

# EU News Bulletin

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

## Number 55 – December 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...

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**Biodiversity targets;**  
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## FUNDING

### Recent & Upcoming Calls

#### Smart Electricity

€20 million is available for the 2009 call under the "ICT" and "Energy" themes of FP7 Cooperation, which aim to improve the competitiveness of European industry and to shape the future development of ICT as well as adapting the current energy system into a more sustainable one, less dependent on imported fuels and instead based on a diverse mix of energy sources. Collaborative projects on novel ICT solutions for Smart Electricity Distribution Networks are sought.

*Deadline: 31 March.*

[http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?seaction=UserSite.FP7DetailsCallPage&c\\_all\\_id=186](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?seaction=UserSite.FP7DetailsCallPage&c_all_id=186)

#### Public Procurement Networks

Funding is available under the CIP Entrepreneurship and Innovation programme to support public procurers in purchasing new and improved solutions, products and services in the Lead Market Initiative areas – construction, protective textiles, bio-based products, recycling, and renewable energies – thereby increasing the demand for innovation. Transnational networks should be established to enable Contracting Authorities to improve their knowledge about innovative solutions that are available or being developed by suppliers and how to succeed in procuring

such solutions. Interaction with industry and potential suppliers and dissemination and training activities should be included.

*Deadline: 27 February*

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/funding/files/themes\\_2008/doc/09n03s00/call.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/funding/files/themes_2008/doc/09n03s00/call.pdf)

#### Senior Volunteering

GIVE, (Grundtvig Initiative on Volunteering in Europe for Seniors) is a new initiative under the Lifelong Learning Programme to support transnational exchange projects for individuals aged 50+ who work in local voluntary sector organisations. Projects may relate to the formal or informal non-profit making activities of sending and hosting organisations that provide good collaborative learning opportunities (e.g. for exchange and mutual acquisition of experience, knowledge and good practice or for intensified European outlooks).

*Deadline: 31 March*

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/grundtvig/doc/c986\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/grundtvig/doc/c986_en.htm)

*This is one of a suite of ongoing Lifelong Learning calls. See October Bulletin and [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lp/doc/call09/prior\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lp/doc/call09/prior_en.pdf) for details.*

#### Spatial Planning

The ESPON 2013 Programme on territorial development and cohesion launches a Call for Expression of Interest for the Knowledge Support System on 19 December. The Call aims at enlarging the existing pool of experts in the field of territorial research and analysis, in particular in themes such as land use, accessibility, innovation and globalisation.

*Full call details: [www.espon.lu](http://www.espon.lu)*

### Online Partner Searches:

#### Interreg IVC (deadline: 30 January)

- Providing better information on hazardous waste management, aligned with the principles of Shared Environmental Information Systems. (Catalonia).
- Construction of an efficient and reliable system for monitoring land consumption; the realization of studies on territorial change and a tool for the

evaluation of eco-sustainability of territorial policies and prevention of natural risk. (Torino).

- Tele-health Services based on mobile telephony. (Thessaloniki).
- Participation models for implementing the Water Framework Directive at Local level. (Catalonia).
- Collaboration network among Regional Climate Change Observatories. (Galicia).
- Demographic change. (Augsburg).
- Social housing quality and environmental improvements (e.g. energy-related) (Croydon, London).

#### Leonardo da Vinci (27 February)

- Life-long learning, personal development, mobility (West Sweden).
- Universal citizens' training entitlement (Poitou-Charentes).

#### LIFE+

Comprehensive Management System for Tackling Climate Change (Seville). Note: application already submitted but interested in associated partners.

#### General partnership requests

- Commuter belt issues like growth and how it impacts on planning, future investments and the environment and using participatory democracy methods for dialogue with citizens. (Värmdö, Stockholm).
- Planning of culture centres or culture meeting points at local level. (Solna, Stockholm).
- Diversification in the fishing and aquaculture sectors, including tourism. (Andalusia).

#### 'Europe for Citizens' (1 February)

'Innovation and creation' themed network twinning project to discuss the specific experience of towns and citizens in responding to change in specific economic sectors (agriculture, services, etc) and how they can remain competitive. (Miggiano (pop. 3,500) in Puglia, Italy).

**To get involved in EU funding programmes check out these and previous requests on [www.iro.ie/funding/news/partner\\_searches/](http://www.iro.ie/funding/news/partner_searches/)**

## NEWS & POLICY

### **2020 Regional challenges vulnerability assessment**

The findings of the *Regions 2020* report, which provides a prospective analysis of the likely medium term regional impact of some of the main challenges facing Europe, have been published. Using a series of indicators, the report maps out a "vulnerability index", identifying the degree of exposure faced by regions due to the impact of globalisation, demography, climate change and energy use and supply. This offers a first look at the potential patterns of disparities that these challenges will generate across Europe and will feed into the ongoing reflection process to determine the future shape and investment priorities of Cohesion Policy. Commenting on the analysis, Commissioner Danuta Hübner highlighted that "it is clearer than ever that we need flexible, forward-looking policies in the EU in order to adapt to changing times and new pressures. The big challenges we are facing will affect Europe's regions in different ways and to varying degrees."

By and large the report sets out a stark contrast between the prospects of northern and western Europe as against those of the southern and eastern parts of the continent. This is especially illustrated with the globalisation index – based on factors such as estimated productivity, employment, and education levels – which indicates that regions (particularly those with major urban centres) with the basis for competitive and innovative economies will benefit while those lacking the capacity to develop along these lines are likely to be more exposed.

For Ireland as a whole, the most obvious area of concern among the four themes examined is exposure to the volatility of international energy markets – a weakness that places this country markedly at odds with its most immediate neighbours. The report concludes that all regions will need to find local solutions tailored to meet the combination of challenges which they face and that the European policy framework must be adapted to assist.

*Regions 2020 report:*  
[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/working/regions2020/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/working/regions2020/index_en.htm)

### **Biodiversity targets slip**

The EU's intention of halting biodiversity decline by 2010 is highly unlikely to be achieved according to a pessimistic mid-term progress review of the *Biodiversity Action Plan* published by the European Commission on 16 December. This is the first comprehensive assessment of progress at both Community and Member State levels under four main policy areas: biodiversity in the EU, the EU and global biodiversity, biodiversity and climate change, and the knowledge base. It shows that intensive efforts will be required in the next two years if Europe is even to come close to achieving the biodiversity goal. Accordingly, priority measures for the coming years ranging from more action to manage and restore Natura 2000 sites to restoring ecosystem health and services in the countryside and in freshwater and marine environments are highlighted.

More positively, the report notes that the Natura 2000 network has been significantly extended and progress has been made in the protection of marine and freshwater ecosystems, particularly with the adoption of a marine strategy directive in May. However, the failure to adopt a draft directive on soil protection leaves a major legislative gap. In October, the European Environment Agency warned that European nature conservation sites were failing to protect vulnerable species and habitats. Less than half of species and habitats protected under EU and national schemes are safe according to the agency.

*Mid-term Report:*  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/bap\\_2008\\_report.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/bap_2008_report.pdf)

*Ireland summary:*  
<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/profiles/ie.pdf>

### **Energy efficiency in low-income homes**

On 3 December, the Commission adopted a proposal to allow all Member States to invest their national Structural Funds allocations in initiatives favouring energy efficiency and renewable energy in homes. This proposal, which would amend the current 'ERDF' Regulation (1080/2006) as regards eligibility of investment, is part of the *European Economic Recovery Plan*, and targets

low-income households, as defined in the legislation of each Member State. In current Community legislation, only the newer Member States may make use of ERDF support in the housing sector. The proposal would extend this across the board as well as entailing fewer restrictions on the types of buildings and geographical zones concerned. Specifically, these measures are designed to target low-income homes.

*Proposal:*  
[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/newsroom/pdf/11122008\\_propo\\_comm\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/newsroom/pdf/11122008_propo_comm_en.pdf)

### **South-East 'Spirit of Enterprise Forum' recognised**

The South-East *Spirit of Enterprise Forum* initiative has been endorsed by Enterprise Ireland to go forward as Ireland's nomination for the Entrepreneurship Promotion category of the European Commission's European Enterprise Awards 2009 which recognise and reward outstanding initiatives that support entrepreneurship at regional and local level.

The Forum, which includes the annual South-East Enterprise Week, is an initiative to harness the collective expertise of over 50 organisations plus the business community to work collaboratively towards a goal of creating one of the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based regional economies in the EU. "The Forum does not rely on any one individual or organisation. It is this collective partnership that provides its core strength and benefit to the region", according to Cllr. Michael Fitzgerald, Cathaoirleach of the South-East Regional Authority, one of the primary instigators in the Forum's establishment. "Its activities to date provide opportunities and direction to all those in enterprise and local/regional development. I am particularly pleased to see that such a diverse grouping of authorities, agencies and groups can work together regionally", he added.

*European Enterprise Awards:*  
[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/smes/awards/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/smes/awards/index_en.htm)  
*Spirit of Enterprise Forum:*  
[www.spiritofenterprise.ie](http://www.spiritofenterprise.ie)

### **Green law implementation**

Plans to improve the application of the EU's 200 or so laws on environmental

protection have been set out by the European Commission as part of a wider ongoing strategy for better implementation of EU legislation.

The Communication stresses the need for close cooperation with Member States to ensure that national implementing rules are correct and adopted on time, and that shared goals are effectively achieved. This includes preparing taking implementation aspects fully into account when devising laws.

To encourage better performance across Europe, the Commission will publish more legal compliance studies and issue scoreboards comparing Member State performance in specific areas. Where serious or systematic infringements persist – such as tolerance of illegal landfills or multiple failures to treat urban wastewater – the Commission will favour strategic legal action over a piecemeal approach.

Communication:

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/legal/law/pdf/com\\_2008\\_773\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/legal/law/pdf/com_2008_773_en.pdf)

## Open Days 2009 launched

'Global challenges, European solutions' is the subtitle of the 2009 edition of *Open Days*, the Brussels week of ideas exchange and networking between local, regional, national and European decision-makers and experts. The designated themes this time around are regions and climate change; restoring growth through innovation; territorial cooperation; and the impact and the future of EU Cohesion Policy.

Within these parameters, the Committee of the Regions will select 30 seminars to take place under the *Open Days* banner on shared issues as defined in applications by multinational consortia of regions and cities. Additionally, the intention is to sanction a similar number of thematic networking activities to bring together regional/local actors, business and financial institutions. Bids for joint events to be included in the programme must meet a 13 March deadline. An Information Pack for potential participants is available from this office or at <http://cor.europa.eu/>.

Workshops by DG REGIO will form another element of the week as will a regional development forum for academics. To complement the Brussels week, 'local events' to showcase European themes and projects are also welcomed during October.

## Bio-waste management

A Green Paper on the management of bio-waste in the EU was presented by the European Commission on 3 December. Bio-waste involves biodegradable garden, kitchen and food waste, typically accounts for around one third of municipal waste and has major potential impacts on the environment, due to its methane content.

While waste management in the EU is governed by a substantial body of regulation, it is felt that there may be room for further improvement in this particular area – particularly given bio-waste's potential advantages as a source of renewable energy and recycled materials. Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas commented that "*we need to work with stakeholders to ensure that the waste management options we choose bring the greatest benefits to our environment.*"

The discussion paper explores the socio-economic and environmental benefits and drawbacks of current practices as well as the impact of existing regulatory measures and is intended to stimulate a debate among stakeholders to contribute towards an assessment of the degree of need for additional EU action to direct more bio-waste towards recycling and energy recovery.

*The Public Consultation will remain open until 15 March.*

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

## EU energy label proposed

Public authorities' purchasing of products that have a significant impact on energy consumption looks likely to be determined by compliance with certain efficiency thresholds. This is due to recently launched EU proposals which could see a widening of the applicability of the existing EU energy label for household appliances. This legislation forms part of the Commission's vision to improve sustainable consumption and production in the EU.

Although products will be labeled on a case-by-case basis there will be certain benchmarks such as an indication of consumption of energy and of "water, chemicals or any other substance". The Commission also proposes minimum efficiency standards for green public procurement and incentives to buy greener products.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/700&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&uiLang=ue=en>

## Maritime spatial planning

A *Roadmap for Maritime Spatial Planning* was adopted by the European Commission on 25 November to address the increasing challenges and complications emerging from the growth in competing uses of both marine and coastal spaces. This new tool is intended to facilitate the development of what is a relatively new concept of more systematically managing these resources in a sustainable manner.

The Communication provides information on current practices and instruments as well as defining a series of joint principles to encourage a debate on how an added value common approach to the challenges of shared maritime resources and issues, which are often interlinked and transcend national borders, can be achieved at EU level. Earlier this year the Irish Sea Regions Platform was launched on foot of a 2007 submission by the Dublin Regional Authority in response to the Commission's Green Paper, *Towards a Future Maritime Policy for the Union*. Partners representing regions and sectoral stakeholders along the seaboard in Ireland and Britain are now working together to establish a basis to provide opportunities to develop integrated projects. Similar strategies for the Baltic and Black Seas are at more advanced stages and have contributed to the Roadmap's content.

The spatial planning approach forms one element of the EU's wider Integrated Maritime Policy which aims to coordinate all EU policies with a maritime dimension in order to safeguard environmental sustainability and quality of life in coastal regions while promoting the growth potential of maritime industries. In 2009, the Commission will organise a number of workshops to discuss the key principles of the roadmap, launch pilot projects aimed at developing cross-border cooperation aspects and produce a progress report. An accompanying study on the legal aspects of this topic has also been issued.

Roadmap:

[http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/spatial\\_planning\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/spatial_planning_en.html)

## Energy to get its own DG

Energy is quickly moving up the EU's list of priorities, as evidenced by the recent EU Council commitment to (and subsequent European Parliament approval of) the ambitious 'climate package' on boosting renewable energy, cutting greenhouse gas emissions and increasing EU energy efficiency. This has been underlined with the 3 December announcement by Commission President Manuel Barroso of the creation, over the next year, of a dedicated energy directorate-general. Currently, energy and transport share a single 'hybrid' DG under Commissioners Andris Piebalgs and Antonio Tajani respectively. Speculation is growing that Member States will create a new Commissioner portfolio in charge of "energy and climate change" after the European Parliament elections in June. However, as of now, climate change remains as a unit within the larger DG Environment.

## Globalisation Fund revised for economic crisis redundancies

A 16 December European Commission proposal (part of the 26 November European Economic Recovery Plan) to extend the scope of the European Globalisation adjustment Fund (EGF) could help those made redundant as a result of the economic and financial crisis. The revision aims to make EGF operations, which have directly financed individual up-skilling for more than 15,000 newly redundant workers in its 2 years of existence, more responsive as an early intervention instrument to help more people to find their way back into the labour market.

The €500 million per annum fund – a figure likely to be increased – was established to support those losing their jobs as a result of changes in world trade patterns but is to be temporarily broadened to take recent developments into account. Other proposed emergency changes to the Fund are:

- lowering the eligibility threshold for applications for support from 1000 to 500 lay-offs in a given sector, region or single industry;
- doubling the support period to 2 years;
- increased EU contribution to 75%.

Commission proposal

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?lang1=de&catId=89&newsId=432&furtherNews=yes>

## Kerry VEC 'EU Villages'

Kerry Education Service (KES), the VEC in that county, has been lauded for its involvement in a transnational pilot project with the shared objective of creating "meeting points for ordinary people across Europe". The recognition for the *EU Villages* project with a 2008 European Regional Communication Champions Award reflects active efforts to engage the public and increase knowledge, understanding, cooperation and solidarity between EU citizens.

The initiative, funded under the Europe for Citizens programme, was part of KES's Community Education Programme. The Kerry element operated from the Adult Education Centre in Causeway and created local mechanisms to allow groups of residents to participate in exchanges with counterparts in Sweden, Cyprus and Romania to collectively explore agreed themes relating to community development matters and the potential/relevance of different EU themes and structures. Topics included participation and democracy; national and European identities; intercultural dialogue; sustaining community buildings; and the impact of Regional Policies on society. One of the outcomes is a mooted project based on Youth and Mental Health to involve secondary schools within the partner regions.

[http://www.cokerryed.ie/news\\_folder/articles/eu\\_villages\\_project\\_wins\\_european\\_award.pdf](http://www.cokerryed.ie/news_folder/articles/eu_villages_project_wins_european_award.pdf)

## State Aid targeting improving

The latest EU State Aid Scoreboard (for 2007) shows that Member States are increasingly using the possibilities offered by recently revised rules to better target their aid. Member States awarded on average 80% of their aid to horizontal objectives of Community interest, such as R&D and environmental aid in particular but also employment, regional development, and training as opposed to supporting individual companies or sectors (the figures for Ireland are slightly below average). This is significantly increased from the 50% average in the mid-1990s.

In fact, over the last 25 years, the overall level of State Aid has fallen from more than 2% of GDP in the 1980s to around 0.5% in 2007. Whilst highlighting this continuing trend for more focused aid, the Scoreboard notes that following the recent financial crisis, the share of

rescue and restructuring aid is likely to increase significantly for some countries in 2008.

Scoreboard and Member States analysis: [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/competition/state\\_aid/studies\\_reports/studies\\_reports.html](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/competition/state_aid/studies_reports/studies_reports.html)

## EVENTS

### 20 January, Brussels Europe for Citizens

An Information Day on the Europe for Citizens programme will focus on the fund's priorities for 2009, the upcoming calendar major events planned, updates and modifications to the Programme guide' how to add value to projects, as well as some examples of best practices.

Register at <http://idcitizen09.teamwork.fr> (password: citizen09)

### 22-23 January, Letterkenny, Spatial Strategies for Regional & Local Development

The fourth annual conference of the International Centre for Local and Regional Development – *Achieving balanced regional development: dynamic regions, spatial strategies and collaboration* – will consider the impact of spatial strategies and designated growth centres in the promotion and achievement of balanced regional and local development. As well as focusing on the island of Ireland, the conference will feature contributions reflecting recent development in regional development policy and practice from both the Welsh and Scottish Spatial Planning Units and the Department of Communities and Local Government in England.

Register at: [www.iclrd.ie](http://www.iclrd.ie)

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