

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

Connecting Europe Facility: infrastructure priorities unveiled

On 19 October, the Commission published a proposed infrastructure package, composed of a new budgetary instrument, the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), as well as revised guidelines for transport, ICT and energy. CEF outlines a €50 billion plan to improve Europe's transport, digital and energy networks in the 2014-2020 period. The instrument will provide seed finance to kick-start key missing link and bottleneck project investment that can make a significant contribution towards making Europe's economy both more competitive and greener by promoting cleaner transport modes, enabling high speed broadband connections and digital services, and facilitating the use of renewable energy. See the sections below for details of what is planned.

The Commission has spelt out that a competitive process will apply and prospective applicants – likely to have a public-private partnership element – will need to be proactive in submitting detailed proposals for infrastructure works and studies in line with the design of CEF in order to avail of the EU co-financing.

As part of the financing arrangements, the Commission has adopted the Project Bond Initiative, which will be one of a number of instruments to attract private finance from capital markets, pension funds or insurance companies to revenue-generating CEF projects. It is envisaged that investment by the EU - which will largely be in the form of European Investment Bank (EIB)-backed equity, debt or guarantees - will help promoters of individual infrastructure

projects by providing credibility and lowering their risk profiles. This could then be complemented by public investment at local, regional and national levels and through the Structural Funds. The expectation is that the EU financing will generate a five-fold contribution in terms of public resources and a twenty-fold investment from the private sector.

The Commission is proposing to launch a CEF pilot phase in 2012-2013, funded to the tune of €230 million, which is expected to mobilise investments of up to €4.6 billion. This will focus on five to ten projects across Europe, concentrating on those that are at a relatively developed stage of the financing process in one or more of the three targeted sectors.

[A growth package for integrated European infrastructures](#)

[Connecting Europe proposal](#)

[Project Bond Initiative pilot](#)

Call: Transport networks

€31.7 billion is to be provided for upgrades in order to transform the existing patchwork of European roads, railways, airports and canals into a unified trans-European transport network (TEN-T) with a focus on safer, more efficient and less polluting modes. The new policy establishes a "core" TEN-T network of the most strategic links between the EU's major "nodes" (social and economic centres, ports and airports) and analyses their relationships with land transport and passenger and freight traffic flows in order to identify priority sections and projects. Investments are to be completed by 2030 to deliver a backbone for transportation within the Single Market.

A series of cross-border corridors have been established to facilitate coordinated development and joining-up of infrastructure of added European value. Of these, one is entitled "Dublin-London-Paris-Brussels" and includes sections for "Belfast-Dublin-Holyhead-Birmingham" and for "Dublin/Cork/Southampton-Le Havre-Paris" with pre-identified sections being mentioned as upgrading the Dublin-Belfast rail line; the recently shelved DART "Interconnectors"; port hinterland connections at Cork and Dublin; and "Rail connection Shannon-Cork-Dublin (studies ongoing)". Associated maps also identify the port of Foynes along with the airports of Dublin and Cork as elements of the core network.

A further, longer-term "comprehensive" network of routes (for completion by 2050) is intended to feed into the core network at regional and national level in order to ultimately reach all parts of the EU. This second layer will largely be financed by Member States, with some EU funding possibilities, including with new innovative financing instruments. Various other Irish ports and airports are mapped in this category as are some transport routes. Horizontal priorities for CEF transport funding include rail signalling and air traffic control systems.

[Revised TEN-T transport network draft regulations](#)

CEF - Digital Infrastructure networks

Almost €9.2 billion is proposed for projects to give citizens and businesses access to high-speed broadband networks and the services that run on them. At least €7 billion will be available for high-speed broadband infrastructure with investment in less obviously attractive infrastructure projects, especially those outside urban or densely populated areas, to be particularly prioritised in a bid to help to fulfil Europe's Digital Agenda targets of broadband access for all at speeds of at least 30 Mbps and at least 50% of households subscribing to speeds above 100Mbps by 2020.

The remaining funding for digital infrastructure will support public interest digital service infrastructure of individual or wider societal benefit. This includes electronic health records, electronic identification, e-procurement and deployment of ICT solutions for intelligent energy networks and for the provision of Smart Energy Services. An emphasis will be placed on promoting pan-European interoperability in the digital Single Market by linking up existing, often national, infrastructures and providing dedicated European-level components of digital service infrastructures.

The proposed new guidelines for trans-European telecommunications networks and services would establish new objectives, priorities, and criteria for identifying projects of common interest.

[Guidelines for trans-European telecommunications networks](#)

[Further details](#)

CEF - Energy networks: 3 corridors for Ireland

€9.1 billion will be invested in trans-European energy infrastructure, with 12 priority corridors identified, covering strategic networks for the transmission and storage of electricity, gas, oil and carbon dioxide (from source to sink). The long-term objective is to help to meet the EU 2020 energy and climate objectives while also further developing the internal market for energy through better interconnections, leading to security of supply and the possibility to transport renewable energy in a cost effective manner across the EU.

Irish investment projects included in the preliminary list relate primarily to electricity and gas interconnections with the UK and the wider continent via the following corridors:

- Northern Seas offshore grid ("NSOG"): an integrated offshore electricity grid to transport electricity from renewable offshore energy sources to centres of consumption

and storage and to increase cross-border electricity exchange;

- North-South electricity interconnections in Western Europe ("NSI West Electricity"): interconnections between Member States of the region and with Mediterranean third countries, notably to integrate electricity from renewable energy sources; and
- North-South gas interconnections in Western Europe ("NSI West Gas"): interconnection capacities for North-South gas flows in Western Europe to further diversify routes of supply and increase short-term gas deliverability.

Furthermore, all Member States will be involved in the development and deployment of smart grids to integrate offshore renewable energy generation, "electricity highways" and cross-border carbon dioxide storage networks.

[Energy Infrastructure Package](#)

[Further details](#)

'Regions of Knowledge' into Interreg?

The 'Regions of Knowledge' (RoK) programme is the element of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) most immediately relevant to local and regional actors. It aims to strengthen regional research potential, in particular by encouraging and supporting the development of 'research-driven clusters' bringing together universities/research centres, the business community and regional authorities. By bolstering these 'triple helix' partnerships, the programme enables regions to strengthen their capacity for investing in and carrying out research activities, while maximising their potential for successful ongoing involvement in further European research projects.

The Commission's recent Synergies Expert Group Report on developing value-added and streamlined linkages between the main EU funding mechanisms (Structural Funds, FP7 and

the Competitiveness & Innovation Programme) for the 2014-2020 period has strongly recommended a redirection of capacity-building schemes such as RoK away from the next framework programme (to be entitled 'Horizon 2010') and into Cohesion Policy as a pillar of Territorial Cooperation. This is despite a recent positive evaluation of RoK in its current incarnation.

Critics of the proposal, notably the ERRIN network of research and innovation regions, have pointed out that, among other issues, the current RoK arrangements provide for one of the few opportunities where regional governments can actively engage in the EU research agenda based on their excellence. This ties in with the notion of 'smart specialisation' which is currently very much in vogue with the Commission and which is one of a number of complementary EU policy initiatives (along with lead markets and key enabling technologies) from which regions risk being cut off by a migration of the programme into Cohesion Policy. It is also suggested that a severing of the direct links between regions and the Commission's DG Research & Innovation would be a retrograde step and would endanger the political awareness and buy-in necessary to the development of regional innovation systems. The higher than average rates of EU support and predictable annual funding system currently provided for are cited as further reasons to resist change.

The current €18 million RoK call for proposals on "RTD and innovation aspects of EU digital agenda" and/or "Development of technologies and services relevant for the implementation of a 'resource efficient Europe'" has attracted interest from a number of clusters based in four separate Irish regions.

['Regions of Knowledge'](#)

[Final Report of the Synergies Expert Group](#)

[Assessment of the impact of the 'Regions of Knowledge' programme](#)

Interreg NWE approvals for Mayo, Kerry and Limerick

As well as the ACE project to be led by the City of Dublin Energy Management Agency (see September's Bulletin), two further projects approved among the latest batch (eight Call) of the Interreg IVB North West Europe Programme have an Irish element.

Mayo County Council and South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd will add to their portfolio of Interreg projects with their involvement in RURAL ALLIANCES which aims to address urgent challenges caused by rapid demographic change in rural areas through the new concept of Enterprise-Community Alliances to build self-supporting, inclusive, confident communities. Meanwhile, the University of Limerick along with the MosArt environmental design practice are set to receive funding as part of the Zecos project to develop a standardised communal multi-stage zero CO2e Emission Certification System.

€73.3 million remains available for projects to be approved in the next calls (the ninth has now closed). Ahead of the tenth Call, which is due to open in spring 2012, a Project Development Workshop will be held in EU House, Dublin on 1 December.

[Further details](#)

Contact: smaurus@seregassembly.ie

Project: ESPON rural development opportunities report

ESPON has released the final report of its EDORA applied research project on 'European Development Opportunities in Rural Areas'. The project studied the changes taking place in European rural areas and their increasing diversity, in order to develop a clear and consistent rationale for policy to enhance territorial cohesion.

[Further details](#)

Catch up on recent calls for proposals through previous issues of this Bulletin: [July](#) & [September](#).

NEWS & POLICY

Waste Management economic instruments

A high level stakeholder event on 25 October presented the interim results of a Commission study on the use of economic instruments and their impacts on Member States' waste management performances. The study was a follow-up to last January's adoption of the Review on the Thematic Strategy on the prevention and recycling of waste which revealed significant differences between Member States in the implementation of legally binding EU minimum targets for recycling, recovery rates and landfill diversion as well as clear links between the performance of Member States and the use of economic instruments.

Discussions focused primarily on three key approaches: (1) Charges for waste disposal and treatment (landfill and incineration); (2) Pay-as-you-throw systems; and (3) Producer responsibility schemes. Next steps identified by the Commission include the finalisation of the study and using these in the impact assessment on the review of the EU targets in 2013. The Review's recommendations were confirmed through the adoption in September of the 'Roadmap on Resource Efficiency' (see September's *Bulletin*) which includes several references to the use of economic instruments and notably the extension of the concept of "producer responsibility".

[Use of Economic Instruments and Waste Management Performances' \(event background paper\)](#)

[Report on the Thematic Strategy \(January 2011\)](#)

Urban planning beyond city borders

The recently published Commission proposals to reform EU Cohesion Policy

for the 2014-2020 programming period contained a clear focus on urban development - including ring-fencing 5% of national ERDF allocations for integrated actions to be delegated to city authority level; an "urban development platform" to foster capacity-building; and a focus on innovative actions. These have been hailed by Committee of the Regions (CoR) President Mercedes Bresso as holding much promise in addressing spatial segregation and "ghettoisation" in European cities.

However, speaking on 24 October at a conference on 'Effective instruments supporting territorial development (regions, urban areas, rural areas)' organised by the Polish Ministry of Regional Development, Bresso drew attention to the need for urban development policies across Europe to consider the wider territorial context by also taking cognisance of and improving their interaction with surrounding rural areas beyond cities' administrative limits.

On behalf of the CoR she expressed "regret [with] the lack of any specific reference to suburban and rural areas in the draft regulation." She went on to urge a more clearly defined role for urban-rural and urban-regional cooperation in EU regional policy based on building partnerships and the need to "support administrative structures promoting a form of cooperation operating close to the grass roots, which stretches beyond official limits, to ensure that resources are managed more effectively."

[Speech by Mercedes Bresso](#)

On a related theme, a new report from the Eurocities network on urban cooperation across administrative borders brings together the perspectives of almost 40 cities of very different size, role and geographic background including capitals, major regional hubs, polycentric metropolitan areas, smaller cities representing wider areas, and secondary centres in larger urban regions. The report states that the role of functional urban areas as economic drivers is becoming increasingly important across Europe with public administrations seeking to find more effective solutions in

order to adapt to the policy challenges of new realities. The examples profiled suggest that the role of metropolitan areas is generally best shaped through bottom-up governance processes rooted in local partnerships and adapted to work alongside existing political and administrative structures.

['Cities cooperating beyond their boundaries: evidence through experience in European cities' \(Eurocities Report\)](#)

Shale gas fracking: differing perspectives emerge

'Fracking' – a technology where high pressure combinations of water, sand and chemicals are hydraulically pumped into underground fissures in order to release natural (shale) gas – has been touted as a significant untapped energy option suitable to the geology of parts of Northwest Ireland. The practice is considered controversial due to potential impacts on groundwater resources and methane leakages.

However, not all Member States seem so reticent about the environmental implications. While there had previously been a degree of inter-governmental discussion on the prospects of establishing an EU-wide framework to govern the development and regulation of any future shale drilling industry – the Commission has yet to adopt a position – a recent study from the Polish Institute of International Affairs deviates strongly. It argues against the feasibility of common European arrangements for controlling the risk factor on the grounds of complexity and the inappropriateness of a one-size-fits-all solution. Poland has recently granted more than a hundred licenses for exploration of its plentiful shale gas reserves.

Meanwhile a separate European Parliament report into the issue was presented and discussed in the Committee on Environment, Public Health and the Food Safety (ENVI) on 4 October. In calling for a dedicated shale gas directive, this more skeptical document downplays the benefits arising from fracking and identifies at least nine

regulatory gaps which present unacceptable risk, such as the absence of appropriate Environmental Impact Assessments and the lack of best available technological practices in Europe. The report recommends banning, or at least restricting, the injection of toxic chemicals during fracturing, and the mandatory disclosure of the substances used. It also calls for the water framework directive (WFD) to address fracking's impact on surface water and for water flows and air emissions to be monitored in areas where permits are granted. However, it also stresses that, on average, only around 2% of shale gas wells developed globally have led to serious violation of environmental and safety standards.

The subsequent debate provided further evidence of the divide among Member States over the issue. Opposition to unrestricted shale gas drilling was led by a number of UK, French and German MEPs who called for stronger protection of the environment and consumers – particularly in the absence of a proper regulatory framework. Calls were made for a European moratorium on hydraulic fracturing as France has recently implemented and for more emphasis on energy efficiency ahead of such unconventional gas production. From the other perspective, Polish MEPs criticised the study's methodology, especially the methane leakage calculation methods and the fact that the positive impacts of shale gas on national and European energy security or for economic development were not addressed.

['Path to Prosperity or Road to Ruin? Shale Gas Under Political Scrutiny' \(Polish Study\)](#)

['Impacts of shale gas and shale oil extraction on the environment and human health' \(European Parliament Report\)](#)

Local authorities back citizenship and exchange programmes

At its Congress on Citizenship and Training in early October, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions

(CEMR) - the largest organisation of local and regional government associations in Europe - has called on the Commission to strengthen the post-2013 Europe for Citizens programme, based on a budget of €495 million to symbolically provide one euro for each European citizen. This proposed increase from the current €215 million could bring continued support for twinning links and extend partnership possibilities to neighbouring countries to the East and South of Europe.

The CEMR is also continuing to voice support for a transnational European-level scheme by which to share knowledge and help capacity-building for elected representatives and officials in order to improve local and regional services, democratic development and better citizen participation. Such an initiative gained support from the European Parliament in 2009 when envisaged along the lines of the Erasmus student exchange programme. The CEMR remains hopeful of realising this aim in 2012 through the creation of a "European Academy for Local and Regional Governance". It additionally hopes to establish an observatory to implement the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life.

[Further details](#)

Hanniffy tells Europe of pressure on Irish local authority finances

In her capacity as a member of the Irish delegation to the Committee of the Regions (CoR), Cllr. Constance Hanniffy (Offaly County Council, the Midland Regional Authority and the Border Midland & Western Regional Assembly) has recently given an interview to the CoR website where she sets out the impact of the economic crisis on the finances of Irish local government for a European audience.

Doing more with less is the theme of the article which highlights how local authorities are striving to enable an exit from the crisis by enhancing support to local enterprise and business development and reducing commercial rates at a time when the sector is coping

with expenditure reductions to the tune of almost 30% since 2008.

The piece sets out how efforts are underway to deliver upon the 16% savings and efficiencies objective recommended last year by the Local Government Efficiency Review Group. These include major long-term structural rearrangements such as the planned merging of certain councils; more emphasis on shared/regional approaches to services and procurement; and implementing the EU-IMF agreement insistence on a national water utility company and the installation of water meters. The effects of a 17% reduction in local government staffing since 2008 – a disproportionate hit compared to all other public service sectors – coupled with the recruitment moratorium and widespread retirements, are also spelt out.

Additional sources of funding, including the EU-IMF agreement household property tax, are instanced as contributing to address the shortfall in order that cutbacks in vital service delivery areas can be minimised.

[Interview](#)

Industrial competitiveness report benchmarks Irish strengths and weaknesses

The Commission published a Communication on industrial competitiveness across all EU Member States on 14 October which comes to the conclusion that Ireland is "relatively well-placed to overcome the crisis" and scores significantly above the EU average on many aspects of its business environment and work force – although less so in terms of sustainable industry and entrepreneurship & SMEs.

The most favourable indicators for Ireland relate to 'labour productivity per person employed in manufacturing' and 'infrastructure spending per inhabitant'. Other categories to score positively include 'share of innovating enterprises as % of all enterprises'; 'share of high-

tech exports in total exports'; and 'e-government usage by enterprises'.

The most underwhelming performances from an Irish perspective relate to '% of broadband lines with speed above 10 Mbps' and 'electricity prices for medium size enterprises'. The report also suggests that the capacity of indigenous firms to innovate should be stepped up further, capitalising as much as possible on the increased investment in public R&D and the development of a green tech sector.

The report concludes that while the main short-term challenge for Ireland is to return to a balanced growth path, the undisputed need to consolidate public finances necessitates a careful review of spending and taxation priorities with a view to avoid the emergence of future bottlenecks to growth, in particular with regard to infrastructure and research. It recognises that Ireland's efforts to shift growth from foreign direct investment based on labour cost and construction to more innovative sectors and services had already born some fruit before the onset of the current crisis and that long-term efforts to provide incentives for more sustainable growth are also moving in the right direction.

[Report](#)

Business R&D Scoreboard

One aspect of the above report to score negatively for Ireland was 'R&D performed by businesses (% of GDP)'. The Commission has also recently published the 2011 EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard, showing that overall R&D investment by top EU companies recovered strongly in 2010, with a 6.1% year-on-year rise. However, the 16 Irish firms among the top 1000 research-performing European companies saw a collective 4.4% decrease in their R&D spend – bringing the Irish share of this exclusive club back to 1.5%, though maintaining a place in the top ten of EU Member States.

[Scoreboard](#)

Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy and Social Business Initiative

On 25 October, in a move to reinforce its efforts to engage with the private sector on social and environmental issues, the Commission adopted a new Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy for the 2011-2014 period along with a Social Business Initiative. Key elements of the package include: 1) encouraging responsible business (including introducing a system of Country-by-Country Reporting); 2) Facilitating Social Entrepreneurship by improving social businesses' access to funding and easing the regulatory environment; and 3) cutting red tape for SMEs by simplifying the preparation of financial statements and removing the obligation to publish quarterly financial information. The Commission will be hosting a conference on Social Economy and Social Business on 18 November in Brussels.

['A renewed EU strategy 2011-14 for Corporate Social Responsibility'](#)

[Social Business Initiative](#)

Radio Spectrum Policy

The European Council has recently endorsed a text drawn up with the European Parliament and Commission paving the way for the establishment of a comprehensive European radio spectrum policy, providing the platform for further improvements to wireless services. The new agreement will foster the roll-out of high speed wireless broadband systems, in particular by requiring Member States to authorise the use of the digital dividend 800 MHz for wireless broadband by January 2013.

The agreed Radio Spectrum Policy Programme will begin in early 2012 and includes several groundbreaking measures: 1) creating a European radio spectrum inventory; 2) fostering the deployment of wireless broadband by setting tight authorisation deadlines on the use of several harmonised spectrum bands for electronic communication services; 3) making at least 1200 MHz of

spectrum available for wireless broadband services by 2015; 4) defining concrete steps to ensure and promote competition in the single EU telecoms market; 5) promoting more flexible spectrum management; 6) meeting the spectrum requirements of EU policies in sectors such as transport, energy, earth observation and monitoring, civil protection, and the Internet of things; and 7) underlining the need for enhanced EU coordination in international spectrum negotiations.

[Further details](#)

Regions examine Ireland's maritime resources

As part of the Association of Irish Regions' commitments under the 2011 OPEN DAYS, a 'local event' seminar was hosted by the Marine Institute (MI) in Galway on 21 October. 'Maximising the Value of our Maritime Resource' provided delegates with opportunities to learn more about what the ocean can offer Ireland in promoting economic development.

According to MI Chief Executive Peter Heffernan, Ireland has 10 times more territory off-shore than on land. To enable this country to harvest this vast resource – for which a number of key sectors including ICT, food, biotechnology, shipping financial services and ocean energy have been identified as offering particular potential – the MI has already carried out a great deal of work to underpin the prospects of giving Ireland strategic advantages in these fields including a comprehensive seabed mapping programme and a rapidly developing research programme.

Further steps will require plan-led approaches and the integration of both the terrestrial and maritime planning systems and their associated processes. This is all the more important with the evolution of integrated maritime policy at EU level (see following article) and the growing recognition of the importance of the marine environment and marine space. Mark Griffin, Assistant Secretary, Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government, set out

the Government's commitments to updating the planning framework and the role that local and regional authorities will play in this process. He also highlighted that the forthcoming Integrated Strategy for the Atlantic Area (to be launched in Lisbon on November 28) will be important in bringing key stakeholders together to discuss the future development of the shared marine space.

Delegates were also presented with some examples of good practice at local, regional and national levels in tapping into the marine resource, including: the development of Killybegs as a renewable energies services hub; the regional framework plan for the Shannon Estuary; and the WestWave project – Ireland's first wave farm.

['Real Map of Ireland'](#)

[WestWave project](#)

Future of Integrated Maritime Policy

A recent speech on the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP), given by the European Commission's highest-ranking official in charge of Maritime Affairs & Fisheries, gave some indications as to the priority being given to the issue and the direction in which it is heading. Addressing the General Assembly of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), DG MARE Director-General Lowri Evans highlighted key IMP milestones to date in providing a framework for dialogue, instruments and actions by which to coordinate EU policies affecting seas and coasts and to turn economic and environmental challenges into opportunities. These include Maritime Spatial Planning, the Marine Knowledge Initiative, and the further development of cooperation between European maritime surveillance authorities.

In casting an eye towards the future Evans confirmed that the IMP's financing regulation should come into force next year, allowing it the scope to become fully anchored within all community funding instruments. High-level

discussions are also due to be held on the relationship between various EU funds and the implementation of sea-basin strategies on the one hand, as well as on the challenges facing the sustainable development of European coastal areas and the maritime economy on the other. The end of 2012 should also see the release of the EU's 'Blue Growth' strategy, which will focus on key sectors and thematic areas linked to maritime policy and will, above all, aim to remove barriers hindering the development of Europe's maritime economy.

Specifically in relation to the Atlantic, the importance of this sea basin shared by five EU Member States was highlighted both in terms of its natural energy resources and its precious ecosystems. These points will form the cornerstones of the EU's forthcoming Integrated Strategy for the Atlantic Area which will set out the financial and regulatory instruments needed to take advantage of the area's potential in a sustainable manner.

['The Integrated Maritime Policy: One Right Answer to a Difficult Economy' \(speech\)](#)

European Maritime Day 2012

Gothenburg has been designated the host of the European Maritime Day for 2012. The annual two-day event, which will be held on 21-22 May next year, provides an opportunity for maritime and coastal stakeholders to share experiences and discuss opportunities related to the importance of seas and oceans and the challenges facing maritime regions and sectors.

On 17 November, a meeting will be organised in Brussels to inform stakeholders about how they can get involved in the event itself and avail of the opportunity to exhibit and hold meetings in connection with it.

www.emd2012.se/

Rural Energy Day

Local representatives and energy solution providers met recently in Brussels for the second annual Rural Energy Day. Stakeholders at the event called for more political attention and financial incentives from the EU and its Member States to the needs of rural areas in order to enable them to generate their own energy in a more sustainable way through less carbon-intensive solutions.

The occasion also saw a new study published, showing the demand patterns for energy used by consumers in rural areas and how these are influenced by lower economic activity. The study highlights the potential of rural areas to increase their use of renewable energy, through such technologies as solar panels, photovoltaics or biomass.

[Further details](#)

[Study](#)

ICT for Local Energy Efficiency website

The Commission's DG for Information Society & Media and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) has recently launched the ICT for Energy Efficiency wiki-site to share information about local and regional ICT initiatives to improve energy efficiency. The wiki-style toolkit is structured in two parts: a practical guidance section, in the form of 12 'walk throughs' to enable local and regional authorities to explore how to progress energy efficiency initiatives; and specific case studies of where local and regional authorities from across the EU have used ICT to implement energy efficiency initiatives. The initiative followed a 2008 CoR opinion on how to address the challenge of energy efficiency through ICT which suggested the need for the EU institutions to provide practical guidance on the issue for local and regional climate change plans.

ict4eewiki.eu

Survey on procurement of ICT

The Commission has recently launched a survey on the purchasing of ICT goods and services. The survey, which is linked to the objectives of the 'Digital Agenda for Europe' flagship initiative, is open to public bodies and ICT suppliers and will provide important input towards the development of guidelines to help ICT procurers to purchase ICT based on standards that are accessible across the supplier market. This will also promote competition and avoid inefficient supplier dependence.

Deadline: 14 November

[Further details](#)

EVENTS

Measuring green energy impacts

18 November, Thurles

The SERVE project, funded by the FP7 Concerto initiative, has been developing a sustainable energy best practice and demonstration zone in North Tipperary since 2007. Under the coordination of LIT Tipperary and with the local County Council and Tipperary Energy Agency as key partners, it has supported energy upgrades in 400 buildings, facilitated the installation of a wide range of renewable energy systems, developed biomass heating systems and been prominent in the development of the Eco Village in Cloughjordan.

This conference will address 'Measuring the Impacts of Sustainable Energy Projects' including in relation to job creation and retention; economic activity including investment costs; and energy savings and production. Speakers will profile methodologies and results from activities across Ireland and the EU. The previous day will include site visits to the Eco Village and a House Retrofitted with a Monitoring System.

www.servecommunity.ie

Urban Biodiversity

24 November, Brussels

This half-day informal event organised by the ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability network will examine local implementation of EU biodiversity policy and efforts to enhance species protection in various urban settings. The occasion will also see the awarding of the winners of the 'European Capitals of Biodiversity' awards.

[Further details](#)

Ageing regions' transformation

29 November, Brussels

The mid-term conference of the Interreg IVC DART project, to which the West Regional Authority is a partner, will examine results emerging to date from the project's demographic change activities. These include indicator development, comparative regional benchmarking, good practice identification, and transfer of approaches. The event will also discuss rural demographics in the context of future EU Cohesion Policy and profile other Interreg projects on the issue.

[Further details](#)

Sustainable investment through future Cohesion Policy

29 November, Brussels

'Green economy to the rescue: How the new Cohesion Policy can steer Europe's regions towards a sustainable economy' is a forthcoming conference organised by a coalition of environmental NGOs (BirdLife International, CEE Bankwatch Network, Friends of the Earth Europe, Transport & Environment, WWF). It will bring together representatives from the EU institutions and national and regional stakeholders, to discuss how investment opportunities in the environmental, energy efficiency and green technology sectors can be combined with a reformed

Regional Policy to steer Europe's regions towards delivering on the EU's sustainable development objectives (climate, biodiversity and resource efficiency) and achieving their own long-term growth over the coming years.

[Further details](#)

TEMPUS Information Day

2 December, Dublin

The Institute of Technology sector (which has, to date, not been a prominent participant) may find it interesting to consider TEMPUS – the programme for higher education cooperation with the EU's Partner Countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean. This offers a means by which to develop initial international linkages and staff and intercultural exchanges with other institutions which may lead in time to further joint activities including course development and research and technology transfer opportunities.

[Further details](#)

Railway station district development

8 December, Brussels

Innovative strategies and practices which emphasise the key role of railway stations in the interface between transport and urban development will be profiled at this seminar. Four inspiring examples from Picardie, Breda, Leuven and Kent will emphasise how station districts can be improved in terms of partnerships, capacity building and funding approaches in relation to EU Cohesion Policy.

<http://en.vleva.eu/railway>

Research & Innovation for regions and cities

13 December, Brussels

As the EU finalises its legal proposals for future funding arrangements under a

Common Strategic Framework to better align the Structural Funds, the enlarged Horizon 2020 R&D programme and the new Competitiveness & Innovation Framework Programme (CIP), the significance of the research and innovation agendas for regional policy continues to grow. The Committee of the Regions Forum 'EU research and innovation: What role for regions and cities after 2013?' aims to provide local, regional and national administrations; the higher education sector and development agencies with an opportunity to discuss the consequences of these proposals and of the broader Europe 2020 growth strategy for facilitating coordination of research and innovation strategies at regional level. The Forum will also present good practice of current regional innovation programmes and projects, showcasing how to match EU priorities and programmes with specific territorial challenges.

www.cor.europa.eu/innovation

The staff of this office can be requested to attend events or provide representation at meetings in Brussels on behalf of local and regional authorities.



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