

# 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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in association with the Institute of Public Administration.



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three sectors outlined and established in at least 3 EU Member States.

The aims of these partnerships would be to favour social inclusion and integration into the labour market by:

- fostering greater awareness by the business world of corporate social responsibility particularly in local communities;
- proposing effective solutions to the socio-economic problems suffered by each specific area and target group; and
- generating measurable results in terms of integration of vulnerable groups, with a particular attention to the integration of early school leavers and unemployed young people into society and the labour market.

Five projects, EU co-financed at up to 80%, are expected to benefit from the €1.5 million budget.

**Deadline: 2 March**

[Further details](#)

2.3 Exploit the renewable energy potential of the marine and coastal environment;

(€10.47 million is available for these two priorities combined);

3.1 Promote interoperability and continuity of existing transport networks, and sea/road/rail/air intermodality; and

3.2 Promote short sea shipping and cooperation between ports;

(€10.6 million is available for these two priorities combined).

**Likely deadline: 30 April**

**An information day on the call is scheduled for EU House, Dublin on 25 January.**

[Further details](#)

### **Upcoming call & Information day: LIFE+**

The 2011 call for proposals for the LIFE+ programme is set to be launched in mid-February with a submission deadline of mid-July. Applicants should note that the schedule which had applied since 2007 of an annual call in May has been altered. Only very minor changes from the 2010 call text are expected.

Consequently, this year's national Information session is taking place on 3 March. The event will be organised by the Commission's DG Environment in the premises of the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

Part 1 is aimed at newcomers with little or no knowledge of the programme and its requirements while Part 2 will provide more detailed information for anyone

## FUNDING, NETWORKING & PROJECTS

### **Call: Social Enterprise**

A call for proposals for a pilot project designed to promote effective new models for "all inclusive cooperation" between public institutions, companies and social enterprises has been launched as part of the PROGRESS programme.

Proposals must be developed and implemented by a transnational partnership comprising consortia of organisations representing each of the

### **Upcoming Call: Atlantic Area**

The third call for proposals for the INTERREG IVB Atlantic Area programme is likely to be opened on 14 February. It is intended to make the remaining €23 million budget of the programme available should suitable quality applications be received. The call will be confined to the following objectives:

1.2 Enhance competitiveness and innovation capacities in maritime economy niches of excellence (€1.98 million available);

2.1 Improve maritime safety; and

considering submitting a proposal plus an overview of changes compared to previous years, and advice on how to fill-in the application forms. Unlike with certain other programmes' information days, tailored project development 'surgeries' will not be available to promoters.

[Programme website](#)

**Info Day registration deadline: 17 February**

[Further details](#)

### **Upcoming restricted call: Northern Periphery**

The Northern Periphery Programme will launch a strategic call – its seventh overall – on 14 January. This will be by invitation only based on recommendations made in a recent evaluation on the programme to address gap areas in the programme by identifying and developing cluster groups around the themes of rural healthcare, climate change and renewable energies.

Separately, on 20 December a preparatory application process across all programme themes was launched. Any preparatory projects that have been approved recently & any preparatory proposals under consideration are free to apply.

[Further details](#)

### **INTERREG NWE approvals and next call**

The North West Europe Programme Steering Committee (PSC) conditionally approved 15 more projects (including 4 strategic initiative projects and a strategic cluster) at its meeting in Glasgow on 2-3 December. The Programme received 40 project applications at the 7<sup>th</sup> call for proposals.

€46.12 million was allocated to the approved projects. With 66 projects ongoing or approved, the total amount of allocated ERDF funds now stands at 67% of the programme budget. The remaining 33% or €109.3m can be broken down as follows:

- Innovation (Priority 1) €37.95m;
- Environmental Challenges (Priority 2) €10.14m;
- Connectivity (Priority 3) €34.1m; and
- Strong Communities (Priority 4) €27.09m.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Call for Proposals will open on 4 March and close on 1 April.

[More information on the 7<sup>th</sup> call results](#)

**Catch up on previous calls for proposals [here](#)**

### **LIFE+ consultation**

On 30 November, the European Commission launched an online public consultation to gather views on the objectives which should underpin the next EU financial instrument for the environment and to ascertain how this support can be delivered. Contributions are welcomed from national, regional and local administrations, environmental stakeholders, the private sector, and the general public. Responses to the wider consultation will be taken into account in the Commission's proposal for a new instrument to succeed LIFE+ in the post -2013 period.

[LIFE+ consultation](#)  
(**deadline: 15 February**)

### **2011 EU Budget agreed – extra allocations for programmes**

The European Parliament adopted the 2011 EU Budget at its Plenary Session in Strasbourg on 15 December in response to the Council's 10 December decision to do likewise. This outcome, based on a Commission compromise, overcame an impasse between the two institutions (see last month's *Bulletin*).

Although some areas of contention relating to Parliament's influence on the future financial framework and the EU's potential for deploying its "own resources" remain to be ironed out during the next 6-month period, this adoption clarifies future funding commitments for initiatives prioritised by MEPs such as the Lifelong Learning Programme (which is given an additional allocation of €18 million); Youth in Action (€3 million); the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (€10 million); Intelligent Energy - Europe (€10 million); LIFE+ (€6.7 million) and DAPHNE (€2.35 million).

[Further details](#)

### **Project: Transport Promotion**

The Press4Transport (P4T) project brings together scientific experts in the field of sustainable surface transport (SST) and media specialists to explain local and regional European transport and logistics initiatives ongoing across the EU.

The promoters, through the European Journalism Centre and in association with the European Commission's DG Research, have launched a website platform and are seeking to include details of ongoing transport-related projects that are innovative yet overlooked and could be interesting for the press if showcased across Europe.

[Further details](#)

**Partner search requests received  
(relating to current calls):**

- Maintaining cultural heritage and revitalising (agro)cultural landscapes (Interreg IVC)
- Promoting diversified entrepreneurship/self-employment as a solution to unemployment (Leonardo/Grundtvig)
- Supporting women immigrants to engage in local activities, accredited skills training and intercultural activities (Integration of Third Country Nationals).
- Development and trial of a modular course to equip mainstream teachers with the knowledge, skills and strategies to meet the academic language learning needs of students from beyond the EU (Integration of Third Country Nationals).
- Developing a linked system of Centres of Excellence for technology or knowledge transfer, promoting the translation of research knowledge into business innovations (Interreg NWE).
- New urban regeneration perspectives for 1960s/1970s buildings.
- Overcoming inner-city barriers created by infrastructure.
- European Port Access System.
- Energy: development of Smart Grid technology; CO2 efficient districts; household consumption.

**Contact the office for further details.**

**We can also circulate your draft project ideas to regions across Europe as required.**

**NEWS & POLICY**

***Irish response to EU Atlantic Strategy***

‘As one of the truly maritime nations of the Union....Ireland by virtue of its large marine and offshore territories and the economic resources they hold (maritime territorial capital), is one of the larger contributors in terms of maritime space to the European Atlantic Area.’ So states the finalised Irish national position in response to the consultation on the Commission’s proposed Integrated Strategy for the Atlantic.

This broadly positive paper sets out a series of priority marine and maritime areas which Ireland sees as offering added value for ‘macro-region level’ cooperation among the five Atlantic EU Member States concerned. These ambitions for a greater degree of pooling of resources primarily relate to progressing the ‘Europe 2020’ goals for smart, sustainable and socially inclusive recovery and growth and its ‘Innovation Union’ initiative in particular.

These include collective efforts to improve:

- the implementation of EU policies and Directives in areas such as fisheries and energy;
- the competitiveness and sustainability of traditional sectors (e.g. maritime transport, seafood, marine tourism);
- global market breakthroughs to exploit current or emerging Atlantic strengths in new environmentally driven services and products (e.g. ocean energy, marine biotechnology) – including through bilateral/transnational research and innovation strategies;
- Maritime/Innovation Cluster development to promote a range of new value-added products and services;
- exchange of and shared access to expertise and specialist infrastructures;

- the quantification and mapping of the economic and quality of life values of Atlantic Seaboard resources;
- maritime safety, surveillance and emergency response as well as environmental and security monitoring; strategic and joined-up use of national and EU Funding Programmes towards common priorities.

The paper also recommends an Atlantic approach to addressing environmental protection including implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, addressing climate change and loss of biodiversity issue, noise pollution etc.

Interestingly, it emphasises that definition of the geographical scope of the European Atlantic Area needs to be determined on a case-by-case basis according to the different economic development, maritime safety/security, environmental protection and governance issues being addressed.

In a further development, four of the Member States – Ireland, France, Spain and Portugal – have formulated and submitted a ‘common contribution’ paper to the Commission.

The Association of Irish Regions submitted its own contribution on the Atlantic Strategy Communication in October and held a conference on marine spatial planning in Wexford at the end of that month to highlight areas of potential direct significance for the local and regional levels.

***Service innovation for sustainable rural tourism***

The use of innovative mobile technology and mobility service solutions to sustainably bolster the tourism of remote regions was the theme of a 22-

23 November conference in Valle d'Aosta, Italy. Concepts from different regions that could make the cultural and leisure offer of rural areas smarter, more attractive and more accessible were presented and discussed. The event included a presentation of the activities of Sligo County Development Board's 'Creative Sligo Partnership'.

The Commission's Enterprise and Industry Directorate General used the occasion to announce that the forthcoming 'European Mobile and Mobility Alliance' (EMMIA) - a cross-sectoral initiative focused on more sustainable solutions in the field of transport and logistics - would be providing incentives for public-private initiatives rolling out innovative mobile and mobility solutions in support of employment-creating tourism.

#### Presentations

#### **Open access to EU research findings**

As of 2 December, EU researchers, businesses and citizens can have free access to data and knowledge produced by scientists receiving EU grants from the Seventh Framework R&D programme (FP7) and the European Research Council (ERC).

OpenAIRE (Open Access Infrastructure for Research in Europe) is a public repository launched by the European Commission which will offer online access to peer-reviewed papers within 6-12 months of publication. It relates especially to activities in the fields of health, energy, environment, information and communication technology and research infrastructures, social sciences, humanities and science in society. This initiative to make EU-funded research more widely available is in line with the recently launched 'Digital Agenda for Europe' and 'Innovation Union'.

#### Further details

#### **E-Government Action Plan**

The European eGovernment Action Plan, published on 15 December, aims to support the transition to a new generation of open, flexible and seamless services at local, regional, national and EU levels to enable citizens and businesses to use online services for their interaction with administrations.

The plan highlights the benefits that promoting eGovernment can have in helping boost competitiveness and allowing public authorities to offer cost-effective but improved services. It is further intended to open the way to allowing users to actively shape the online public services which suit their needs best.

The key action lines include forty specific measures to be implemented over the next five years – particularly applied to the cross-border functionality of eGovernment services.

These include empowerment of users in public sector information service development and policy-making; more efficient and greener public administration organisational processes (e.g. electronic procurement); and putting in place pre-conditions for developing eGovernment such as open specifications or applying the European Interoperability Framework, and providing key enablers such as pan-EU mutual recognition of e-identification and revision of the eSignature Directive.

#### e-Government Action Plan

#### **Report: Banks hampering SME access to EIB loans**

Two autumns ago the European Investment Bank (EIB) announced a stimulus package in response to the emerging credit crunch which included the immediate deployment of an additional €15 billion package to help support the small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector across the EU. These "global loans", instigated at the request of EU finance ministers, were intended to be provided to third party intermediaries (predominantly commercial banks), who would then lend out the funds along with their own contribution to borrowers.

A report from Bankwatch, a Prague-based transparency campaign group, published in early December, assesses the effectiveness of global loan lending in disbursing funds to SMEs in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia from 2008 to June 2010. The report alleges that the bulk of these resources have been hoarded by the banking sector for liquidity purposes instead of being released to the intended recipients. It has found that just 0.001% of all SME businesses in these countries had received any EIB loan allocations.

From the supply side this has in turn meant that only 74% of the €15 billion has so far been disbursed by the EIB to intermediary banks with a significant portion of this thought to be remaining in the hands of the banks.

This would seem to tally with the experiences of Irish SMEs in terms of accessing credit over the same period and the report focuses in part on the situation of EIB loans provided specifically for Ireland – citing the scepticism of Chambers Ireland that any real trickle down is occurring.

The new report backs up similar findings by the Council of Europe's European Bank for Reconstruction and

Development in an investigation earlier this year into the effect of its own SME lending practices in response to the crisis. In that case complaints were made not only about commercial banks unwillingness to comply with the agreed terms but also about widespread prohibitive pricing of loans.

[Report](#)

### **All-Island Spatial Data resource**

The National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) and the National Centre for Geo-computation (NCG) at NUI Maynooth have launched the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) website - a free resource for the public sector and civil society organisations. It includes a number of different mapping and data modules designed to improve evidence-based decision making.

AIRO makes a set of spatial datasets at various scales - local, county, regional, all-island, and European - available along with a suite of specialist tools to aid their analysis. These include:

- Data on 14 key themes (including agriculture, demographics, economy, education, health, housing, regional development, transport) plus access to a series of key statistics and datasets, plus an inventory of pre-prepared maps, and of key publications and organisations.
- 95 interactive census Mapping Modules for each of the local authority, regional authority or partnership areas that allow users to produce thematic maps on housing, Live Register, community, regional economy, social deprivation, and unfinished estates. Interactive time series data and statistical information is also available.
- Geographical Profiling - enabling the creation of detailed census

profiles of any user defined area on the island of Ireland as well as catchments and specific buffer distances. This includes the locations of key geo-referenced places.

The website also contains a 'News and Events' section to keep up-to-date with the latest news and events in relation to spatial data and evidence informed analysis in Ireland.

Register at <http://www.airo.ie>

### **Natura 2000 consultation**

A consultation on financing Natura 2000 nature protection areas was launched at the end of November.

In its spring 2010 Council, Environment Ministers emphasised the need to put in place adequate finance and effective management and restoration measures for the birds and habitats sites which form the network. By mid-2011 the Commission plans to issue a new Communication on this issue, in collaboration with Member States, to assess the adequacy of the current approach of integrating the financing of Natura sites into the funding streams of different EU policy sectors. The cost, which is mainly borne by Member States, is estimated at an annual €6 billion.

[Financing NATURA 2000 consultation \(deadline: 17 February\)](#)

[Stakeholder conference \(June 2010\)](#)

### **RegioNetwork 2020**

A new professional networking website on regional policy has been launched by the European Commission. RegioNetwork 2020 is an on-line forum for exchanges of good practice and

discussions relating to all aspects of EU Cohesion Policy. It is also designed to support 'Europe 2020' the EU's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Organisations such as local and regional authorities as well as individuals may register.

[www.regionetwork2020.eu](http://www.regionetwork2020.eu)

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Cities' responses to economic crisis**

'URBACT Cities facing the Crisis - Impact and Responses' provides a summary of the findings from a recently concluded pan-European survey and a series of case studies reflecting 10 selected cities' solutions to deal with the effects of the economic downturn.

Dublin is among the cities to be profiled in-depth. A particular emphasis in the report is placed on efforts to use the crisis as an opportunity to build consensus among local actors, including local authorities, and to achieve active involvement in devising a strategic direction and long-term priorities for the national capital as a competitive "global city". The Lord Mayor's Commission on Employment (LMCE) is cited as a key milestone with its set of recommendations now due to be delivered through the new City Development Plan and the Economic Development Action Plan for the Dublin City Region

[Further details](#)

### **Land Use Management for Sustainable Cities**

LUMASEC is a recently concluded URBACT project which aimed to identify the scope of strategic and operational action for European cities in land use planning. The consortium behind the project has published a final handbook providing strategies and tools for decision-makers regarding this challenge.

['Sustainable Land Use Management in Europe'](#)

## **EVENTS**

### **Sustainable mobility Brussels, 9-10 February**

The *Intermodes 2011* Convention will be devoted to discussing passenger transport intermodality in order to share concrete solutions for the joint development of sustainable mobility. 4 specific themes will be addressed:

- Community/voluntary initiatives to facilitate access to sustainable mobility through intermodality;
- Intermodality and geographical accessibility (cross-border etc.);
- Technology at the service of accessibility, including interoperability, integrated ticketing, signage and intermodal hubs;
- Intermodality at the service of accessibility.

[Further details](#)

### **Culture in Motion Brussels, 15-16 February**

The European Commission's third 'Culture in Motion' Conference will aim

to ascertain the added value of transnational cultural cooperation projects supported by the EU and to pinpoint what it is that European financing enables the cultural sector to achieve that would not otherwise have been possible.

Plenary sessions will explore issues including cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage; access to heritage and cultural works; and strengthening the development and professionalisation of the sector. A showcase of projects funded by the Culture Programme and other EU programmes including the Leitrim Design House (Peace II) is intended to underline the significant role of culture in enhancing smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and supporting other EU policies. Day 2 of the event will run into the Stakeholder Consultation Meeting on the next EU Culture Programme.

[Registration \(deadline: 31 January\)](#)

### **Urban Innovation London, 28 February – 1 March**

A major international conference, 'Future of Cities: Centres of Innovation for Urban Solutions' will focus on the key economic, climate, resources, infrastructure, and demographics challenges faced by rapidly growing urban areas. This event will attempt to address whether cities have the powers and resources they need to adequately meet these challenges and whether national government policies on the economy, energy, transport and migration align sufficiently well with cities' needs.

[Further details](#)

### **Sustainable Energy Brussels, 12-14 April**

Hundreds of events discussing and promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy are scheduled to take place in Brussels and also across Europe as 'Local Events' during the European Sustainable Energy Week in April.

[Further details](#)

**Upon request, IRO staff may be available to attend events in Brussels on behalf of local and regional authorities.**



**Irish Regions**  
Brussels Office  
*Oifig Réigiún na hÉireann, An Bhrúxail*

*Working for Ireland's  
local and regional levels in Europe*

Rond-Point Schuman, 11  
B-1040 Brussels  
[www.iro.ie](http://www.iro.ie)

Robert Collins      Ronan Gingles  
Head of Office      EU Policy, Research  
   & Communications

[robert.collins@iro.ie](mailto:robert.collins@iro.ie)    [ronan.gingles@iro.ie](mailto:ronan.gingles@iro.ie)

Tel: +3222331122      Tel: +3222331120  
GSM: +32498120821    GSM: +32493203666