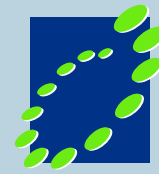


EU News Bulletin

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

Number 54 – November 2008

Produced by the Irish Regions Office (IRO), Brussels
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Irish Regions Office



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FUNDING CALLS

Urban & Suburban Mobility

The European Commission has launched a call for proposals to award grants to actions in support of the development of sustainable mobility policy for urban agglomerations. Actions should test and assess measures which can significantly contribute to promoting the objectives set out in the 2007 Green Paper 'Towards a new culture for urban mobility': more fluid and less polluted towns and cities; more intelligent and more accessible urban transport; and safer and more secure urban transport. They should also contribute to the implementation of the forthcoming Action Plan on urban mobility.

Possible areas of activity include good practice in demand-responsive transport for passengers (seamless traffic chains, integrating private and public travel in urban and peri-urban areas, including possible links to land-use and urban mobility planning); safe walking/cycling; and systems of access to green areas (including interoperable technological tools and public information provision). Where possible, actions should add value to and incorporate experiences gained from activities financed under Community programmes such as STEER and CIVITAS. The total budget is €5 million.

Deadline: 31 March 2009

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/energy_transport/grants/proposal_en.htm

Sustainable Consumption & Production

As part of society and the economy's move from unsustainable patterns of development to sustainable consumption and production (SCP) the SWITCH ASIA programme has launched its second call. SCP reconciles consideration of demand side issues (consumer behaviour and choices in use of goods and services) with the supply side (economic, social and environmental life cycle impacts of production processes).

SWITCH will grant aid partnerships involving EU and Asian non-profit making organisations with an ability to reach out to large numbers of SMEs, business intermediaries or consumer groups and with interests in pursuing sustainable development through (for example) the use of environmentally friendly technologies and practices; developing and applying effective economic instruments SMEs should be selected from sectors or industrial areas that substantially contribute to overall water and air pollution and/or are resource intensive. As well as sustainable growth, the programme also emphasises objectives of corporate social responsibility and decent working conditions.

Deadline: 27 February 2009

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/regional-cooperation/environment/switch_en.htm

Online Partner Searches:

- Promoting young entrepreneurship (NB: a meeting will take place in Brussels on 11 December to progress an application).
- Changing role of knowledge throughout the economy.
- Support services and facilitation for foreign nationals.
- European Market Entrance for Spin-offs, Start-ups and SMEs

Check out other offers on http://www.iro.ie/funding/news/partner_searches/ to get involved in EU funding programmes.

NEWS & POLICY

European Commission adopts 2009 Work Programme

The 2009 Legislative and Work Programme of the European Commission was adopted on 5 November. For this final year of the present Commission's mandate the programme envisages following up on recent initiatives to address the financial crisis as well as consolidating and completing work already underway, with the emphasis on implementing the visions set out in areas like energy, climate change, migration and social policy. The priorities set out amid its 12 strategic initiatives, 37 priority initiatives, 33 simplification proposals are:

- reform and specific measures in the areas of financial markets and financial supervision aimed at rebuilding economic confidence through the 'framework for action' towards economic recovery presented late last month;
- working towards achieving global agreement on the energy and climate change package at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change meeting (Copenhagen, December) in order to move towards implementation;
- specific citizen-centred measures and policies in consumer affairs and freedom, security and justice;
- building ever improved relations with the wider world through enlargement policy, neighbourhood policy, world trade, and transatlantic relations.

Promoting a simpler and better regulatory environment without unnecessary administrative burdens remains a key legislative aim and specific measures are set out on simplification as well as the withdrawal of pending proposals. Additionally, the presentation of the Budget Review, an important contribution to the debate on the shape of the future priorities of the Union and their financing, will form a key part of the legacy of this Commission post 2013.

http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/clwp2009_en.pdf

National Reform Programme for Growth and Jobs

National Reform Programmes (NRPs) as drawn up by national governments are a framework for articulating Member State strategies for generating economic growth and job creation as part of the redesigned Lisbon Strategy. They offer a succinct overview of planned national level macro- and micro-economic, and employment reforms and successful and innovative policies in a bid to give new impetus to the drive to increase prosperity and to allow more people to share in it.

Ireland's NRP for 2008-2010 has now been submitted to the European Commission. It summarises progress since 2007 while setting out a renewed approach for the economically uncertain period ahead based, in particular, on a broad range of policies and initiatives within the framework of the recently reviewed *Towards 2016* social partnership agreement and *Budget 2009*.

The Government has indicated that it will bring forward revised and new strategies over the period ahead in response to the fast-changing situation in order to ensure a return to strong economic growth and employment performance while also stressing the interdependence of social, environmental and economic goals.

Ireland's NRP:

<http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/pdf/member-states-2008-2010-reports/Ireland%20NRP%202008-10%20FINAL.pdf>

Mid-West e-Inclusion project wins Commission award

Citizens First, an Interreg 3b North West Europe project led by the Mid-West Regional Authority, has won a medal as part of the eInclusion Awards. This European Commission initiative recognises public, business and civil society sector organisations whose activities have made the best and most imaginative uses of Information and Communications Technology to positively impact on the lives of marginalised people and communities - thereby reducing digital and social exclusion. Beyond its social necessity, overcoming this barrier is estimated to be worth up to €85 billion to European companies and governments over the next five years and the awards aim to inspire progress and greater all-round ICT efforts towards this goal.

Citizens First's recognition is under the category of 'Inclusive Public Services' for its efforts in engaging with isolated and socially disadvantaged communities to plan and deliver internet based public services underpinning an inclusive Information Society. It focused in particular on empowering such groups by providing technical skills training to address the

socio-economic and cultural barriers that exclude them from e-government services. Winners will be announced on 1 December.

Contact: Marie Collins, mcollins@mwra.ie
Project: <http://www.citizen-first.net/>
Awards: www.e-inclusionawards.eu/

LEADER funding announced

The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs announced the funding allocations under Axes 3 and 4 of the new Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 on 4 November. In what is by far the largest ever support package for this type of action, funding of €425.4 million (€234 million from the EU) will be provided towards activities to stimulate economic vitality and social well-being across all areas of Ireland not designated as gateways or hubs under the National Spatial Strategy.

The focus of Axis 3 is on quality of life and diversification into non-agricultural activities. Though complementary to on-farm measures under the programme, its actions are centred on the wider rural community including the need to provide alternative and suitable employment opportunities and the range of services that people living in rural areas need and expect. These challenges are to be addressed through support for the development of rural enterprises based on local natural resources, service provision, tourism and recreational activities, village enhancement, environmental initiatives, conservation and upgrading of rural heritage, and training.

The funding will be delivered to community groups and individuals using the well-established LEADER methodology through 36 integrated Local Action Groups (LAGS) established under Axis 4. While many of these retain their identities from previous rounds of the LEADER programmes, a certain amount of rationalisation has taken place to create more structures to operate at a 'county-level' where appropriate.

The list of LAGs and their allocations:
<http://www.pobail.ie/en/PressReleases/htmltext.9566.en.html>

Cities tackle Climate Change

Thinking global while acting local received another boost on 27 October as over 50 major European cities committed to adopt and implement ambitious policies to change public perceptions of climate change and mitigate its impact – provided central governments give them the power to act.

While not binding, the *Eurocities Climate Change Declaration* provides guidelines for implementing local policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by involving all

local actors in improving standards and performances in areas including urban planning, transport and energy.

Examples of actions proposed include:

- Adopting ambitious sustainable public procurement policies;
- Developing innovative partnerships in the fields of research and higher education;
- Limiting urban sprawl and developing compact cities;
- Creating new 'eco-quarters';
- Constructing energy-efficient buildings;
- Developing new forms of mobility, and;
- Developing the production of renewable energy.

Eurocities President and Mayor of Lyon Gérard Collomb stated that EU Member States "must delegate to the cities the authority to act on a local level to reduce emissions, and undertake with the European Union to provide funding for initiatives supporting public transportation, housing, and energy". This initiative follows upon last January's *Covenant of Mayors* where almost 100 cities signed up to a commitment to exceed the EU's stated aim of slashing CO2 emissions by 20% by 2020.

www.eurocities.org/uploads/load.php?file=081021_decl_eurocities_en-mrod.pdf

Improving agri-product quality

In response to current trends in food production, increasing pressure from overseas low cost products (exacerbated by globalisation, trade agreements and freer markets) and the evolving market requirements, the European Commission has adopted (15 October) a Green Paper to open the debate on how to help European farmers make the most of the quality of the food and drinks they produce.

The *Green Paper on agricultural product quality* looks at the range of standards, quality and certification programmes and labeling schemes currently operating under EU Agricultural Policy, including geographical indications, organic farming, and private and regional food quality certification schemes, and asks for stakeholder views on how effective these measures are in delivering guarantees and communicating the qualities of EU products. It also seeks suggestions for better exploiting the strengths of EU farming by turning consumer demands to their advantage by delivering exactly what consumers want in the form of clearly distinguished products.

Contributions are particularly sought from individuals or groups representing farmers, food producers, processors, retailers, distributors, traders and consumers as well as public bodies and NGOs. The consultation remains open until 31

December. A Communication will be prepared next year based on the results, which could lead to legislative proposals at a later stage.

Green paper and consultation:
http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/policy/index_en.htm

Energy now 'top priority' of EU budget reform

On 12 November a conference on the findings of the broad consultation on reform of the EU budget, which took place between September 2007 and April this year, revealed that widespread backing exists among public, private and NGO stakeholders for energy policy to rank among the top priorities for EU spending.

The ascendancy of energy issues alongside climate change and competitiveness concerns is the most eye-catching finding arising from what is effectively the first indication towards the make-up of the post-2013 period budget. The findings represent a massive change in grassroots thinking and, if acted upon by the Commission and Member States, in the long-term, may have huge implications for well established policies such as the CAP.

Budget and Financial Programming Commissioner Dalia Grybauskaitė stated that this evidence sent out a very serious signal to politicians about the need to develop new policies to face the energy challenges that Europe is facing. She added that this indicated that extensive financial resources should be allocated to improved interconnections to improve energy supply security, research on energy efficiency, investments in new technologies and renewable energy sources.

Conference papers:
http://ec.europa.eu/budget/reform/conference/documents_en.htm

eProcurement Consultation

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market and Services has launched a survey to evaluate the uptake of electronic public procurement across the EU. In particular, the evaluation will assess how well the objectives of the *Action Plan for the implementation of the legal framework for electronic public procurement*, adopted in 2004, have been achieved.

The questionnaire is aimed at four different categories of users:

- Suppliers who may have conducted business with public purchasers in a traditional and/or an eProcurement procedure;
- Contracting entities including local authorities which may have awarded works, supplies or services contracts

via traditional and/or eProcurement procedures;

- Central Purchasing Bodies, i.e. specialised procurement coordinating entities; and
- National procurement policy institutions or agencies responsible for related technical or legal aspects.

The results of this survey will be collected in a report, which will be made available during the second half of 2009.

Email survey.eproc@it.ey.com to receive a logon identity.

Action Plan for eProcurement:
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publicprocurement/e-procurement_en.htm#actionplan

First Life+ approvals

Two Irish projects on related themes are among the first projects approved under LIFE+ the European fund for the environment. Both are Nature & Biodiversity activities under the component of the programme supporting the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Natura 2000 network and tackling wider biodiversity conservation issues.

Shannon Regional Fisheries Board's ShannonSACLAEO initiative aims to restore the lower Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for sea lamprey, Atlantic salmon and European otter by targeting, in particular, the control and reversal of the damage caused by two invasive alien species (IAS): the giant hogweed and the Japanese knotweed. Meanwhile the CAISIE project of the Central Fisheries Board's will target the control of aquatic IAS and restoration of natural communities in Lough Corrib including exchange and information dissemination with other European IAS control teams and policy makers.

EU co-financing totaling €186 million was approved for 143 projects from over 700 applications to this first call. The programme awards approvals annually.

<http://ec.europa.eu/life>

New websites reveal EU funding beneficiaries

Details of the 28,000 beneficiaries during 2007 of approximately €10 billion in funding, grants, contracts and other forms of EU support are now publicly available for the first time after the European Commission unveiled the 'Financial Transparency System' search engine in October. A separate portal giving details of payments to Member States from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development went live on 30 September. The websites form part of the wider transparency initiative introduced in 2005.

Financial Transparency System

http://ec.europa.eu/grants/search/index_en.htm

CAP payments:

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/funding/index_en.htm

National-Regional Governance & Project Partnerships

A European Parliament report on governance and partnership in Regional Policy, adopted on 21 October, has stressed that regional and local partners should be more extensively involved, in planning and implementing regional development projects.

To provide the practical solutions that citizens expect on issues such as social housing the 'Beaupuy Report' urges national authorities to step up their use of the "integrated approach" to policy making and to involve local partners from the planning stage to completion, so as to make better use of their experience and know-how and to enhance effectiveness, efficiency, legitimacy and transparency. It also urges Member States to establish public-private partnerships to implement Structural Fund activities under the Operational Programmes and to provide all actors with the means to implement good governance.

The report advises that to succeed, multi-level governance needs to take a "bottom-up" approach whereby local and regional authorities must step up their co-operation with national governments and the Commission. Equally, Member States are urged to decentralise both the legislative and budgetary implementation of Cohesion Policy in keeping with the subsidiarity principle.

It calls on the Commission, Member States and regional and local authorities to help integrate the management of all community funding for regional and urban development (Structural Funds, R&D support, and the European agricultural fund for rural development) in order to better exploit and co-ordinate these instruments. As part of commission efforts to spearhead the introduction of modern governance practices a practical guide and an 'Erasmus-style' training and exchange programme for local and regional representatives are also proposed.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/reportscom.do?language=en&body=regi>

Comenius Regio

The European Commission has launched Comenius Regio, a new action under the Lifelong Learning Programme to support transnational cooperation and exchange of experience and good practice between

educational authorities and regional or local authorities to improve educational opportunities for children of school-age.

Comenius Regio Partnerships will fund bilateral cooperation projects on any educational topic of common relevance to both participating regions such as school management issues, better integration of pupils from migrant backgrounds, entrepreneurship education or reducing early school leaving. Schools and other relevant partners (e.g. youth organisations) within the areas involved must be integrated into project activities.

Around 500 projects of 2-year duration are expected to be funded until 2013 with grants covering mobility exchanges of school staff, joint teacher training activities, peer learning or study visits as well as trials of new educational approaches, surveys, and awareness-raising campaigns. The first deadline is 20 February.

www.ec.europa.eu/education/comenius

Access to higher education

European higher education providers have committed themselves to a coordinated respond to growing demands to raise employment prospects by broadening access to their services. Although education is a Member State competence, lifelong learning (LLL) with its roles in developing employability, adaptability and personal fulfilment while also promoting social inclusion is considered a core element of the EU's renewed Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs. When allied with flexible working arrangements ('flexicurity') it is thought that continuous education to support and realise learner potential can contribute much towards modernising European labour markets and ensuring that people have greater access to employment.

The European University Association (EUA), which represents institutions and organisations involved in higher education teaching and research, published a *Charter on Lifelong Learning* (25 October) to emphasise the role of its members in driving this agenda. The document pledges them to work in conjunction with partners (e.g. development agencies, employers bodies, trade unions) at various levels to undertake targeted out-reach measures for diversified groups of potential students and to create tailored, attractive and relevant programmes which promote flexible and creative learning and reflect fast-changing labour markets. It also calls for concerted governmental action to improve recognition of prior learning as well as establishing the appropriate financial frameworks to effectively and equitably fund LLL.

Charter:
http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Publications/EUA_Charter_Eng_LY.pdf

EVENTS

5 December, Brussels Secure energy on the periphery

Secure Energy Futures for Europe's Peripheral Communities: Delivering Europe's Climate Change and Energy Policies at the Local Level is the final international event of the ASPIRE project under the Intelligent Energy Europe programme. The event will demonstrate best practice being achieved towards developing a model for creating Sustainable Energy Communities in peripheral areas of EU by identifying and maximising their potential for promoting, using and benefiting economically from such renewable energy resources. Delegates may provide input into a future co-operation network for Sustainable Energy Communities.

Conference:
http://www.managenergy.net/conference/pdfs/0812ASPIRE_invitation.pdf

Project:
<http://www.aspire-project.eu/>

3-5 December, Brussels Impact Assessment

This three-day course offers participants an intensive introduction to the practical understanding of integrated (social, environmental and economic) Impact Assessment. This key tool for better regulation is becoming increasingly central to the policy-making and legislative processes of the EU. Among the themes to be addressed are identification of relevant Commission proposals for impact assessment, the timetable for their preparation, the key analytical steps followed by the Commission, and opportunities for stakeholder and Member State input.

http://www.eipa.eu/files/repository/product/20080710124323_0812005_080710.pdf

10 December, Brussels Financing Renewable and Efficient Energy

The European Association of Public Banks (EAPB) in co-operation with the Committee of the Regions is holding a conference: '*Financing of Renewable and Efficient Energy in Europe*'. Officials from the European Commission, experts from the banking sector, local authorities and regions will make available their expertise and discuss current developments in this field.

http://www.cor.europa.eu/COR_cms/ui/ViewDocument.aspx?siteid=default&content/

D=31c7e763-43fd-4e86-bca8-944c65b7caf5

9-13 February 2009, Brussels Sustainable Energy Week

Registration has opened for the 2009 *European Sustainable Energy Week* - the key annual event of the Sustainable Energy Europe Campaign and the focal point for sustainable energy issues in Europe. Organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy and Transport along with the other European Institutions, major energy actors and private companies, EUSEW 2009 is set to include over 135 events for stakeholders and general public both in Brussels and throughout Europe. This will include weekend "open days for sustainable energy" where Cork County Energy Agency and Tipperary Energy Agency will introduce the general public to energy efficient lifestyles through organised visits to local examples of 'eco-villages' and sustainable housing estates where renewable energy technologies have been already installed. Informative and practical talks from alternative energy experts will also take place.

This popular week of events requires prompt registration on:
<http://www.eusew.eu/>

Sustainable Energy Europe Campaign:
<http://www.sustenergy.org/>

PUBLICATIONS

Court of Auditors Report

The implementation of the EU budget – a responsibility of the European Commission along with Member State governments in some policy areas – is audited externally each year by the European Court of Auditors. Its report on the €114 billion set aside for 2007 was published on 10 November and will provide a basis for the budgetary agreement procedure to be carried out between the European Parliament and the Council over the coming months.

<http://eca.europa.eu/portal/pls/portal/docs/1/1569525.PDF>

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