

EU News Bulletin

The latest monthly EU opportunities, news & policy, publications and events of relevance to Ireland's local and regional level.

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FUNDING, NETWORKING & PROJECTS

Call: Sport

A call was launched on 22 May to support transnational projects based on the 2010 Annual Work Programme for the 'Preparatory Action in the field of Sport' (published on 26 April). The main objective of this initiative is to prepare future EU actions in this field, on the basis of priorities set in the White Paper on Sport. A

more ambitious EU Sport Programme is expected in the coming years.

A budget of €2.5 million at an 80% co-financing rate is being provided to identify suitable networks and good practices involving partner organisations in at least 5 EU Member States on:

- Anti-doping projects focusing on prevention measures in amateur sport, sport for all and/or fitness (an indicative 5 projects at €200,000 funding each to be co-financed);
- Promoting social inclusion, particularly of migrants through sport (5 projects at €200,000 each); and
- Promoting volunteering in sport - in particular relating to legal, fiscal and funding-related aspects and issues faced by actors involved in the management and running of sport associations and local sport structures (3 projects at €150,000-€200,000).

Actions will need to extend beyond basic research or one-off conferences.

The EU gained a competence in sport under the Lisbon treaty and European Sports Ministers held their first ever formal meeting on 10 May in Brussels, as part of the Council of Education, Youth and Culture. At this meeting they unanimously agreed to design a common policy which will aim, among other principles, to recognise sport's education and social role (including promoting training, health-enhancing physical activity and social inclusion); support sport structures, especially those of volunteers, and ensure sustainable funding (a study on the financing of grassroots sport in the EU is nearing completion); and encourage values such as the fight against discrimination and xenophobia. The Commission is committed to including these priorities in its upcoming communication on sport which is due to be published in November as a basis for common policies.

Deadline: 31 August

[Further details](#)

[Approved applications \(2009\)](#)

Call: Transport Infrastructure

On 19 May the European Commission launched three new calls for proposals, making an additional €172 million of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) budget available to finance transport infrastructure projects. Funding opportunities are based upon the TEN-T annual and multi-annual programmes and will reflect key projects of European added value in the fields of:

- Motorways of the Sea (alternative freight routes) (€85 million);
- River information services and inland waterway traffic management (€10 million);
- Promoting the development of an integrated and environmentally friendly transport system (€30 million);
- Studies and works accelerating the implementation of TEN-T projects notably in the rail and inland waterways sectors, as well as projects supporting the Single European Sky policy (up to €40 million);
- Studies to support public-private partnerships (PPPs) (up to €7 million).

Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of their relevance to TEN-T priorities and policy objectives, and their socio-economic and environmental impact.

Deadline: 31 August

[Further details](#)

or e-mail: TENT-AGENCY@ec.europa.eu

Call: Entrepreneurial Mobility

On 18 May a call for proposals was published to develop the 'Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs' preparatory action. This call aims to help new EU entrepreneurs enrich their experiences, learning and networking by spending periods of on-the-job training in enterprises run by experienced counterparts in other EU Member States. The overall objective of the preparatory action is to enhance the

business skills, ideas development, internationalisation and market access prospects, and longer-term competitiveness of potential start-up entrepreneurs and newly established micro and small enterprises. A budget of €4.3 million is being provided, mainly to support “intermediary organisations” active in supporting enterprises and who would facilitate the mobility of nascent entrepreneurs.

Deadline: 28 June
[Further details](#)

Call: Territorial Development networking (ESPON)

On 19 May the ESPON 2013 Programme (the European observation network for territorial development and cohesion) published a call for Transnational Networking Activities under Priority 4 to provide for activities on targeted capitalisation, awareness raising and dissemination of results arising from the programme. This is being undertaken on the basis that a participatory approach involving all relevant stakeholders and target groups in the preparation of territorial policies is fundamental to ensure their relevance, effectiveness, transferability and sustainability. Interactive and focused transnational dialogue actions involving policy makers, practitioners, scientists and young academics are encouraged.

A budget of €1.3 million is being provided with three types of actions foreseen to be financed:

- Media and Publications
- European Seminars and Workshops
- Transnational Networking Activities

ESPON has also launched calls for targeted analyses and applied research activities.

Deadline: 28 June
[Further details](#)

Call: Crime Prevention

Several calls for proposals to finance transnational projects within the ‘Prevention of and Fight against Crime’ programme have been opened. As well as technical policing and legal system support,

this includes measures to address the following issues:

- 1) Radicalisation leading to terrorism and the role of victims of terrorism in preventing – mainly at community level (18 June deadline);
- 2) Illegal use of internet (18 June deadline); and
- 3) Trafficking of human beings (25 June deadline).

[Further details](#)

A separate call for proposals for transnational projects under the ‘Prevention, Preparedness and Consequence Management of Terrorism and other Security related risks’ programme (CIPS) will be published in mid-June, with a deadline for applications in late July.

[Further details](#)

Call: Road Safety

Funding is being made available by the European Commission to support operations reinforcing and developing its policies in the field of transport as set out in its 2010 Work Programme and in the context set in the White Paper ‘European Transport policy for 2010: time to decide’. The main topic selected is road safety for which €2 million is to be provided to co-finance research activities and dissemination of best practices; coordination and harmonisation of standards and procedures; and studies and analyses on socio-economic issues referring to the transport system.

Possible project themes include:

- Development and implementation of innovative road safety communication campaigns, teaching approaches and new information technologies to influence user behaviour;
- Ensuring greater awareness and better understanding between various types of road users;
- The impact on driving behaviour and road safety of factors such as an ageing population, gender, and new technology;
- The economic and social impact of road safety.

This call will also co-finance a network of centres promoting inland waterway navigation (local level logistical advice and technical assistance to transport users).

Deadline: 15 September
[Further details](#)

Call: ICT for the Elderly

The Ambient Assisted Living programme has recently launched its third call for proposals entitled “ICT-based Solutions for Advancement of Older Persons’ Independence and Participation in the Self-Serve Society”. The call looks for technological solutions which allow older people to preserve and enhance their autonomy and dignity in all aspects of daily life such as the home environment or mobility, to take an active part in society and to stimulate and support the capacities required for such participation. It is particularly aimed at assisting the quality of life of the socially isolated, frail, and those suffering from chronic conditions or disabilities. Projects should be transnational in nature and involve industry (notably SMEs) and Higher Education Institutions in piloting new approaches with future market potential in terms of savings to be achieved in the cost of social and health care.

Deadline: 30 July
[Further details](#)
Contact: Gerard.butler@enterprise-ireland.com

The European Commission has also launched a public consultation on how best to use ICTs to help older Europeans live more independently, and more generally to establish new ways to put ICTs at the service of the most vulnerable members of society.

[Consultation \(Deadline: 1 July\)](#)

Future Maritime Funding

The Spanish Secretary of State for the EU, Diego Lopez Garrido, used the occasion of the annual European Maritime Day (20 May) in Gijón to announce that the June Council of Ministers meeting will unveil a new financial instrument to develop an Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) as set out in the 2007 vision document (‘the Blue

Book') and accompanying action plan. The package is expected to be worth in the region of €45 million over 3 years and will be used to support actions of joining up policies with a maritime dimension over the coming years.

IMP covers a wide range of governance, spatial planning, and sustainable development issues including marine transport; competitiveness and employment in marine businesses; scientific research; and protection of the marine environment. Actions dealing with the economic crisis and the need to embed maritime issues within the European strategy for growth and economic development are likely to be prioritised.

At the same meeting Spain's Minister for the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, Elena Espinosa called for actions to develop broader knowledge of Europe's maritime resources and their economic, social and environmental situations. She also supported the development of joint marine strategies at a transnational level. EU Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Commissioner María Damanaki noted the need to develop a comprehensive policy that includes all involved parties in activities related to the sea and expands marine knowledge.

['The Blue Book'](#)

Research & Regional Funding

A 20 May European Parliament resolution on the relation between the EU research and innovation funding programmes and regional development funds stressed the need for a more integrated approach and better synergies to be created between these policy fields and their funding instruments. This report highlights that sustainable economic growth is increasingly dependent on regional economies being able to innovate and invest in new technologies.

[Research-Regional Funding Resolution](#)

Project: Bio-energy in the West

A recently approved €3 million Interreg Northern Periphery Programme initiative led by the Western Development Commission (WDC) along with partners from Northern Ireland (Action

Renewables), Scotland and Sweden, is examining how local energy needs can be supplied from local sources in order to deliver much needed sustainable employment to rural economies.

The pilot phase of the RASLRES project focuses on wood biomass and was launched on 29 April by which point 125 enquiries had been received from businesses and organisations in the West Region alone. WDC research shows that by 2020, if forestry is properly managed with a long-term vision, the West could annually develop an indigenous, renewable wood energy resource supplying over 470,000 tonnes of fuel. This replenishable output would deliver 11% of the region's heat needs as well as enormous CO2 emissions savings and would create up to 900 additional jobs across the entire supply chain - in turn generating an additional €15 million for the regional economy and providing €1.7 million directly to the farming sector.

During 2010 and 2011 RASLRES will assess the heat market and fuel resources in each participating region to identify 'hot spots' of potential wood energy activity. This will lead to the roll-out of a range of free and expertly tailored technical and business advisory services to the wood energy sector via pilot projects to:

- Establish sustainable local supply and demand loops;
- Develop local wood fuel supply from forestry;
- Offer best practice approaches to support industry development;
- Help build critical mass and scale; and
- Support investment plans and help secure project finance.

The selected pilots are intended to be developed into commercially operational investments in terms of renewable heating schemes and/or fuel supply chains.

Aside from wood, RASLRES also encompasses the analysis and development of reed canary grass and marine biomass alternatives in order to stimulate the market and sustainably grow local bio-energy businesses in peripheral regions.

Visit www.raslres.eu
or contact ianbrannigan@wdc.ie

[Other recent calls](#)

[Partner Searches received by the IRO from other regions](#)

NEWS & POLICY

'Europe 2020': EU Institutions urge strong regional focus

The May Plenary session of the European Parliament included the adoption of a resolution on the contribution of Cohesion Policy to the achievement of the 'Europe 2020' Strategy objectives of turning the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.

The key messages of the Resolution, which expresses dissatisfaction with aspects of the manner in which the (outgoing) Lisbon Strategy was designed and deployed in relation to regional development, are:

- 1) the rejection of attempts to renationalise Cohesion Policy coupled with support for the need to take the regional dimension into consideration when reviewing the EU Budget post-2013;
- 2) ensuring sufficient flexibility to accommodate regional specificities, support the weaker regions in overcoming their socio-economic difficulties and reducing disparities between regions; and
- 3) the importance of involving local and regional authorities as well as stakeholders from civil society in an improved multi-level governance system to ensure that the strategy objectives are realised.

MEPs also called for a strengthening of the territorial dimension of Europe 2020 and requested the Commission to prepare an assessment of the territorial impact of the allocation of Structural Funds to the Lisbon Strategy goals and whether this has actually contributed to balanced and coherent regional development.

[Parliament Resolution](#)

In a very similar vein, the ability of the 'Europe 2020' Strategy to achieve its ambitious goals is in some doubt if responses to a recent survey of European cities and regions are to be believed.

The overwhelming majority of the 90 local and regional authorities from 21 Member States who responded to the 'Your Voice on Europe 2020' consultation organised by the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in March/April believe that the initiative as currently incarnated lacks the means to deliver on its promises. Widespread concerns are raised as to how well thought-out, inclusive and flexible its design process, governance arrangements and proposed delivery mechanisms are in order to account adequately for very differing socio-economic realities on the ground across the EU.

Other commonly shared misgivings expressed include the need for the Strategy to employ new evaluation indicators to complement GDP with broader measures of sustainability and quality of life in order to better mobilise local resources and stimulate growth; to be used as a basis for better focusing existing EU funding instruments towards a limited set of priorities; to serve as a framework towards achieving a coordinated implementation of EU, national, regional and local policies; and to be aligned with a strengthened Cohesion Policy for the entire EU.

This grassroots feedback has been communicated to the EU's key decision-makers ahead of the European Council on June 18 which is due to discuss the Strategy. As part of this, the CoR has now formally asked the European Council to invite all Member States to involve their sub-national tiers in their countries' contributions to the overall EU target-setting and flagship initiatives as well as in the draft National Reform Programmes.

[CoR consultation findings](#)

Budget Commissioner "open" to local & regional input

EU Budget Commissioner, Janusz Lewandowski expressed his willingness to work with the local and regional government tiers in the context of the EU Budget Review and beyond during a 17 May

meeting with representatives from EURO CITIES, the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

Recognising the vital role of local and regional authorities in ensuring efficient EU programming the Commissioner commented that "Europe needs to concentrate on how to improve the delivering mechanism of Cohesion Policy, but I am sure of the fact that this must be done through a decentralised management system and multi-level governance. Local and regional authorities must feel a sense of programme and policy ownership, so as to help close the gap between distant Brussels and European citizens".

For their part the various representative bodies used the occasion to reaffirm their collective opposition to any prospect of either the renationalisation of Cohesion Policy (on the grounds of the need for all regions to maintain access to funding) and to an over emphasis on larger-scale projects to the detriment of smaller authorities' participation.

[Further details](#)

Globalisation Fund: Irish Construction Sector application

As speculated in the January *Bulletin* following a successful aid package negotiated by Lithuania, the Irish Government is preparing to submit a similar bid to the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) on behalf of the Irish construction industry.

A recent meeting held between Marian Harkin MEP (Member of the European Globalisation Working Group in the European Parliament), the BMW Regional Assembly and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment provided clarification that it is now the Irish Government's intention to pursue an application based on the effects of the economic downturn on Ireland's construction sector. While the fund has already been deployed in relation to the mass redundancies announced last year by DELL, SR Technics and Waterford Wedgewood, this would represent the first time that it will be invoked by Ireland at

sector level and beyond the effects of a single firm closure.

The application, to be based on official National Redundancy Database statistics, is to be forwarded to the European Commission by the middle of June and, if successful, would part-finance one-off retraining initiatives, career guidance and self-employment incentives for a certain number of individual workers made redundant within a timeframe likely to stretch from July 2009 to March 2010. The EGF regulation potentially allows for support for those made unemployed in a range of sectors relating to building construction including "specialised construction activities", "civil engineering", "architectural and engineering activities", "services to buildings and landscape activities", and "real estate activities".

[EGF](#)

Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries

The Commission has recently launched an online consultation aimed at unlocking the full potential of Europe's cultural and creative industries. The consultation is linked to a Green Paper, which highlights the need to improve access to finance, especially for small businesses, as a key to enabling the sector to flourish and to contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth. The consultation aims to gather views on various issues, including business environment, the need to open a European common space for culture, capacity building, skills development and promotion of European creators on the world stage. The Commission welcomes contributions from public authorities, private and third sector organisations, as well as citizens. The results will also be analysed and summarised in a report to be published in September. The responses to the consultation will inform the Commission on how to ensure that EU policies and programmes are fit for the active involvement of the cultural and creative industries.

Deadline 30 July

[Further details](#)

EP seeks to broaden Less-Favoured Areas status

A comprehensive strategy to harmonise the way Less-Favoured Areas (LFAs) are classified to determine levels of farming aid is being sought by the European Parliament. MEPs adopted a report on 5 May as their collective response to the April 2009 European Commission Communication on the revision of the traditional criteria to define areas of natural disadvantage. That Communication had placed an emphasis on the use of fewer but more objective and measurable soil and climate factors in order to better target assistance towards areas where the sustainable practice of farming is severely hindered. The LFA scheme involves compensatory payments for productive farming as opposed to other EU agri-environmental measures related to land management.

According to its deliberations, the Parliament considers that the strict application of the 8 proposed 'biophysical' criteria alone is insufficient in determining the true extent of natural handicaps; that an integrated strategy taking account of specific national and regional characteristics is needed; and that there are major "social implications" to a reclassification meaning that certain socio-economic criteria such as remoteness from markets, lack of services and depopulation should be re-opened for consideration on a purely objective basis.

[Resolution](#)

[2009 LFA Communication](#)

Spanish Presidency to push urban renewal

The Informal Meetings of Ministers on both Housing and Urban Development will take place on 21-22 June in Toledo with urban sustainability topping the agenda. The Spanish Presidency established urban development among the key priorities for its current tenure of the EU and has been making efforts to promote a common appreciation among all Member States and EU institutions of how Integrated Urban Regeneration and renewal measures can be deployed with all-round benefits, namely:

- Fighting against Climate Change (buildings' energy efficiency; use of renewable energies; public transportation; general improvement of air and noise conditions etc.).
- Addressing urban sprawl (brownfield development emphasis)
- Creating economic growth and employment through urban 'green' renewal; and
- Developing comprehensive social programmes in parallel with (physical) urban regeneration activities in deprived neighbourhoods.

Spanish Minister of Housing, Beatriz Corredor Sierra, who will chair negotiations, has flagged up the importance of the Toledo meetings for Europe's cities as presenting a follow-up on the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities. In particular she has laid emphasis on how this agreement needs to be properly developed to frame the promotion of sustainability in cities, the innovative exploitation of the various approaches contained within urban policies, and to allow special attention to addressing quality of life, equality, and the fight against poverty and social exclusion through integrated policies. The Minister has also spoken of the requirement to profoundly adapt economic and social development models and the template for urban growth in the light of past mistakes by granting city themes a greater degree of influence.

[Further details](#)

New Biodiversity Protection tools

The opening session of the annual Green Week conference in Brussels saw the unveiling of two new weapons to step up the fight against biodiversity loss: a "biodiversity baseline" to measure progress and failures and a Biodiversity Information System for Europe (BISE). The European Environment Agency (EEA) and European Commission have developed these tools as part of the International Year of Biodiversity.

One of the principal reasons cited for Europe's failure to halt biodiversity loss by a 2010 target date has been the persistence of gaps in available knowledge. The new baseline tool is intended to solve that problem by providing policymakers with a

comprehensive snapshot of the state of play across the Union. Its framework should allow for robust linkages to be made between different forms of validated data on species numbers, habitats status and ecosystem services. Species and habitats information will be organised into main ecosystem types (coastal, wetlands, grasslands, forests etc.), and updated annually.

BISE will provide a centralised online platform designed to facilitate access to existing information about nature and biodiversity, presenting data in a far more comprehensive manner than before. As well as information about EU policy and legislation in the area of nature, it provides a wealth of material about the state of the EU environment and ecosystems and the threats they face, ongoing research in biodiversity, and access the state of biodiversity reporting in Member States in order to encourage greater levels of cooperation.

[BISE](#)

[Baseline](#)

Accessible Cities for the Disabled

A competition to promote accessibility in European cities to persons of reduced mobility is to be launched by the Commission according to a 19 May announcement by the Spanish Minister for Health and Social Policy, Trinidad Jiménez, following the informal meeting of European disability ministers in Zaragoza. Every competing city nominated for what will be known as the 'European Capital of Accessibility' will receive an evaluation rating based on four criteria:

- The condition of buildings and public spaces;
- Transport and infrastructure;
- Information and communications (including new technologies); and
- Services open to the public.

The inaugural award will be announced in December during the European Day of People with Disabilities.

[Further details](#)

'Digital Agenda' outlined

The European Commission unveiled its new 'Digital Agenda for Europe' on 19 May. Reflecting the fact that information and communications technologies (ICTs) are recognised as having been the most significant driver of productive growth in Europe over recent years and that ICT research is consequently the largest single research element of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), this action plan for the digital economy is the first of the seven 'Flagship Initiatives' announced in March under the 'Europe 2020' Strategy to be fleshed out in detail.

The Agenda proposes to remove current obstacles to maximising the long-term potential arising from adequate investment in research and development (R&D) and use of ICT. It outlines seven priority areas: creating a digital Single Market; greater interoperability; boosting internet trust and security; much faster internet access; more investment in research and development; enhancing digital literacy skills and inclusion; and applying ICT to address society's major challenges – notably climate change and ageing demographic. In each case a set of key actions are to be put into place or proposed over the next 2-3 years.

In order to address major barriers to research investment reaching the levels needed to compete globally, the Commission's intention is to concentrate efforts on policies such as leveraging more private investment; pooling resources between Member States and industry; easing access to funding; supporting joint ICT research infrastructures and innovation clusters; and developing a new generation of web-based applications and services in cooperation with stakeholders.

A series of performance targets have also been included in the strategy:

- Basic DSL broadband availability for all EU citizens by 2013; fast broadband (30 Mbps or more) for all and ultra-fast (above 100Mbps) for 50% of households by 2020;
- Digital inclusion measures to increase regular internet use among the general population (75%) and among disadvantaged people (60%);
- 50% of citizens using eGovernment public services by 2015;

- A doubling of annual public investment in ICT R&D across Member States to €11 billion by 2020;
- At least 20% overall reduction in energy use on lighting by 2020.

In addition, the Member States are being urged to engage in large-scale pilot projects to test and develop innovative and interoperable solutions in areas of public interest.

[Further details](#)

No new biowaste law from Brussels

Biodegradable waste from gardens and foodstuffs (household and processing) amounts to an annual 88 million tonnes in Europe, equivalent to approximately 40% of all municipal solid waste generated. This entails major environmental impacts including dangerous methane release from landfill dumps.

On 18 May the European Commission presented a policy paper outlining actions to improve the management of bio-waste and to tap into its significant environmental and economic benefits as a source of energy and recycled materials. Spin-offs aside from the reduction in carbon emissions are expected to be generated in terms of soil quality, biodiversity protection, and the production of compost and bio-gas.

While the Landfill Directive imposed targets to channel most bio-waste away from landfill by 2016, alternative treatment options have not been specified in EU legislation. Consequently national systems vary widely across Europe and lean towards either incineration or high-recovery methods such as anaerobic digestion. Some countries in the latter group had been pressing for a specific 'Biowaste Directive' but the report instead outlines recommendations to achieve the objectives while maintaining Member States' discretion to choose the waste management options best suited to their individual environmental and economic circumstances.

Its analysis reveals that the body of EU waste legislation, though lacking in terms of its implementation efforts to date, already provides a sufficient basis to enable Member States to take the necessary action without the further imposition of

additional and separate legislation. In this vein, the issues the Commission hopes to see more rigorously enforced nationally along with the targets on diverting bio-waste away from landfill include proper application of the waste hierarchy and other provisions of the Waste Framework Directive to introduce separate collection systems as a matter of priority. The report identifies the operation of particularly efficient separating systems in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and certain Italian and Spanish regions.

In tandem with national actions the Commission is also emphasising the need for supporting initiatives at EU level – such as developing standards for compost – in order to accelerate progress and ensure a level playing field across Europe. This will involve specific guidance and indicators for bio-waste prevention with possible future binding targets, as well as compost standards and guidelines on the application of life cycle thinking and assessment in the waste sector.

['Communication on future steps in bio-waste management in the European Union'](#)

European Network for Rural Development

The newly revamped website of the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) aims to provide the necessary tools to ensure direct up-to-date access to effective information sharing and communication on EU rural development issues. Notable new features include:

- Clickable maps allowing easier access to country-based information and resources;
- A Fast-access gateway to all National Rural Networks;
- An enlarged thematic section on key topics; and
- A Local Action Groups (LAG) database and Partner Search tool (available shortly).

The website will be gradually expanded to include new features and regularly updated with new information.

[Further details](#)

Fisheries Policy reform

On 2-3 May a conference on the future reform of the EU Common Fisheries Policy took place in La Coruna, Spain. The event provided the Commission and the current Spanish Presidency with an opportunity to get an insight into the general positions of stakeholder groups including industry, NGOs and national administrations. At an Informal Council meeting in Vigo over the following days, Maritime Affairs Commissioner Maria Damanaki presented this overview to Fisheries Ministers and sought clarification on each government's stance on each of the topics addressed so far.

[Summary of the debate](#)

The case for green taxes/incentives

The European Commission, together with the UN Environmental Programme, has launched a major new report highlighting the need for radical changes in the way economies use scarce resources. 'Environmental Impacts of Consumption and Production: Priority Products and Materials' evidences the growing link between economic activity and environmental degradation – mainly in relation to increased energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. To counter this worrying trend, the report recommends that taxes and other incentives should be used to encourage more eco-friendly practices, particularly in agriculture.

The report is the latest in a series from the International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management and provides science-based ranking of the environmental and resource impacts of products, materials and economic and lifestyle activities. Using life-cycle analyses, it catalogues the materials and energy required for production, consumption and disposal, and identifies the processes, products and materials most responsible for environmental harm around the globe.

[Environmental Impacts of Consumption and Production: Priority Products and Materials'](#)

Anti-discrimination directive stalls

The proposed directive to combat discrimination on the grounds of religion, disability, age or sexual orientation failed to progress at May Council meeting of Social Affairs Ministers. Despite backing in principle from most Member States, a number instanced concerns over the draft legislation's possible erosion of national competences.

The directive's intended extension of protection against discrimination would incorporate social protection (including healthcare), education and access to goods and services, including housing. However, work remains on clarifying matters such as the applicability of disability accessibility provisions to individual cases.

Common ground also remains elusive for now on various concepts, including striking a balance between protection against discrimination and individual rights in the private sphere (including freedom of speech and religion). A lack of coherence with existing legislation is also being cited as a stumbling block. The proposed directive has been intended to complement three existing directives: one on general discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, another on discrimination specifically within the labour market and the third on equal treatment between men and women.

PUBLICATIONS

Regional Innovation Governance

Support for the development and implementation of 'bottom-up' Regional Innovation Strategies involving relevant actors as partners has been an option offered by the European Commission as part of the Structural Funds programmes over the last 15 years. At the end of May, DG REGIO produced a paper on this issue. It examines the experiences of 14 European regions – including Denmark, Western Sweden, East England and Southern & Eastern Scotland ('Lowlands & Uplands') -

who have chosen to take advantage of this opportunity during the current programming period in order to better understand the various approaches to regional governance of innovation employed on the ground by different programme Managing Authorities, regional stakeholders and academics.

The case studies demonstrate complementarities between the Structural Funds support and national regional innovation policies and funding arrangements, while also showing that further room remains to improve the effectiveness of operations. This report is one in a series on regional research and indicators.

[Report](#)

Best practice in local social inclusion

ELISAN, the European Local Inclusion and Social Action Network, has recently launched a call in order to collect local and regional best practices on social inclusion to be included in an online database. The database will be organised by themes and will be available on the ELISAN website.

[Further details](#)

Urban-Rural Land-use linkages

The seventh newsletter of the PLUREL project to develop strategies and sustainability assessment tools for peri-urban land use linkages was published in May. This issue's contents include articles on planning instruments to control urban growth as well as on new impact analysis tools for sustainable urbanisation. The consortium involved as partners includes the School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy at the University College Dublin.

[Newsletter](#)

EVENTS

“Experience economy” for SMEs **22 June, Brussels**

‘Re-invent and re-vitalize!’ is a European SME Week seminar organised by the Central Denmark EU Office, in cooperation with the European Policy Centre (EPC). It will look at experience-based business development in European SMEs as a means of delivering fresh ideas and approaches with the potential for maintaining competitiveness with proven products/services and achieving practical levels of innovation. This adding of value is based on creating associations between products and unique experiences and typically arises from the use of branding or other linkages in marketing; the sale of add-ons; or incorporating active consumer involvement into the process. The event will present Danish SME experiences and results from engagement with such approaches and link them to other innovative cases from other European regions in a bid to put the “experience economy” on the European agenda.

[Further details](#)

Spatial Data Infrastructure **23-25 June, Krakow**

The INSPIRE Conference 2010 - "INSPIRE as a Framework for Cooperation" – is open to all individuals interested in or working in the field of spatial data infrastructures (SDI) development and implementation. It will address issues of common policy, research, new and evolving technologies and SDI implementation. Particular emphasis will be placed on accounts of how the perceived benefits for policy, public administration, citizens and the private sector compare with realities on the ground to date.

[Further details](#)

Car-free Cities **28 June-1 July, York**

The Ninth World Carfree Network conference will be held under the theme “How Do We Get There?” in a bid to combine a positive vision of the future with a practical focus on bringing carfree communities to life. The network promotes practical alternatives to car dependence through strategy development, collaboration and exchange in a bid to transform towns and cities into human-scaled environments rich in public space and community life through awareness-raising campaigns, transport policies and urban planning.

[Further details](#)

Biogas regions **30 June, Brussels**

The biogas sector is growing rapidly across Europe and could contribute strongly towards meeting the EU’s various 2020 energy targets and as part of the European Biomass action plan. Fedarene (European Federation of Regional Energy and Environment Agencies) and the Bio-gas Regions project (Intelligent Energy Europe programme) are jointly holding a seminar promoting the potential of this resource.

The topics to be addressed include the overall potential of biogas production; the EU regulatory framework; the positive implications for the agricultural sector and agri-food industry; and how the concrete implementation of biogas strategies at regional level can be managed. In this regard the territorial approach facilitating partnerships between the different sectors (local authorities, farmers and food processing industries) and the elaboration of a road map in each region to overcome obstacles and create a biogas friendly environment will be stressed.

[Further details](#)

Green Technologies projects **1 July, Caen**

MIRIADE, the Regional Agency for Innovation & Business Development in Normandy, and the Entreprise Europe Network are organising a series of workshops to act as a starting point in the development of transnational projects on “Green Technologies: Energy and Environment” – particularly opportunities for those with ambitions relating to Agro-Resources, Eco-materials and Renewable Energies. The focus will be placed upon the relevant aspects of the Seventh Framework Programme for Research & Development (FP7) and on the Competitiveness & Innovation Programme (CIP).

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