

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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Articles inside

...

Integrated Maritime Policy Package

Local energy fund up to €146 m

Globalisation Fund - SR Technics

Commission 2011 Work Programme

Post-2013 Budget Review

MEPs weigh in behind strong

flexible Regional Policy for all

'Smart specialisation strategies'

for regional innovation

'Innovation Union'

Industrial Policy Flagship Initiative

Electronic procurement

CAP Reform leak

Social services of general interest

Social Economy

Natura 2000 Wind Energy

Guidelines

2010 Biodiversity Plan Assessment

Urban Transport awards

Cluster Observatory

Sustainable Cities

FUNDING, NETWORKING & PROJECTS

Call: Fundamental Rights & Citizenship

This call will provide operating grants to support the existence and functioning of non-profit organisations, voluntary associations, foundations, NGOs or similar bodies having activities in their annual work

programmes that contribute to the general objectives of the Fundamental Rights & Citizenship Programme during 2011.

Deadline: 26 November

[Further details](#)

Call: Drug Prevention & Information

This call will provide operating grants to support the existence and functioning of non-profit organisations, voluntary associations, foundations, NGOs or similar bodies having activities in their annual work programmes that contribute to the general objectives of the Drug Prevention and Information Programme during 2011.

Deadline: 26 November

[Further details](#)

Call: Criminal Justice

Operating Grants co-financing of the activities of non-governmental organisations or other entities pursuing an aim of general European interest in accordance with the general objectives of the Criminal Justice programme during the year 2011 is currently available.

Deadline: 9 December

[Further details](#)

Call: Refugee Fund

The 2010 call under the European Refugee Fund aims to support and encourage efforts made by Member States (including by non-state actors)

in receiving refugees and displaced persons and managing the consequences thereof, taking into account EU legislation on these issues.

Deadline: 14 December

[Further details](#)

Calls: Lifelong Learning

The Commission has published the 2011 set of general Calls for Proposal for the Life Long Learning programme. This encompasses various aspects of the Comenius (schools), Leonardo Da Vinci (vocational education & training), Erasmus, (higher education) Grundtvig (adult education), Transversal and Jean Monnet actions including multilateral projects, networks, accompanying measures, partnerships, mobility and training.

The Commission has also released the strategic Life Long Learning priorities for 2011-2013 for each action.

Depending upon the action, applications are to be made to either the Commission's Executive Agency for Education and Culture (EACEA) or to Leargas.

The total budget for the Call is estimated at €1.065 billion.

Deadlines: Various - falling during the first quarter of 2011.

[Further details](#)

[All recent calls](#)

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

Integrated Maritime Policy package

The European Commission has recently brought forward a funding proposal to support the EU's integrated maritime policy for the 2011-2013 period. €50 million will be allocated to fund pilot projects in six main areas:

- promoting integrated maritime governance;
- pinpointing the needs of European sea basins;
- developing maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management;
- developing a marine knowledge infrastructure;
- developing a common information sharing environment; and
- promoting sustainable economic growth, innovation and employment in maritime sectors and coastal regions.

The proposal will require the approval of both the Council and the European Parliament.

[Further details](#)

Local energy fund reaches €146m

What had been an €115 million reallocation to finance local and regional energy saving, energy efficiency and renewable energy projects (see September *Bulletin*) was swelled to €146.34 million on 26 October as the European Parliament's Energy Committee gave its approval to the Council to release uncommitted funds from the European Energy Recovery Plan.

A new fund will be operational from 1 January 2011 until 31 March 2014 and will provide support in the form of loans, guarantees, equity or other financial products to assist local and regional authorities in paying for economically and financially viable projects such as:

- * renovations of public and private

buildings to improve energy efficiency or switching to renewable energy;

- * the construction of renewables-based heat-and-power installations, with distribution networks, and their integration into electricity grids;
- * clean urban public transport solutions, particularly electric and hydrogen vehicles; and
- * local infrastructure, including efficient street lighting, electricity storage, smart metering and smart grids.

Up to 15% of the funding may be used to provide technical assistance to public authorities to help set up the projects. Geographical balance is to be an important criterion in the selection of projects. The Parliament will vote on the changes during the 10-11 November session in Brussels.

[Further details](#)

Globalisation Fund: Progress for SR Technics application

On 26 October, the European Parliament's Committee on Budgets gave its go-ahead to a European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) compensation package for 850 workers who lost their jobs in the SR Technics aircraft maintenance firm located at Dublin Airport.

The total amount of EU funding earmarked to support guidance, retraining and entrepreneurship measures towards these workers' reintegration into the labour market is €7.45 million (total package value is €11.5 million). The decision must be approved by the full Parliament session on 11 November and the Council of Ministers thereafter although this is seen as largely a formality.

[Further details](#)

NEWS & POLICY

Commission 2011 priorities

Proposals for concrete policy initiatives and legislation where the EU can bring a real added value to creating long-term prosperity underpin the Commission's 2011 Work Programme.

Largely based on the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and socially inclusive growth, the priorities, adopted on 27 October, fall under five main headings:

- sustaining the social market economy;
- restoring growth for jobs;
- pursuing the citizens agenda of rights, freedom and justice;
- Europe's global presence; and
- making the most of EU policies "from input to impact".

In practical terms the work programme is accompanied by a set of 40 strategic initiatives for delivery in 2011. Those of most relevance to Ireland and the local and regional levels include:

- an entirely new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) which will have significant impacts on policy areas such as research, CAP and regional policy by streamlining and simplifying the existing funding programme architecture (expected in June).
- proposals for the design and implementation of innovative financial instruments for the post-2013 period with a stronger emphasis on financial engineering and leveraging of funding, including some in collaboration with the European Investment Bank and other public financial institutions (3rd quarter);
- an Annual Growth Survey to analyse the economic situation (1st quarter);
- a legislative proposal for a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (1st quarter);

- a ‘Low Carbon Economy 2050’ Roadmap (1st quarter);
- a ‘European Energy Efficiency Plan’ (1st quarter);
- a ‘White Paper on the Future of Transport’ (1st quarter);
- a ‘Resource Efficient Europe’ Roadmap (2nd quarter);
- an ‘Energy Roadmap 2050’ (3rd quarter);
- a Directive on Energy efficiency and Savings to replace the Energy Services Directive (3rd quarter);
- Revision of the Working Time Directive (3rd quarter);
- Revision of the State Aid framework for services of general economic interest (SGEI) (4th quarter).

An additional 92 initiatives (fresh proposals, progress reports and simplifications) are listed as being “under consideration”. The most eye-catching issues likely to be addressed include:

- a Social Business Initiative;
- a sustainable bio-based economy;
- deploying new technology in support of sustainable transport;
- sustainable competitiveness of the construction sector;
- a review of the Water Framework Directive’s priority substances;
- modernisation of Public Procurement;
- local re-registering of vehicles from another Member State;
- an EU framework for national strategies for Roma integration;
- practically addressing shortcomings in the implementation of environmental law and policy;
- unlocking the potential of the cultural and creative industries;
- an integrated Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) framework;
- an Integrated Strategy for the Atlantic Sea Basin (tbc);
- digitisation and digital preservation by libraries.

[2011 Work Programme](#)

A fuller briefing document on this issue is available from this office on request.

Post-2013 Budget Review

On 19 October, the European Commission published its Budget Review, to set about defining the shape of EU spending post-2013. The document does not provide detailed figures regarding the balance of future budgets for individual policies. It is intended instead to kick off a debate with Member States and the European Parliament so that a regulation on the next Multiannual Financial Framework can be tabled before 1 July 2011.

The paper confirms that the reform of the EU budget will mainly entail a rebalancing act to ensure that the various EU policy budgets match Europe 2020 Strategy priorities. This is most particularly true for the Common Agricultural Policy, which the paper makes clear should focus more on environment and climate change challenges.

The Review includes some hints about the Commission’s stance on the future of Cohesion Policy. For example, the desire to adopt a Common Strategic Framework is evident. Such a framework would replace the current approach of separate sets of strategic guidelines for the major European funding instruments (Regional Development Fund, Social Fund, Agriculture Fund for Rural Development and Fisheries Fund) and would ensure greater coordination between them by outlining a comprehensive investment strategy to translate the Europe 2020 targets and objectives into investment priorities, particularly in relation to headline targets and flagship projects.

This would entail a new approach of concrete objectives and commitments being negotiated between the Commission and Member States and formalised in ‘Development and Investment Partnership Contracts’.

The framework would also serve to highlight the reforms needed to maximise the impact of Cohesion Policy support and to identify linkages and coordination mechanisms with other EU instruments such as programmes for research, innovation and lifelong learning.

There are also some indications that Cohesion Policy and its objectives could be broadened to support the Europe 2020 Strategy priorities and become the “standard bearer for the objectives of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth” in Europe.

One option cited is the reshaping of the budget to create large-scale, dedicated funds devoted to the delivery of investment in areas such as energy and climate change, for example, the European Energy Recovery Plan.

The review also broaches the subject of how the EU is resourced by setting out the pros and cons of a list of possible future revenue streams relating to taxes on the financial sector, emissions, air travel, energy, corporate income and sales (VAT).

[Budget Review](#)

MEPs favour strong & flexible future Regional Policy for all

The European Parliament has set out what it sees as the key principles that should underpin post-2013 Cohesion Policy in a pair of resolutions adopted on 7 October.

In what is seen as a significant statement, MEPs have pledged their support to Cohesion Policy as an indispensable element to the success of the Europe 2020 Strategy, but as an independent policy on its own terms and reflecting its specific objectives rather than being subsumed within the overarching strategy for smart, sustainable and socially inclusive growth.

As such they have come out in favour of a properly resourced policy "embracing all the European regions" and operating on the basis of flexibility in order to reflect and respond to different regional characteristics. This includes greater attention to investments in urban and suburban projects via appropriate new funding instruments.

MEPs have backed calls for the policy to be more "result-oriented" - entailing the need to strike a better balance between quality of performance and financial control.

The use of complimentary indications alongside the gross domestic product (GDP) yardstick for determining eligibility for regional assistance is an area MEPs have decided should be left to the discretion of national authorities to decide upon depending on local specificities.

A separate resolution on the European Social Fund (ESF) called for the instrument to be strengthened as a key tool in combating unemployment, poverty and exclusion and improving education and life-long learning. The proposals endorsed include simplification measures, better monitoring efforts and ESF remaining as a part of Cohesion Policy albeit with its own rules.

[Further details](#)

'Smart specialisation strategies' for innovation at regional level

Last June's Council of the EU noted that Regional Policy can release the growth potential of the Union by promoting innovation in all regions while ensuring complementarity between European, national and regional measures to support research and development, entrepreneurship and information technology and communication (ICT).

October saw the release of a Commission Communication outlining how regional funds can help unlock the growth potential of the EU as a whole, by targeting investment in innovation in all regions.

'Regional Policy contributing to smart growth in Europe 2020' describes the role of regional policy in the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy, in particular by bringing a local/regional dimension to the 'Innovation Union' Flagship Initiative (see following article). The Communication encourages national and regional authorities to design 'smart specialisation strategies' (previously advanced in the Barca Report and in the report 'The role of Community Research Policy in the Knowledge-Based Economy') to help regions identify and set about exploiting their outstanding assets including through direct interaction with local higher education institutions and businesses.

Through this communication and its associated Working Document the Commission wants to raise the awareness of relevant new concepts and policy tools regarding innovation support, including new opportunities and ways of maximising synergies across all Community Funds for innovation.

In this sense the Working Document describes how synergies are being developed at Community level amongst Commission departments, groups of Member States responsible for various innovation programmes and High Level Groups of experts to build consistency and critical mass for the purpose of delivering innovation on the ground.

A key aspect underpinning the Commission's thinking is that concentrating resources on a limited number of priorities will ensure a more effective use of public funds and help

to leverage higher levels of private investment.

['Regional Policy contributing to smart growth in Europe 2020' \(Communication\)'](#)

[Working Document](#)

'Innovation Union'

On 6 October, the Commission published a Communication 'Innovation Union: Transforming Europe through Research and Innovation', to launch another of the seven 'flagship initiatives' as part of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The document indicates the Commission's intentions to see the following ambitions realised from 2011 onwards in order to encourage innovation in Europe

- EU innovation partnerships are to be piloted with an initial focus on active and healthy ageing, designed to address growing demographic disparities, followed by subsequent pilot projects in the fields of energy, smart cities and agriculture.
- an Innovation Union Scoreboard will track the progress of Member States' innovation policies.
- further use needs to be made of the European Investment Bank's risk-sharing financial facilities in order to improve access to finance to enable innovation.
- a major research programme on public sector and social innovation will be launched.
- a European Design Excellence label will be created to promote Europe as a centre for innovation.
- National Governments will be asked to set aside dedicated budgets for public procurement of innovative products and services.
- a legislative proposal on improving standard setting is due to be published (early 2011).

- a proposal for an EU knowledge market for patents and licensing.
- a review of Structural Funds and state aid frameworks in order to boost the potential for innovation.

[Further details](#)

Industrial Policy Flagship Initiative

On 27 October, the Commission adopted its latest Europe 2020 flagship initiative, entitled “An integrated industrial policy for the globalisation era: focusing on competitiveness and sustainability”.

Its aim in the first instance is to encourage the internationalisation of SMEs - a strategy on this is due in early 2011. It also aims to facilitate SMEs access to finance, and enhance the single market to ensure that it can be used to its full potential. The Commission will also produce a new policy initiative on corporate social responsibility in 2011.

Success will be measured by targets: a 1% annual increase in industry’s international competitiveness, 5 million new jobs in industry by 2020 (the majority in SMEs), a 2.5% annual increase in manufacturing output and a 5% increase in exports of manufactured goods.

[Further details](#)

Electronic procurement Green Paper

A consultation was launched by the European Commission on 18 October to seek the views of interested parties on how the EU can help Member States to facilitate public sector entities’ deployment of new technologies when purchasing supplies or services or awarding contracts for public works. This first step towards a comprehensive EU

level programme to harness the recognised potential of ICT for more streamlined, efficient and cost-effective public procurement is addressed not only to government departments and contracting authorities but also to providers of technology solutions and representatives of business trade associations.

The associated Green Paper identifies obstacles to faster take-up of e-procurement as well as the risks that divergent national approaches present for cross-border collaboration. It sets out a series of options for overcoming these challenges including, regulatory incentives, standardisation and interoperability solutions. Among the areas it hopes to stimulate discussion on are simplification and improving public purchasing; and the necessary legislative incentives and tools to accelerate the switch-over to electronic procedures as the norm. The phasing in of e-procurement forms part of the ambitious e-Government agenda to fundamentally transform the delivery and performance of public administration.

The Commission has also unveiled its new e-CERTIS data base which is a free, web-based tool to help companies and contracting organisations cope with the documentation demands encountered when tendering for public contracts in another EU Member State.

[Consultation](#)

[e-CERTIS](#)

CAP Reform leak

A leaked copy of the eagerly awaited Communication on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013 has made its way onto the Brussels circuit in advance of the official publication of the document on 17 November.

Unsurprisingly the Commission is recommending that the two pillar structure of the policy should be retained in any event, although three broad policy options remain under consideration as part of the reform: an “enhanced” status quo; “more balanced, targeted and sustainable support”; abolishing market and income support. No costings of these options or indications of overall budget have been outlined at this point.

For pillar one (direct payments) the Commission is recommending the redistribution, redesign and better targeting of support to “active” farmers only, with payments on a decoupled per-hectare basis. It is envisaged that the lowest level would comprise a basic income support payment subject to cross compliance, with potential top up payments for ‘agri-environmental actions’.

For pillar two (rural development) quantified targets would be set for outcomes established at both EU and national programme level along with a new “risk management tool-kit” to address production and income risks. The introduction of an income stabilisation tool has also been mooted.

Payments for Less Favoured Areas – those with “specific natural constraints” – would be calculated on a per hectare basis and subject to voluntary national top-ups.

The Communication is not expected to launch a stakeholder consultation, though the European Commission will be open to receive reactions and comments to the Communication, particularly with regards to rural development.

[Further details](#)

Social services of general interest

The Belgian Presidency of the EU organised a forum for social partners, civil society and institutional representatives from the Member States to discuss the impact of European policy objectives which are increasingly based on free market approaches and social services of general interest (SSIG) upon each other on 26-27 October in Brussels.

With the participation of the relevant Commissioners for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, the Internal Market and Competition, the event provided an opportunity for a wide-ranging discussion on the role of SSIGs in Europe, particularly in relation to the economic crisis and by reference to budgetary restrictions.

Belgian minister for Social Affairs and Public Health Laurette Onkelinx, as chief organiser, expressed a wish that the market should "contribute to social progress, with the aim of constructing a social market economy" and urged action to make the existing rules on SSIG both better known and better adapted with a view to providing greater legal security and to recognise the specific nature of these services.

As a consequence of the Forum, 15 concrete recommendations were adopted. Conclusions on this priority issue for the Belgian Presidency are to be presented to the Ministerial Council for Social Affairs on 6 December.

[Further details](#)

Social Economy

A separate Belgian Presidency conference on October 27-28 sought to emphasise the important role the social economy should play in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy through employment initiatives which, beyond economic development, additionally provide for

the active inclusion, training and integration of marginalised and vulnerable groups.

Among the priorities flagged up by the Conference as being key to the sector's further development beyond its current 11 million jobs across the EU were the need to facilitate access to necessary legal and financial support; fostering better links with sustainable development issues and actors; and greater efforts to ensure visibility and recognition.

The Presidency has committed to inviting Member States and EU Institutions to work for greater recognition for social economy actors and to give this sector the resources needed for its development and growth.

[‘The Social Economy and the Europe 2020 Strategy’ conference](#)

Wind Energy Guidelines for Natura 2000 sites

Guidelines for wind energy development in protected natural areas were published by the European Commission on 29 October. These are intended to offer greater clarity to Member States and industry regarding the undertaking of wind energy development activities in sensitive locations and to counter instances of poorly sited or designed wind farms having a negative impact on the conservation of vulnerable species and habitats.

The guidelines apply specifically to the EU-wide Natura 2000 ecological network of nearly 26,000 sites of high biodiversity value. In a bid to avoid conflict over the proper usage of such sites (which require a sustainable balance of both ecological and economic functions) and to reduce the risk of later stage delays in relation to individual proposals, the guidelines highlight the importance of strategic

planning and the need for good quality assessment of new developments.

[Further details](#)

Urban Transport awards

The OSMOSE Awards - organised as part of the NICHES+ project (Seventh Framework Research Programme) and coordinated by the Polis transport network - reward local authorities that have introduced innovative and sustainable measures in response to urban transport challenges.

This year's awards will look at a number of promising new concepts, initiatives and projects which are recognised as having the potential to become a 'mainstream' urban transport policy application in the future. The scheme is open to local and regional authorities and their partners. Each application will be assessed by a panel of independent transport experts. Successful applicants will be promoted in the NICHES+ Study Tour Catalogue on urban transport innovation.

Deadline: 1 December
[NICHES+](#)
[POLIS](#)

2010 Biodiversity Plan Assessment

The 2010 report assessing implementation of the EU Biodiversity Action Plan was published in October. The Action Plan addresses the challenge of integrating biodiversity concerns into other policy sectors in a unified way through specific priority actions to be shared between EU Institutions and Member States. It also contains indicators to monitor progress.

The 2010 report reflects upon the failure to comply with the headline goal of halting biodiversity decline in

Europe by this stage. This is analysed by reference to four main policy areas: biodiversity in the EU (including objectives to safeguard key habitats and species; to conserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in both the wider countryside and marine environment; to reinforce compatibility of regional and territorial development with biodiversity; and to substantially reduce the impact of invasive alien species); the EU's role in strengthening international biodiversity and ecosystem services (through governance and trade arrangements); supporting biodiversity adaptation to climate change; and strengthening the knowledge base for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

It also considers a set of supporting measures: ensuring adequate financing; strengthening EU decision making; building partnerships; and public education, awareness and participation.

The principle threats to biodiversity are characterised as changes in land use, excessive demands made on our environment, pollution, invasive species and climate change. Nonetheless, the report notes substantial progress made since the 2008 mid-term review and expresses the hope that lessons learned in the interim can be put towards general good use into the future. In that vein a separate progress report on 150 actions underway at EU level has also been compiled.

[2010 Report
EU Actions
Ireland performance report](#)

Cluster Observatory website

The European Cluster Observatory is an on-line platform that provides a single access point to information and analysis of clusters and cluster policy in Europe. The Observatory recently

launched its redesigned web site at the European Cluster Conference. It provides cluster stakeholders with a wide range of services, such as the Cluster Mapping tool, which gives access to data on clusters and regions in Europe, including framework conditions that shape regional competitiveness.

[Further details](#)

Sustainable Cities

The report of the 'Supporting cities for sustainable solutions' conference held on 15 September and attended by IRO staff has been made available to this office. The event was a joint initiative of the European Parliament's Intergroup on Climate Change and Biodiversity and of the European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD).

Contact this office for a copy.

PUBLICATIONS

North West Europe's contribution to Europe 2020

The INTERREG North West Europe programme has produced an overview document of some of the transnational cooperation currently underway under the programme. Rather than an official mid-term evaluation this is intended to provide a flavour of the types of actions being carried out. It also provides analysis of who is involved in the projects and why INTERREG is an essential tool for securing Europe's ambitions and long-term vision for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in line with the Europe 2020 goals.

[Further details](#)

EVENTS

Local Energy Communities Brussels, 6-7 December

The CONCERTO initiative (part of the Seventh Framework Programme) has supported 22 projects to proactively address the challenges of creating more sustainable approaches to local communities' energy needs and supply. Its Final Forum will offer a platform for the exchange of ideas and results drawn from the experiences of the 58 European towns and cities that have implemented CONCERTO actions to identify replicable solutions.

[Further details](#)

Urban Development Liege, 30 November-1 December

The 2010 conference of the URBACT II networking programme on sustainable integrated urban development is set to bring together all types of urban actors to discuss the challenges cities are facing and to exchange innovative solutions emerging from the programme's local impacts, transfer of knowledge, and wider policy links.

[Further details](#)



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