

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: Regional research-driven potential (sustainable transport)

On 20 July, as part of a set of [51 separate Seventh Framework Research & Development calls for proposals](#), the 2011 Regions of Knowledge (RoK) call was published.

The objective of RoK is to strengthen research potential by networking and integrating regional research actors and institutions into corresponding their activities with the realities of the regional economy and its needs. In particular it will support analysis and implementation of actions by regional research-driven clusters and networks built on the 'triple helix' approach which brings together sets of universities/research centres, companies

and regional/local authorities with a role in economic development and/or research and innovation policy. Transnational cooperation between different regions is a central requirement with efforts to mentor less developed regions being especially welcomed.

Under this call, proposals should relate specifically to boosting the competitiveness of the transport-related economy by supporting the innovative capacity of industries and businesses, through the development of green intermodal regional transport systems, urban mobility and safety and security.

A budget of €18.66 million has been set aside.

The key theme for next year's RoK call has also been outlined as sustainable energy. Potential bids for this will have an additional 12 months to work on their applications.

Deadline: 9 December

[Further details](#)

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Call: Low carbon energy clusters

EUROGIA+, the EUREKA Cluster for strategically significant R&D public-private partnerships in Low Carbon Energy Technologies is inviting high-tech industry and SMEs as well as research institutes and academia to participate in its 5th call for project proposals.

Deadline: 2 September

[Further details](#)

[All recent calls](#)

Risk Sharing Finance Facility

The Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) have recently launched a short film to raise awareness on the Risk Sharing Finance Facility (RSFF), an innovative scheme to improve access to debt financing for private companies or public institutions promoting activities in the field of research, development and innovation. By balancing risk between the two institutions the RSFF extends the ability of the EIB to provide loans or guarantees for investment with a higher risk and reward profile.

The RSFF draws half its capital from the EIB and the other half from the 7th Framework Programme. It has provided loans and guarantees worth €6 billion since 2007 to firms of all sizes, public-private partnerships and joint ventures, research institutes, universities and science and technology parks.

[Further details](#)

Call: Agri product promotion

The European Commission adopted programmes in 14 Member States including Ireland on 1 July, to provide information on and to promote agricultural products. €1.32million is to be provided as 50% contribution over three years, for the promotion of fresh Irish fruit and vegetable on the UK market. The programme is financed under EU Regulation 3/2008 on information provision and promotion measures.

Financed measures can consist of promotional actions including participation at events and fairs, in particular highlighting the advantages of EU products, especially in terms of quality, hygiene, food safety, nutrition, labelling, animal welfare or environment-friendliness of their production. Measures can also cover information campaigns on the EU system of protected designations of origin

(PDO), protected geographical indications (PGI) and traditional speciality guaranteed (TSG) EU quality and labelling systems and organic farming.

Each year, by 30 November, interested professional organisations may submit their proposals to Bord Bia.

Deadline: 30 November
[Further details](#)

Progress Microfinance Facility guarantees

On 24 July the EU mandated the European Investment Fund (EIF) to implement a guarantee action under the European Progress Microfinance Facility for employment and social inclusion which has been designed to assist the newly unemployed with starting new businesses.

The Guarantee Action element aims to increase access to, and availability of, microfinance for eligible final beneficiaries. It is open to public and private bodies established at national, regional or local levels which can act as intermediaries in providing micro-credits, or guarantees supporting micro-credits to persons and micro-enterprises. The Facility has a €100 million budget to end 2013 of which €25 million is earmarked for the Guarantee Action. Applications from the intermediaries will be examined and determined by the EIF with the aim of allowing the scheme to be rolled out in each Member State.

[Further details](#)

New approvals under Life+

The project approvals for the 2009 Life+ programme calls for proposals were announced by DG Environment on 23 July. Among the 210 approved projects are two Irish initiatives on Nature & Biodiversity project.

The Blackwater Samok project aims to bring about a sustained enhancement of the Upper (Munster) Blackwater Special Area of Conservation (SAC) by targeting the species of Freshwater pearl mussel, Atlantic salmon, European otter and kingfisher. This will involve carrying out actions aimed at restoring the quality of

the river bed and riparian zone. The IRD Duhallow community-based Integrated Rural Development company has been provided with EU funding of €935,000 to work on this issue until 2014.

Meanwhile Coillte is to benefit from €1.29 million over the next 5 years to help restore wetland, peat-forming conditions on raised bogs by continuing the process of removing plantation forests. This builds upon the work carried out under a previous LIFE-funded project which was completed in December 2008.

[Further details](#)

2009 funding beneficiaries disclosed

The European Commission has announced the inclusion of 2009 data into the Financial Transparency System (FTS). This on-line database containing more than 114,000 entries going back to 2007, provides information on expenditure managed directly by the Commission and its executive agencies. This equates to 20% of the entire EU Budget.

Beneficiaries who received EU funding in policy areas like research, education and culture, energy and transport or external aid have now been publically disclosed. Commission procurement contracts for its day-to-day administration are also included.

[FTS](#)

Project Focus: Donegal/Fermanagh shared border village

Work is getting underway on an €8.3m EU project involving Donegal County Council in conjunction with its partners in Fermanagh District Council and local development actors in twin border villages.

The multi-faceted 'Termon' community and recreation regeneration project – funded by the PEACE III programme - is designed to enhance public spaces in Pettigo and Tullyhommon and to encourage increased cross-border interaction and greater levels of cross-community engagement.

In terms of creating shared social resources, the transforming initiative will develop multi-purpose facilities for culture, sports, education, recreation and youth activities at key sites within each village. An innovative design approach will also include a new cross-border riverside walkway park and footbridge. Further elements relate to general improvements to the urban environment of the village centres

According to Francie Coyle, Director of Planning & Economic Development, Donegal County Council, "The extensive redevelopment and enhancement of the physical environment and community infrastructure as proposed by this project will regenerate and transform the twin villages and promote a vibrant, active and integrated community".

The project builds on the work of the Association for the Development of Pettigo and Tullyhommon (ADoPT) whose 'Community in Action Plan' promotes peace through activities targeted at building the capacity of local young people, senior citizens, marginalized and minority groups.

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Project Focus: Controlling invasive water species

CAISIE ("Control of Aquatic Invasive Species and the Restoration of Natural Communities in Ireland") is a Life+ project focussing on restoring the waters of Lough Corrib and the Grand Canal and Barrow Navigation to their previous states of domestic biodiversity by 2013.

Particular high impact non-native species of fish, crabs, mussels and plants which have found their way into Irish waters by accident or design in recent years are increasingly threatening our rivers and lakes as seen with the effect of the Curly leaved waterweed on Lough Corrib's Atlantic salmon and brown trout.

Under the project, which also benefits from support from the support of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, control and habitat restoration solutions are to be achieved by employing available international best practice and, where appropriate, carrying

out innovative research to develop new methods.

A nationwide education and awareness campaign on the consequences of alien species will also be carried out with an emphasis on the impact not only on the natural environment but also on associated commercial activity. Currently there is no specific law to ban the importation, sale or distribution of many of these species in Ireland although the National Parks and Wildlife Service proposes to introduce appropriate legislation.

CAISIE's lead partners are Inland Fisheries Ireland who provide support to a research team based in Moycullen. A Project Advisory Group comprising experts from various state, semi-state and academic institutions plus Galway County Council also provide guidance.

www.caisie.ie

Local Sports Participation

The Flemish Institute for Sports Administration and Recreation Management (ISB) – an umbrella organisation for sporting bodies, community service providers and facilities trustees - will organise a European Congress on Local Sports Participation on 13-14 October in Leuven. They are looking to actively involve other local and regional organisations in other EU member states with a role in the not-for-profit management of recreation – particularly those which can offer examples of good practices on and financial insights into local sports participation.

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NEWS & POLICY

Campaign to maintain Structural Funding for all

With the post-2014 shape of the EU Budget still very much a work in progress, and with the Commission's Fifth Cohesion Report expected in November ahead of a vital Council of Ministers meeting in Liege, there are fears that the Structural Funds, which

are providing a guaranteed €2 million per week in 'Objective 2' EU investment support to Ireland from 2007-2013, could be remodeled into a purely compensatory support package restricted to only the very poorest parts of Europe.

As part of their lobbying campaign to prevent this coming to pass, on 7 October, key political representatives from an estimated 100 European regions in which these 'Competitiveness & Employment' Programmes operate - including Ireland's Border, Midland & Western and Southern & Eastern Regions - will gather in Brussels to sign a joint declaration. This demonstration of intention to secure continued European support for tailored, bottom-up, place-based interventions to help all regions to overcome structural weaknesses and properly realise their development potential will then be presented to the President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso and Commissioner for Regional Policy Johannes Hahn.

Meanwhile, on 6 July the European Parliament agreed a resolution asking the Commission to present a special study on the effects of the financial crisis on EU regions, particularly Objective 2 regions. The study could possibly lend weight to the continuation of Structural Funds in their current form.

[EP Resolution](#)

Belgian Presidency backs Cohesion Policy

In a 13 July address to the European Parliament on behalf of the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council, Rudy Demotte, the Walloon Minister-President stressed his country's support for the "essential role" of cohesion policy in the continuation of balanced European development.

The current Presidency is highly supportive of the capacity for action through the Structural Funds being maintained and reinforced throughout the EU – particularly as a long-term leverage mechanism to deliver sustainable growth in response to economic development and employment difficulties. Demotte also stressed the need to encourage greater involvement of local and regional authorities and admitted that it would be in the EU's interest to

consider the use of criteria other than GDP for a more accurate evaluation of the economic and social situation of regions.

[Further details](#)

Intelligent Transport Systems Directive

On 6 July the European Parliament voted in favour of a new Directive on Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS). The legislation which is intended to establish a framework to accelerate and coordinate the deployment and use of innovative technologies for road transport, including its interfaces with other transport modes, will support the ITS Action Plan in contributing to a cleaner, safer and more efficient transport system.

The first priorities will be traffic and travel information, the eCall emergency system and intelligent truck parking. The Commission will have seven years to adopt specifications based on functional, technical, organisational or services provisions to address the compatibility, interoperability and continuity of ITS solutions across Europe.

In 2011, the Commission will adopt a work programme and Member States will issue a first report on their national activities.

<http://ec.europa.eu/transport/its/>

Institutions seek to shape CAP reform

The European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for a greener, more equitable and more competitive post-2013 Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) on 8 July.

While stressing that the amounts allocated to the policy as a whole should be maintained at current levels, MEPs have come out in favour of reform measures being guided by the fairer distribution of payments using more objective criteria with less emphasis on acreage alone and more on other factors including regional circumstances.

The resolution also calls for an EU-funded top-up payment to reward high standards

in areas, such as food safety and reduced greenhouse gas emissions associated with production.

The adopted text further calls for the continuation of the two-pillar structure of CAP, highlighting that rural development must remain a central aim of the future policy in order to play a role in ensuring the long-term survival of competitive and environmentally-sound farming in Europe.

[EP Resolution](#)

Meanwhile, at a major conference on the same issue on 20 July, Committee of the Regions (CoR) President Mercedes Bresso set out the opinion that CAP reform - as with all EU policies - should be based on a thorough assessment of its impact on local communities. This would not be restricted to rural development but would also include agricultural production measures. Bresso also advocated a more joined-up treatment of EU agricultural policies.

The CoR recently presented a report on the future of CAP which emphasised equal treatment of the different types of production and regions by offering a more flexible range of support mechanisms which would be conditional upon social and environmental factors.

[Further details](#)

[CoR own-initiative opinion on the future of the CAP](#)

Internationalising SMEs

A new EU study has shown that small firms who manage to trade internationally typically create more jobs and are more innovative. Despite this, only one in four SMEs across the EU has exported in the last three years. This has led the Commission to promote “internationalisation” in its forthcoming European Innovation Plan.

EU officials have said that the strategy – due to be unveiled in the autumn – will look at ways to help SMEs access fast-growing export markets, as they are often unaware of the public support mechanisms available. The Commission also plans to open a series of offices across the world in to help SMEs expand into key new markets.

[‘Internationalisation of European SMEs’ report](#)

Renewables contribution to energy consumption

New Eurostat figures reveal that energy from combined renewable sources – solar/photovoltaic, hydro/tidal, wind, geothermal and biomass – contributed 10.3% of gross final energy consumption across the EU in 2008 – up from 9.7% the previous year.

The Member States with the highest share of renewables input were Sweden (44%), Finland (30.5%), Latvia (29.9%), Austria (28.5%) and Portugal (23.2%). By contrast Ireland attained 3.8%, showing steady year-on-year improvement since 2006 but now ahead of only five other countries (including UK, Belgium and Netherlands) which began from a similarly low base. This leaves much to do in order to reach the agreed government target of 16% renewables in consumption by 2020.

[Further details](#)

WESTBIC chief to head EU Business Support network

EBN, the network of European Business & Innovation Centres (BICs) has elected Joe Greaney, Director of WESTBIC, as its President. The biggest Business Support network in the EU boasts over 150 quality assured *Applied Innovation Partners* – 5 in Ireland – as full member organisations and is officially recognised and backed by the European Commission.

BICs operate on a regional basis, enabling business access to valuable research & technological development (RTD) and to collaborative network opportunities as well as facilitating the subsequent transfer of creative knowledge into commercial activity, new start-ups and ultimately, jobs. Their close relationship with SMEs is coupled with a strong alignment with enterprise and economic development policies at all levels.

WESTBIC, which provides services promoting innovation and entrepreneurship to enterprises across the

West and Midlands Regions as well as Donegal, is joined in Ireland by other BICs covering the South-East and the hinterlands of Dublin, Cork and Limerick. Looking forward to the challenge of his new role, Greaney said “I believe we are well positioned to make an even bigger impact in our shared Innovation agenda as the corner stone in building competitive economies”.

[Further details](#)

City Region Governance

The Joining Forces project on city-region governance has now concluded having brought together eight partner cities to explore effective strategy-development and governance arrangements at the city-region level. This URBACT II initiative examined how successful cooperation between cities and their surrounding areas can be achieved while helping to effectively address key competitiveness, equality and sustainability challenges. It dealt with issues including appropriate scales of governance and policy-making, resource pooling, and support at national, regional and EU level.

After two years of exchange and learning activities, Joining Forces has proposed recommendations applicable at various levels in response to each partner city’s situation. These are based on consideration of aspects of metropolitan governance including strategic and spatial planning; mobility management and transport; environmental issues (air and noise pollution, waste disposal, water supply); knowledge economy (creativity, research & education); private sector involvement; social inclusion, participation and empowerment; and attractiveness & competitiveness. In response, partner cities have set up Local Support Groups to work on plans ensuring the process has an impact on local practices and policies.

[Final Report – Conclusions & Recommendations](#)

[Compendium of information on Local Support Groups and Local Action Plans](#)

National opt-outs from GMO legislation?

Commission proposals published on 13 July would adapt current legislation (Directive 2001/18/EC) to give Member States the freedom to restrict or prohibit cultivation of EU-authorized genetically modified crops in their territory. The series of measures are being suggested as a way of breaking the deadlock on making the EU authorisation system more flexible.

The proposals which will go before the European Parliament and the Council would extend the reasoning behind the right to ban GMO crops beyond health or environmental concerns and would allow Member States to create 'GMO-free' areas. They should also clarify arrangements for co-existence between natural and GM crops.

[Further details](#)

Intangible assets and regional economic growth

A 7th Framework Research Programme 'Socio-economic Sciences and the Humanities' initiative on the impact of "intangible assets" (IA) on regional economic growth held its final conference in Brussels on 6 July to disseminate its findings as policy recommendations towards the future design and implementation of regional innovation strategies.

The IAREG project has analysed the difficult-to-appreciate and thus undervalued role of IA such as human capital, researcher mobility, and entrepreneurship networks in the generation of innovation, competitiveness and economic growth at regional level. Its participants – research institutes, firms, policy-makers and other stakeholders in 9 countries – have collectively developed a series of new indicators in order to present new evidence on the processes through which IA influence economic development and ways in which this may be reliably monitored.

It analysed how IA and their interaction define the environment affecting firms' location decisions and measured the role of regional externalities in the generation of

IA and in determining local economic performances.

<http://www.iareg.org>

Future of pensions consultation

On 7 July the Commission launched an EU-wide public debate on how to ensure pensions are sustainable and safe and how the EU can contribute to supporting national efforts. The online consultation includes a series of questions, inviting interested parties to submit views and ideas on confronting the pension challenge.

The Green Paper aims to address the issues of ensuring pension systems are sustainable in the long term, achieving the right balance between work and retirement and making pensions more transparent. It aims to review the pension framework in an integrated way from both an economic and social point of view.

Deadline: 15 November

[Further details](#)

European Enterprise Awards 2011

The Commission has recently launched the 2011 European Enterprise Awards, which aim to recognise national, regional, local or public-private partnerships who have "promoted the entrepreneurial spirit" and "supported the internationalisation of business" in Europe.

Eligible entities can be national organisations, local or regional authorities, community groups, public-private partnerships, educational programmes or business organisations. Entrants must show how they have played a key role in fostering business and boosting the economy during 2009-2010.

[Further details](#)

CoR gains extra areas of influence

On foot of the Lisbon Treaty granting it enhanced powers as a consultative body with the right to contribute the voice of

local level practitioners to EU policy-making across a widened range of fields, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) has been undertaking efforts to gain fuller recognition of its influence.

In response, the Commission has recently announced its intention to increase the CoR's involvement in the EU's legislative process beyond even that foreseen as obligatory by the treaty. This will now entail the local and regional perspective being formally sought as input to an additional 86 legislative initiatives scheduled for progress over the remainder of this year. As well as employment, enterprise, internal market and environment, the proposals include a series of issues such as data protection, children's rights, and the fight against racism.

Recent negotiations between the Commissioner for Interinstitutional Relations Maroš Šefčovič, and CoR President Mercedes Bresso have also opened the door to a formalised revision of the working arrangements between these two bodies. Crucially, this includes a possible extension of the scope of impact assessments carried out by the Commission ahead of legislative proposals in order to take account of territorial cohesion. This is seen as one of the CoR's key battle lines.

[Further details](#)

Sustainable Cities tender

On 22 July the European Commission launched a call for tenders to carry out the testing phase of the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC). As mentioned in last month's *Bulletin* the RFSC is a policy development and performance monitoring tool to practically assist the local level development and implementation of integrated urban planning approaches. The Commission intends to contract technical assistance to organise the services and procedures in this phase among 50-70 cities. Interested parties may submit their proposals to the Commission until 15 September.

[Further details](#)

EVENTS

Urban demographic change Budapest, 13-14 September

The 2010 annual conference of the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) will look at the huge impact of demographic change on the social, economic and environmental fabric of our cities. Policy makers, researchers and practitioners at EU, national and local level will present and debate the main challenges and solutions by reference to different aspects including an aging population, migration, shrinking cities, urban sprawl and their effect on issues such as housing, employment, public services and quality of life in cities.

[Further details](#)

CIVITAS (sustainable urban transport) Malmo, 27-29 September

The 2010 Annual CIVITAS Forum Conference is an opportunity for the exchange of dialogue and views between city and European politicians on the one hand, and experts in the field of urban mobility on the other.

The CIVITAS Forum Network currently includes 168 cities from 28 European countries, that have formally committed to clean and sustainable urban transport.

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European Cluster Conference 2010 Brussels, 29 September – 1 October

The Belgian Presidency of the European Council and DG Enterprise & Industry are co-organising a conference to address the role of world-class clusters in renewing European industry in light of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The event will gather key policy-makers at various levels and high-level speakers from academia and industry to discuss how better policies can be

formulated to make full use of the economic potential of excellent clusters.

[Further details](#)

Regions & Sustainable Development Brussels, 4-5 October

The region of Flanders will hold two events on 'Regions and Sustainable Development linked with the Open Days 2010 week of cities and regions in Brussels.

On 4 October a 'Getting cities involved – pathways to sustainable development' workshop is being organised to allow for an exchange of good practices and experiences among participating regions on their policies in this field. Regional representatives are invited to present and discuss experiences (good or bad). The workshop will attempt to lay the foundations for a 'knowledge network for sustainable development policies' that will facilitate cross-regional learning and exchange in the future.

Discussions will also provide input into the following day's workshop on measuring and fostering sustainable development and quality of life through alternative indicators to GDP within the context of EU policy objectives including the broad Europe 2020 strategy. This event is part of a campaign by the Flemish authorities for regional and city impacts to be more carefully taken into account in EU policy making.

[Further details](#)

Senior Enterprise project launch Newtownmounckenny, 5-6 October

The Senior Enterprise project on tapping into the underused entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and resources offered by those aged 50+ with a view to encouraging new business start-ups and investment opportunities will be officially launched at a dedicated conference. The project is supported by Interreg IVB North-West Europe and led by the Mid-East Regional Authority.

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European Transport Conference Glasgow, 11-13 October

This multi-disciplinary event for transport and land-use planners, policy makers and researchers, traffic engineers and infrastructure providers seeks to build a forum for exchange of knowledge, experiences, lessons, ideas, and information, contributing to the creation of efficient strategies for urban sustainability. The Conference programme covers supra-national issues, national and local policy, and the implementation of projects at a local level.

www.aetransport.org

Local renewables & mobility Freiburg, 14-15 October

Local Renewables is a series of events aimed to inform and mobilise local governments and their partners about the potential of generating and using renewable energy at the local level, and how to best set-up and implement related policies. The 2010 conference will look into the role of e-mobility and biofuels in the future of urban mobility. Panels will discuss the issues of energy and fuel supply, urban infrastructure needs and whether new fuels are a contribution or a potential obstacle to a holistic concept for sustainable urban mobility.

[Further details](#)



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