

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: Sustainable Urban Transport

The European Commission unveiled the new CIVITAS Plus II call for proposals on 14 September. Under the initiative, part of the Seventh Framework Programme, and drawing upon the Commission's Action

Plan on Urban Mobility, cities can apply for funding to support them in designing, procuring, deploying, managing and evaluating ambitious new policies and technologies for more sustainable urban passenger and freight transport.

Included amongst the expected impacts are the:

- promotion of integrated approaches to urban transport planning and financing;
- development, demonstration and validation of new policy approaches and innovative transport technologies and systems for improving urban mobility whilst reducing accidents, congestion, energy consumption, air and noise pollution, etc.
- networking of cities to promote dialogue, shared learning and pooling of resources (e.g. for procurement); and
- development of methods of assessing the cost-effectiveness and long-term viability of integrated mobility measures.

An indicative budget of €18 million is available.

Deadline: 12 April 2011.
[Further details](#)

Call: ICT research

One of the biggest ever EU calls for proposals on information and communications technology (ICT) was announced on 28 September. €780 million is being made available from the FP7 programme to boost research on topics including ICT for energy efficiency in buildings, in transport and logistics (€135 million – following upon €220 million made available in July for public private partnerships on ICT breakthroughs in smart cars, green buildings and sustainable factories); health and well-being in an

ageing society (€200 million); the future internet; robotics; smart and embedded systems; and photonics. Close to €1.2 billion has been budgeted for a call along similar lines in 2011.

Deadline: 18 January 2011
[FP7-ICT-2011-7 Call](#)

Call: Audiovisual festivals

In order to facilitate and encourage the promotion and movement of European audiovisual and cinema works, a call for proposals providing support for the implementation of audiovisual festivals was launched on 3 September. Events which commit to screening a minimum of 70% European films from at least 10 States participating in the MEDIA Programme and taking place between 1 May 2011 and 30 April 2012 are eligible. Factors to be assessed in applications include the European dimension, cultural and geographic diversity and quality and innovative nature of the programming as well as audience impact. Maximum grants of €75,000 are available to finance up to 50% of eligible costs incurred.

Deadlines: 2 November (for events starting between 1 May and 31 October 2011) and 30 April 2011 (for events starting between 1 November 2011 and 30 April 2012).

[Further details](#)

Call: Sustainable maritime activities research

The European Commission has unveiled a €45 million investment budget for research projects on maritime activities. The "Ocean of Tomorrow 2011" call for proposals is designed to encourage innovative, forward-looking and sustainable approaches to maritime activities. Large-scale multidisciplinary research projects involving partners from different EU and

partner countries to address challenges in ocean management may apply.

The call is split into four themes:

- Food, Agriculture & Fisheries, and Biotechnology (€14 million)
- Energy (€5m)
- Environment (including climate change) (€16 m)
- Transport (€10 m)

Deadline: 18 January

[Further details](#)

New €115 million fund for local energy efficiency

On 2 September, MEPs voted to redirect approximately €115 million set to remain unspent under the €4 billion 2010 allocation to energy by the European Economic Recovery Plan (EERP) towards green investment projects to be delivered at local and regional level. The Commission proposal was unanimously approved by the European Parliament's Industry, Research and Energy committee and will go before the Plenary session in October.

MEPs had been critical of the recovery plan's emphasis on long-term carbon capture and storage ahead of more immediately deliverable investments in the field of energy efficiency and renewable energies. This emphasis had in fact represented a major row-back on the original proposal to provide €500 million for local "smart cities" energy actions which were ultimately deemed to lack European added value.

The money will be used to create a dedicated Sustainable Energy Financing Initiative' to support local and regional projects which will need to be able to contribute significantly and in a measurable way towards economic recovery, boosting energy security and cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Innovative green projects relating to combined heat and power and district heating networks; intelligent public lighting systems; urban public transport and electric vehicles; linking decentralised renewable production into grids; electricity storage; and smart energy-use metering are among the topics likely to be eligible for support.

[Further details](#)

Regions march on Brussels to maintain Structural Funding for Ireland

With Ireland receiving the equivalent of €2 million per week in EU Structural Funding support throughout the 2007-2013 period, a decision on the future shape of EU Regional Policy from 2014 onwards will be of major national significance. There are concerns that the next generation of funds could be restricted to only the very poorest parts of the EU - leaving Ireland out in the cold. This prospect has encouraged regions right across the EU to campaign collectively in order to demonstrate why such a change would be misguided.

While the bulk of Structural Funds spending is channelled towards providing a means for regions lagging behind to catch up, some resources are used to support tailored, place-based interventions designed to help all regions, regardless of their income levels, to properly realise their own development potential. This arrangement reflects EU Regional Policy's integral contribution to wider European goals of creating the conditions for competitive regional economies in which employment can flourish – in line with the new 'Europe 2020' Strategy for smart, sustainable and socially inclusive growth.

In Ireland this takes the form of a national employment and human resources development programme as well as two Regional Programmes covering the Border, Midland & Western (BMW) and Southern & Eastern (S&E) Regions. The value of EU support delivered to Ireland through these programmes is significantly in excess of the national take from any other EU source, with the exception of the Common Agriculture Policy.

As a means of developing a critical mass to lobby against a radical remodelling of the funds, the Irish regions, operating through this office, have helped create an alliance of 141 similarly affected regions representing 297 million Europeans. On 7 October, during the Open Days week of regions and cities, political representatives from across Europe will gather in Brussels to formally sign a joint declaration of intent to secure significant continued European support for all regions. After a symbolic march to the Commission Headquarters, the official dossier will be presented to European Commission President José

Manuel Barroso, Regional Policy Commissioner Johannes Hahn, as well as the Presidents of the European Parliament and EU Committee of the Regions. Cllr. Joe Flanagan (Westmeath County Council) and Cllr. John Byrne (Wicklow County Council) will sign in their capacities as Cathaoirigh of the BMW and S&E Regional Assemblies respectively.

Further details from this office

Commissioners call for fund streamlining

Four EU Commissioners have written to European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso, calling for a streamlining of the administration of major EU funds from 2014 onwards. The letter, signed by Commissioners Johannes Hahn (Regional Policy), László Andor (Employment and Social Affairs), Dacian Cioloş (Agriculture and Rural Development) and Maria Damanaki (Fisheries) recommend bringing the funds associated with their portfolios - the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Cohesion Fund, European Social Fund (ESF), European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and European Fisheries Fund (EFF) – together under a common strategic framework.

The arguments in favour of this approach are that it would theoretically lead to more consistent rules and procedures for project implementation, improve efficiencies, and promote much greater overall coherence between the different elements of EU-funded activity for delivery at national, regional and local level within Member States.

This would most probably create the conditions for better priority setting and territorial evaluation of the impacts of planned projects for integrated local and regional development. The European Parliament has previously indicated support for such a change, citing a need for greater synergies to be achieved between the various policies underpinning the funding instruments.

Commission boosts cities' prospects of funding role

The campaign to grant cities and their functional areas a key role in the design and delivery of the next generation of Cohesion Policy continues to gain strength. A 14 September EUROCITIES conference saw Regional Commissioner Johannes Hahn speak of an ambition to better deploy the grassroots assets and potential of cities and to prioritise the influence of the EU urban agenda in order to "close the policy gap by involving city administrators who best know the needs of the people".

If realised, these ambitions would entail a clearer earmarking of a portion of the next generation of Structural Funds for use within cities across the EU and a greater emphasis on devising programmes to deal with the challenges of specific urban areas. It is estimated that currently just 10% of the funds are channelled towards urban issues.

Another key area of EU policy as reflected by its prominence within the 'Europe 2020' Strategy, is achieving growth through sustainability by integrating economic, social and environmental actions. This was also singled out by the Commissioner as a "smart investment" approach which can best be delivered by city authorities in order to achieve informed and long-term positive impacts. The EU Belgian Presidency and the influential European Parliament Urban Intergroup have also come out in favour of granting cities a greater role in determining future Cohesion Policy.

[Hahn comments](#)

Solidarity Fund approves flood relief

The EU Solidarity Fund has allocated €13.02 million in response to Ireland's application for aid in respect of the extensive November 2009 flood damage across swathes of the country. The fund allows the state to recoup a portion of the public expenditure incurred in relation to emergency operations to allow for a rapid return to normal living conditions. In this case this included damage to roads, infrastructure, the provision of temporary accommodation and the costs incurred by the rescue services but did not support full

reconstruction nor prevention works. The total costs to Government Departments and local authorities (as opposed to individuals) of the flooding are estimated at €276.9 million. The application was submitted as estimates in January and finalised in June.

The Commission has now also approved Ireland's application to the EU Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) for €7.4 million worth of assistance following the closure of SR Technics. This will form the main part of a package valued at almost €11.5 million to provide retraining and entrepreneurial/self-employment guidance for 850 workers made redundant. The application will now be sent to the European Parliament and EU Ministers for approval.

[Further details](#)

Future lifelong learning, youth and culture programmes

On 15 September the European Commission launched public consultations to inform the post-2014 Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) as well as the Youth in Action and Erasmus Mundus programmes. It is intended that the new programmes should support the objectives of the 'Europe 2020' Strategy and contribute to two of its flagship initiatives, 'an Agenda for New Skills and Jobs' and the newly adopted 'Youth on the Move' (see article below).

Deadline: 30 November

[Questionnaires](#)

Similarly, a public consultation on the shape of the next EU Culture Programme was launched on 15 September. The results will be analysed and summarised in a report to be made available in Spring 2011.

Deadline: 15 December

[Further details](#)

The Commission has also just released a report outlining improvements to the advisory procedures and greater efficiencies in the application processes for grants from its programmes in the fields of lifelong learning, youth, citizenship and

culture. The changes and the greater certainty created have been found to have contributed to boosting the sustainability of funding partnerships and the projects themselves.

[Further details](#)

[Previous calls](#)

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

NEWS & POLICY

Youth employment package unveiled

The European Commission's flagship initiative to enhance the performance of education systems and to facilitate the entry of young people into the labour market was launched with a 15 September Communication. 'Youth on the Move' (part of the 'Europe 2020' Strategy which set a number of targets for educational access and participation) is intended to provide for coordinated actions among Member States to tackle the common challenges of youth unemployment by enabling young people to improve their skills and job prospects. This is the EU's first effort to integrate youth and employment policies.

The initiative bring together new and existing measures at EU level and in the Member States with the aim of creating a more effective package of support for young people. Although concrete implementation details have not yet been revealed, there are to be 28 key policy actions and measures across three strands:

- modernising youth education and training to make it more relevant and attractive to young people and employers - actions will target schools, apprentices and better recognition for informal skills.
- facilitating transnational mobility periods for students and trainee workers through a new generation of EU funding programmes for

education, training and employment; a revamped EURES job portal; and the removal of existing obstacles to mobility.

- a set of measures to provide a new policy framework for youth employment including recommendations to Member States on labour market reform and reinforcement of public employment services.

Additional funding is to be made available for two new actions directly accessible to young people: The Your first EURES job' scheme should help link young people with companies looking for qualified workers and will be launched in 2011 while the 'European Progress Microfinance Facility' (See April's *Bulletin*) will provide young unemployed entrepreneurs with access to credit.

Some possible further elements which have been spoken about by interested parties outside the decision-making process include the targeting of measures towards those with lower levels of education; more effective incorporation of the various EU exchanges programmes into national education and training systems; the use of Structural Funds to improve national education infrastructure; providing incentives to hire young people; and improved protection and standards for interns and placement workers.

[Further details](#)

Territorial Pacts to deliver 'Europe 2020'?

How can the local and regional levels be properly involved in the delivery of 'Europe 2020' – the overarching EU strategy for smart, sustainable and socially inclusive growth? In a bid to ensure that there is no repeat of the recognised failure to make much of the intentions behind the previous Lisbon Strategy take effect beyond the drawing board, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) is proposing that a partnership approach involving all levels of governance presents the best way forward.

This 'Territorial Pacts' approach would institute a formalised arrangement to better integrate the approaches of

national, regional and local authorities in policy areas of immediate relevance to the strategy in order to assure the appropriate design and implementation of its key objectives and 'flagship initiatives'. According to its instigators, this heightened level of participation would not only ensure a much-needed sense of ownership of the new strategy but also tap into the added value that cities and regions could provide towards meeting its various economic and social development targets and the EU's goals in education, climate change and the fight against poverty.

Under the Lisbon Treaty, the three main EU institutions are now duty bound to incorporate local and regional perspectives (through the CoR) into EU decision-making processes for policy fields having an evident regional impact. The treaty also introduced the concept of "territorial cohesion" – creating the conditions to maximise local potential on themes such as sustainable development and access to services. This is to be achieved by deploying integrated place-based approaches (reconciling competing sectoral policies) which are informed by local circumstances and based on the use of partnership arrangements within and between regions.

By 12 November, Member States must present draft National Reform Programmes on the policy measures and targets required to achieve key Europe 2020 objectives and flagship initiatives. The final versions are to be adopted in April 2011. If agreed to, incorporating a sub-national dimension into this process could possibly entail more tailored setting of priorities and performance targets based on the realities of local and regional communities' needs and capacities; territorial impact assessments of key future sectoral policy proposals; and ongoing monitoring of how the strategy is being implemented regionally as well as nationally including use of specific non-GDP indicators.

Further details from this office

Impact assessment assessed: before and after?

As part of the European Commission's 'Better Regulation' initiative, EU policy development is strongly informed by

impact assessments – evidence-based estimating of the likely impact of planned legislation on citizens and the economy. This approach, based on systematically analysing relevant information, is designed to allow for different policy options to be explored as solutions to particular issues before a more rounded proposal for action emerges from the Commission for consideration by the other EU institutions. As well as improved policy responses, long-term implementation cost savings are a key objective.

A report, released on 28 September by the EU's independent financial watchdog the Court of Auditors, has found impact assessment to have been "broadly effective" from 2003-2008. 85% of the experts surveyed agreed that the system is improving legislation effectively. Nonetheless, areas for improvement have been identified in terms of defining which proposals should undergo impact assessment, links with public consultation exercises, clarity of message conveyed and facilitating comparison of available options. A greater emphasis on the role and requirements of implementation has also been called for.

The assessments are considered "of real value" by the European Parliament and Member States in supporting decision-making, but there are concerns that they are restricted to appraising only the Commission proposals without being updated to take into account amendments of the final, adopted version of legislation (once it has passed through the various EU Institutions). This in fact leaves a substantial information deficit in the EU knowledge base as to what newly agreed legislation will actually entail and prominent MEPs have called for the procedure to be repeated at this stage in order to analyse the consequences of EU decisions.

The Court of Auditors hopes that the non-binding report's recommendations will be considered by the 3 main institutions when revising their inter-institutional agreements on better law-making and a common approach to impact assessment. The Commission will adopt a communication on smart regulation outlining practical further improvements to the EU regulatory framework over the coming months.

['Impact Assessments in the EU institutions: Do they support decision-making?' report](#)

Energy efficiency plan to focus on buildings

The revision of the Energy Efficiency Action Plan, expected to be delivered by the Commission over the coming months, will include a major emphasis on how buildings can contribute to energy savings according to Energy Commissioner Commissioner Günther Oettinger, speaking after a 7 September meeting of European energy ministers.

The plan will centre on the pre-existing EU commitment of making 20% energy savings over the next decade with consequent economic and employment dividends as well as obvious environmental benefits. Although it has yet to be decided precisely how this will be arrived at on a sector-by-sector basis, renovations and new technologies in the built environment are recognised as being key components by national governments and the Commission. Buildings accounts for 40% of Europe's energy consumption.

Previous blueprints of the long-delayed plan have suggested measures such as a European Buildings Initiative to stimulate the renovation of 15 million buildings to high efficiency standards by 2020, obliging all Member States to establish a National Energy Efficiency Fund to support preferential loans or risk-sharing facilities, policies to speed up the uptake of smart electricity meters, and a European training strategy for an energy-efficiency workforce. A special EU summit devoted to energy will take place on 4 February by which time a draft plan is expected to be ready.

Atlantic Strategy consultation

The public consultation to feed into the proposal for a Commission Communication on Integrated Maritime Policy for the Atlantic Ocean sea basin will remain open until 15 October via a brief online questionnaire for anonymous contributions. Organisations are asked to forward their thoughts to Luis.Cuervo-Spottorno@ec.europa.eu.

[Consultation](#)

Regional Competitiveness Index

The Commission's Joint Research Centre and DG for Regional Policy have developed a new index to track competitiveness across 268 EU regions from 2007-2009. By providing a composite rating based on a series of performance indicators taken from a number of reliable international sources, the instrument offers regions a means to identify strengths, weaknesses and capacities in order to settle upon priorities for increasing economic growth. This is intended as an alternative and complementary approach to the traditional use of GDP figures alone. The latter are used as a cross-reference to determine each region's "stage of development" before arriving at the final rating.

The index incorporates measures of innovation and technological capabilities, transport and communications, health, education, and governance. Quality of Institutions, Macro-economic Stability, Infrastructure, Health, and Educational Quality are measured as basic economic drivers for all regions along with the indicators of "efficiency" - Higher Education and Lifelong Learning, Labour Market, and Market Size. For more highly developed regions, the further factors of Technological Readiness, Business Sophistication and Innovation are taken to assume greater significance.

The disparities evident within Member States indicate a very strong regional dimension to competitiveness. Ireland's two EU regions - Southern & Eastern (S&E) and Border, Midlands & Western - are placed 43rd and 129th respectively in terms of overall competitiveness. According to the categories for which figures are available, the S&E rank is most encouraging for Business Sophistication (16th), Higher Education/Training & Lifelong Learning (26th), Labour Market Efficiency (55th) and Innovation (65th); average for Health (109th) but disappointing for Infrastructure (180th). BMW rates well for Health (58th); on an intermediate level for Higher Education/Training & Lifelong Learning (91st) as well as Business Sophistication and Innovation (both 120th) and Labour Market Efficiency (124th) and less impressively for Infrastructure (185th). Its 'Stage of Development' was also adjudged to be marginally below the EU average.

[EU Regional Competitiveness Index 2010](#)

CAP reform discussions: scope widens beyond farming

Ambitions to radically adapt the next generation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) from its traditional farming emphasis to additionally encompass a new set of responsibilities would seem to be gaining momentum. This is tied up in a thinking that the spending of 40% of the total EU budget needs to better contribute as part of the EU's response to wider challenges - principally by corresponding with the overarching 'Europe 2020' Strategy to deliver growth and employment according to intelligent, sustainable and socially inclusive approaches.

Over time the focus of CAP has expanded from its original aims of ensuring food productivity and supply; market stability; and supporting farming incomes while keeping consumer prices low to also address food safety, animal welfare, environmental stewardship, and rural development. A July conference organised by DG Agriculture & Rural Development after undertaking a consultation among stakeholders and the wider public debated the opportunities to further move European agriculture from an intensive production model towards an approach that places more value on the environment as well as rural economic diversification and local product specificities.

Of late, the two new areas of focus most spoken of are management of public (environmental) goods and "green growth" measures to assist the wider rural economy. This would entail a much greater emphasis on direct payments to farmers (CAP pillar 1) being contingent on efforts to maintain the availability and quality of natural resources of great societal and economic benefit through sustainable long-term and resource-efficient management practices such as through less polluting production processes. Issues around which activities relating to "public goods" connected to agriculture might be expected include landscapes; farmland biodiversity; water quality and availability; soil functionality; greenhouse gas emissions; air quality; and flood resilience.

This development of synergies between EU agriculture and environmental practices would greatly extend previous CAP reform attempts to make European farming both more competitive and sustainable. These ambitions are allied with the issue of using CAP resources to unlock the off-farm economic potential of rural areas (e.g. tourism, development of bio-energy resources) as part of a general overhaul of rural development policy.

[Consultation summary report](#)

[Further details](#)

Covenant of Mayors energy influence grows

On 15 September, Energy Commissioner Günther Öttinger, speaking at the 'Supporting cities for sustainable solutions' event in the European Parliament, made a point of emphasising the role of the Covenant of Mayors sustainable local energy policy pledge by cities and regions as being key to guaranteeing the application of European commitments in relation to climate change challenges. His comments that "local solutions are often the key to success" suggest that future EU energy funding arrangements could use the Covenant's commitments for local actions to reduce CO₂ emissions through enhanced energy efficiency and cleaner energy production as their cornerstone. Dublin City Council is the only Irish signatory to date among almost 2,000 local authorities.

This seal of approval follows upon Commission President José Manuel Barroso's recent comment that he would very much like to see local and regional authorities extend innovative partnerships like the Covenant of Mayors to other policy areas in order to help Europe to translate its ambitions into reality.

[Öttinger comments](#)

[Barroso comments](#)

Gender Equality Strategy

On 21 September, the Commission adopted a five-year strategy designed to promote gender equality and to translate the aims

of the Commission's Women's Charter into concrete measures. The plan spells out a series of actions based on five priorities: getting more women into the labour market; opening more senior positions; to women; promoting female entrepreneurship and self employment; introducing a European Equal Pay Day to raise awareness; and working with Member States to combat gender-based violence.

The Commission will also set up a yearly top-level Gender Equality Dialogue involving the European Parliament, the Council presidencies, European social partners and civil society to assess progress in implementing the strategy.

[Further details](#)

Sport reaches EU agenda

On 16 September, the new EU competence for sport – particularly as a means of promoting physical wellbeing, social inclusion and volunteerism – was officially begun with the inaugural meeting of the retitled Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council of Ministers.

This comes ahead of a Commission Communication, scheduled for mid-November, outlining draft plans for a new EU Sports Programme from 2012 onwards and following a 'Preparatory Action' to fund pilot sport initiatives last year. With this in mind, earlier this month a group of 5 MEPs from across the political spectrum, including Sean Kelly, formulated a joint written Declaration for the attention of the Commission, Member States and their own parliamentary colleagues on what they see as the priority need to secure EU funding to allow hard-pressed grassroots sport to flourish.

[MEPs' declaration](#)

Agreement on late payments to SMEs

On 13 September negotiators from the European Parliament and the Council reached agreement on how to reform the Late Payments Directive. The main objective of this undertaking is to improve

the cash flow of European businesses, particularly SMEs based on a commitment in the Small Business Act (2008).

The recent discussions have overturned a discrepancy in the conditions to be applied to public body and business-to-business SME transaction payments for goods and services. A defined 30 day standard grace period is now to be allowed for both sectors, with a possibility to extend it up to 60 days only in exceptional circumstances (including for the healthcare sector). The initial draft proposal from the Commission had been for an open-ended period to be agreed between the parties. Where payment is delayed, the interest charge will be (a reduced) 8% of invoice value while the proposed additional lump sum compensation has now been removed. A simplified fixed €40 amount will be applied for associated recovery costs. Parliament's October plenary session will be asked to ratify the agreement.

[Further details](#)

Economic effects of Maritime Spatial Planning

The European Commission, together with EU Member States and stakeholders, has been working since 2008 to promote the use of maritime spatial planning (MSP) approaches. An independent study for DG Maritime Affairs & Fisheries on the economic effects of such improved coordination of maritime activities and resource use between competing sectors and across national borders was published on 13 September.

Focusing on efforts to better integrate interests such as shipping, offshore energy, port development, and fisheries, the study claims that, if properly managed, MSP in Europe offers a viable policy framework within which to improve the delivery of useful actions and developments and to make investment more attractive. The key benefits to be derived from better joined-up planning efforts are simplified decision-making processes; enhanced legal certainty coupled with reduced transaction costs for investors; and easier practical cross-border cooperation thanks to greater coherence between planning systems. Indicative figures are provided for cost efficiencies or prospective investment which could be

generated for a number of specific activities.

As examples, the report includes an annex on the scope and possible benefits of MSP, illustrated through case studies of its practice in Portugal and of the development of a transnational electricity grid between 9 EU Member States including Ireland.

[Study](#)

[Case Studies](#)

[EU MSP brochure](#)

2012 proposed as Year for Active Ageing

To draw attention to the challenges, and opportunities, of demographic change for society and the economy, the European Commission proposed on 6 September that 2012 should be the European Year for Active Ageing. The designation is intended to facilitate the development of policies and initiatives at all levels of governance and through civil society to help older people, whose numbers will soon be increasing by about two million people a year in Europe to remain fully involved in society. This will involve major awareness-raising and pilot actions to tackle ill health, promote active engagement through volunteering and employment, combat age discrimination and encourage autonomous living. The European Parliament and Council are expected to endorse in the New Year.

[Further details](#)

Renewables generation targets upped

The European Commission's latest 'trends to 2030' energy report projects that renewable energy sources - principally wind, hydro and biomass - will account for 64% of new electricity generation capacity installed in Europe over the next decade and will provide 36.1% of total generation by 2030. The figures represent an ambitious update of the 2007 report, reflecting factors such as recent EU legislation to enable the deployment of

renewable energies and energy-efficient technologies as well as legally-binding targets on greenhouse gas emissions reduction and renewable production.

[Further details](#)

Loop Head earns water tourism award

Loop Head in Co. Clare is among twenty five tourist destinations which were awarded the '2010 European Destination of Excellence' (EDEN) title on 27 September. The EU scheme promotes all-round sustainable tourism development models outside mainstream locations where unique (and economically viable) experiences are provided by a combination of cultural relevance, local involvement, environmental sensitivity. This year EDEN focused on aquatic tourism assets with the West Clare peninsula being praised for its exceptional scuba diving, diverse sea and bird life and dramatic cliffs. Previous Irish winners have been Clonakilty (2007, emerging rural destination), Carlingford and the Cooley peninsula (2008, local intangible heritage), and the Sheep's Head peninsula, Co. Cork (2009, protected areas).

[Further details](#)

Public libraries seek new role for digital era

The European Congress on e-inclusion (ECEI10) - "Delivering digital Europe in public libraries" - organised by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, took place in Brussels on 20-21 September. The conference was organised within the framework of the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion and with specific reference to the new 'Digital Agenda for Europe' policy which sets out to respond to the challenges and opportunities brought about by an increasingly digital age including the social, cultural and economic benefits they bring.

The event looked at a range of areas including the opportunities public libraries have to bridge the digital divide, the role they can play to increase accessibility of services and information as well as their

role in supporting digital literacy programmes. Among the conclusions reached were that the core added value of the public library and librarian in the future will be in a role as a guide who makes users familiar with the internet and with the access to new skills it offers. Delegates also argued in favour of libraries entering into external knowledge and skills partnerships.

[Further details](#)

PUBLICATIONS

EU at local & regional level in Ireland

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Mr. John Gormley, T.D. has launched a new publication examining the role and influence of the EU in regional development across Ireland. 'Ireland & Europe: the European Union at local and regional level in Ireland' was instigated by the Irish Regions Brussels Office with financial support from the European Commission Representation in Ireland. The booklet profiles the extent to which EU decisions impact at local level and how this level feeds into the European decision-making system; the current EU funding landscape for this sector; and a series of region-by-region examples of recent or ongoing projects supported by the EU.

Minister Gormley explained that he was "particularly conscious of the deep connections and inter-dependencies between the EU and the sub-national levels, including from policy and legislation perspectives". He continued to say that "there can often be a tendency not to fully appreciate or understand these, and for this reason, the publication that we are launching here today is particularly important and welcome."

[Further details](#)

Contact this office to receive an electronic copy. Hard copies are available upon request from your Regional Authority.

Positive economics of local natural resources

A report launched on 9 September by the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) aims to improve local and regional policy makers' understanding of the value and services provided by "natural capital" like woodlands, parks and waterways. The report, supported by the UN Environment Programme, highlights the extent to which cities depend on nature, and illustrates how ecosystem services can provide cost-effective solutions to municipal needs and services. It goes on to explain how local development policy areas such as urban management, spatial planning and protected areas management can benefit from a proper appreciation of and informed knowledge of these resources as well as by ensuring equal access to their benefits and local involvement in determining their usage. Among the case studies are payment schemes for ecosystem services, guidelines for rewarding good stewardship of local natural capital, certification and labeling.

[TEEB 'For Local & Regional Policy' Report](#)

EVENTS

European Green Capital Conference 20-22 October, Stockholm

The First European Green Capital Conference will be held in Stockholm – the inaugural (2010) winner of the award. The conference will bring together decision makers, politicians and officials from ambitious cities to exchange good examples and inspiration on how to turn visions of urban sustainability and quality of life into a wider reality.

[Further details](#)

Creativity within cities and regions 21 October, Kortrijk, Belgium

The Interreg IVB project Creative City Challenge and the Eurotowns network for medium-sized towns and cities with

populations from 50,000 to 250,000 are organising the 'Fostering Creativity within Cities: Playtime is Over' conference. The event will stress the importance of creativity for economic growth and will showcase tools and measures cities and regions have thus far experimented with in fostering it. Topics to be discussed include levers to stimulate innovation, factors taken into account by companies when choosing their place of business, and company expectations of local authorities.

[Further details](#)

Social Economy and growth 27-28 October, Brussels

The 'Social Economy and the Europe 2020 Strategy: Local added value and territorial roots' conference, organised through the Belgian Presidency together with the European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy (REVES), sets out to highlight the role of this particular sector within the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

[Further details](#)

Integrated Maritime development 29 October, Wexford

Three years after the European Commission launched its 'Blue Paper', a workshop on 'EU Integrated Maritime Policy – the Irish Regional Dimensions' will assess its state-of-play of implementation, the impacts and implications and future potential for this country at national and sub-national levels. The event will have a particular focus on the evolving debate on an Integrated Strategy for the Atlantic Area, but also the possible application of this approach to sea basins, such as the Irish Sea. Marine Spatial Planning and the contribution that maritime policy can play generally for future economic 'blue growth' and jobs will also be discussed. The workshop will hear from practitioners and will use case studies to illustrate best practice. The event is organised by the Association of Irish Regions as part of the EU 'Open Days' week of regions and cities.

Contact dir@sera.ie

Entrepreneurship for society 27-29 October, Liege

The 2010 Europe INNOVA Conference will focus on "Addressing Societal Challenges through Entrepreneurship and Innovation" and reflect on how innovation in its many forms can support the transition towards a resource efficient and competitive economy. The discussions will concentrate on three areas of particular importance: Unlocking Europe's Creative Potential; Greening Industries; and Supporting Innovative Entrepreneurship.

[Further details](#)

Ireland-Wales Programme 5 November, Llandudno

Interreg IVA Ireland-Wales' Annual Event for 2010 will be on the theme of 'Environment, Climate Change and Marine Research: the Benefits and Legacies of Cross Border Partnerships' – corresponding to the programme's Priority 2.1. The half-day event will include discussion on project and partnership development and the impact of projects past and present on the environment.

[Further details](#)



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Brussels Office
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