

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:

Funding:

Energy efficiency and renewables

Local development research

SME Data Resources

Employment & Social Affairs

Ambient Assisted Living

News & Policy:

Resource efficiency

Regional Assemblies' position on future Structural Funds

Fifth Cohesion Forum

Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion

Modernising public procurement

Socially responsible procurement

Green public sector vehicles

Financing services of general interest

Integrating Europe's periphery into transport networks

Sustainable water management at local level

Future prospects for cities, rural areas and energy

Societal role of sport

Maritime Spatial Planning

Single Market for Services

Entrepreneurial dimension of Cultural and Creative Industries

Employment & Social Affairs Survey

Local authorities' LIFE+ projects

FUNDING, NETWORKING & PROJECTS

Call: INTELLIGENT ENERGY -EUROPE

The Intelligent Energy - Europe II (IEE) programme supports non-technological contributions and promotional activities to widen the uptake of and leverage investment in efficient energy approaches and renewable energy sources (RES) with a view to improving the sustainability and development of cities' and regions' energy potential.

Key Actions have been established across all 4 programme strands in this year's Work Programme whose Call for Proposals opened on 18 January with a €67 million budget (75% co-financing).

SAVE (improving energy efficiency and rational use of resources, in particular in the building and industry sectors):

- **Energy-efficient products:**
 - Boosting market share (eco-design & energy labelling directives);
 - Procurement opportunities.
- **Industrial excellence in energy:**
 - Increased SME competitiveness (areas of untapped potential);
 - Cross-sector conservation schemes (especially audit or financing schemes for waste heat recovery).

ALTENER (diversification of renewable energy resources and their integration into the local environment and energy systems):

- **Electricity from RES:**
 - Grid issues (e.g. smart metering; offshore authorisation);
 - Mitigating the consequences

and impacts (social, environmental etc.) of infrastructure.

- **RES in heating/cooling:**
 - Existing public buildings' changeover to renewable systems;
 - District networks (e.g. CHP) – integrated planning/management.
- **Bioenergy supply** (solid biomass, liquid biofuels, biogas)
- **'Strategic Initiatives'** – analyse & streamline regulation.

STEER (energy aspects of transport and the diversification of fuels).

- **Energy-efficient transport** reducing demand for car travel and road freight, modal shift to more efficient transport means):
 - Developing local authority sustainable urban/peri-urban mobility plans;
 - Urban freight distribution;
 - Leisure travel (behavioural change).
- **Clean & energy-efficient vehicles:**
 - Market transformation;
 - Implementation of the Clean Vehicle Directive.

Integrated Initiatives:

- **Local energy leadership:**
 - Long-term exchange and capacity-building cooperation between experienced and 'learning' public authorities to integrate Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAPs) into their operations;
 - Collaboration between public authorities and other local actors, in particular energy utilities.
- **Mobilising local energy investments** (non-transnational).
- **'Nearly zero-energy' buildings.**

The programme's list of approved projects arising from the 2010 Call were published in January. No Irish organisations were successful on this occasion.

Deadline: 12 May

[Further details](#)

[Information Day package](#)

Call: ESPON (research towards local/regional development needs)

A call for proposals for the ESPON 2013 Programme to support policy development in relation to ensuring territorial cohesion and balanced development was published on 25 January. The Programme aims to provide regions and cities with opportunities to access comparable analysis on their own territorial dynamics and to reveal territorial assets and areas of potential for sustainable development. This Call relates to three separate Priorities:

Applied Research Projects (Priority 1) are required to support policy development by creating Europe-wide, comparable information and evidence on territorial dynamics, potentials and challenges focusing on development opportunities for regions and cities. From a budget of €3.1 million, one project will be financed from each of the following topics:

- European Regions: Potential Contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy;
- Territorial Scenarios and Visions for Europe;
- Territorial Potentials for a Greener Economy;
- Territorial Governance – Best Practices for New Perspectives.

Targeted Analyses (Priority 2) allow that particular local/regional development circumstances may be informed by wider and comparative European territorial contexts – namely the deployment of techniques and results arising from previous/existing

ESPON actions undertaken by reference to other territories, regions and cities. Expressions of interest are required at this stage for project ideas from stakeholder organisations representing either national administrations or groups of public authorities at regional/local level in 3 different countries. At the subsequent stage, the necessary research expertise corresponding to identified requirements will be allocated via a call for proposals jointly specified by the programme authorities and the successful stakeholders.

It is planned to allocate €1.795 million to 5 Targeted Analysis projects which may relate to:

- integrated studies and thematic analyses,
- knowledge support to innovative and experimental actions; or
- joint actions among Structural Funds Programmes' Managing Authorities.

Priority 3 covers proposals within the Scientific Platform on the EU Territorial Monitoring and Reporting System towards policy development processes (€598,000 for a single project).

An information day is scheduled to take place in Brussels on 10 February. While this is already fully subscribed the associated documentation will be made available from the programme website shortly afterwards. In advance, potential applicants can improve their prospects of getting involved by filling in and submitting a 'Partner Information Form' reflecting their interests and ambitions.

Deadline: 21 March

[Further details](#)

[Partner Information Form](#)

Call: SME Data Resources

Actions under the FP7 Cooperation Call 'SME Initiative on Digital Content and Languages' aim to make it easier for small businesses in particular to exploit and contribute to data resources or

specialised tools which would otherwise be overly expensive to obtain and maintain. Overcoming linguistic barriers to data pooling is a further objective.

User-centred experimentation will also be supported with the aim of demonstrating the integration of data-intensive technologies within innovative solutions and processes.

Deadlines: 28 April, 28 September

[Further details](#)

Upcoming Call:

Employment & Social Affairs

The Commission's DG Employment & Social Affairs has released information regarding three calls for proposals that will be published in the course of February:

- Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue;
- Information and training measures for workers' organisations;
- Information consultation and participation of representatives of undertakings.

The terms of the calls will be largely in line with those of their 2010 equivalents. Deadlines are likely to follow at the end of March/early April.

[Further details](#)

Upcoming Call:

Ambient Assisted Living (AAL)

The next call on 'enhancing mobility of older people with ICT' is expected to be launched at the end of March with a deadline towards the end of June.

[Further details](#)

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

Interreg IVB Atlantic Area

Details pertaining to the upcoming final call of the Interreg IVB Atlantic Area Programme (see last month's bulletin for a full article) were provided at a national Information Day held in Dublin on 25 January. The information, along with a presentation given by this office on alternative EU funding options for energy, transport and maritime activities, is available from the BMW Regional Assembly website.

[Further details](#)

European Public Sector Award

Entries are being sought for the European Public Sector Award 2011. This is an opportunity for innovative and successful public achievements and projects to be recognized across three themes:

- 1: Smart Public Service Delivery in a Cold Economic Climate
- 2: Opening Up the Public Sector through Collaborative Governance
- 3: Going Green: Concrete Solutions from the Public Sector.

There is no requirement for entries to have any EU-supported element.

Deadline: 25 March

www.epsa2011.eu

Partner search requests received this month:

Interreg IVC:

- Green Economy Development Areas - strategic visions and management models at local and regional level.
- Regional Open Governments 2.0 - social networks, open data and transparency for improved public actions.
- Learning by surfing: Promotion of a smart ICT use for rural youth.
- Entrepreneurial camps for Social Tourism Development to encourage young entrepreneurs.

- Risk prevention in port loading activities through ICT simulation.
- SME Technology Transfer Policies.
- Designing a toolkit for best practice in employer-responsive course design.
- Early-years support programmes for new SMEs.
- Defining the conditions for setting up a digital cooperative.

Other programmes:

- Healthcare and care of the elderly in their regular housing (Leonardo)
- Promoting careers in engineering through closer partnership between the public, education and private sectors (Leonardo).
- Integrating an entrepreneurial perspective into schools (Comenius).
- Providing social and educational tools for the comprehensive care and integration of young students in intercultural settings (Leonardo).
- Exploring music heritage projects using new media for user-communities (Leonardo).
- Youth choirs (Youth in Action).

Contact the office for further details of the above or to have your own draft ideas circulated to potential partners in regions across Europe.

NEWS & POLICY

Sustainable growth through resource efficiency

The final of seven Flagship Initiatives to have been adopted by the Commission under the 'Europe 2020' growth strategy was launched on 26 January. The 'Resource-efficient Europe' Communication sets out a systemic approach towards mainstreaming resource efficiency within EU policies on energy, transport, climate change,

biodiversity, agriculture, fisheries, industry, commodities and regional development.

It establishes a strategic policy framework by which it is intended to deliver a more sustainable use of natural resources and the shift towards resource-efficient growth. This transformation entails ambitions to decouple economic growth from undue impact on environmental raw materials, water, air and ecosystems; to encourage a significant shift towards a low-carbon economy; to increase the use of renewable energy sources; to modernise the transport sector; and to promote energy efficiency.

The annex to the Communication mentions 20 proposals to be tabled during the coming year for initiatives to green the economy by improving the balance between the requirements of business and of resource management. These include the European Energy Efficiency Plan 2020, White Paper on the future of Transport, reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, and a roadmap to a low-carbon economy by 2050. The latter is expected to be presented by the summer and should identify the long-term changes needed to achieve this transition. This will propose new policy initiatives to enhance synergies between different policy fields, in particular to stimulate greater innovation for short-term and long-term economic and environmental benefits. It may also involve the setting of national performance targets.

[Communication on a resource-efficient Europe](#)

On the same date, the Commission also adopted a Communication setting out the role of EU regional policy in contributing to the implementation of a resource efficient Europe. This document provides recommendations for those in Member States responsible for managing Structural Funding on how best to harness EU investment to achieve a low carbon, resource efficient,

climate resilient and competitive economy.

[‘Regional Policy contributing to sustainable growth in Europe 2020’](#)

Future shape of Regional Policy: Assemblies’ Joint Position

Ireland’s Regional Assemblies have forwarded a joint submission to the European Commission as part of the consultation process on the policy proposals of the Fifth Cohesion Report which was adopted in November.

This follows upon last year’s joint Assemblies declaration on the future of EU Cohesion Policy from 2014 onwards which highlighted the benefits for Ireland of the policy being based on a long-term development approach with an explicit spatial orientation to enable all regions to achieve their territorial potential.

In essence, the Assemblies support the continuation of an ambitious policy which places territorial cohesion and regional competitiveness at its core. Key recommendations include:

- Making the concept of Territorial Cohesion, as set out in the Lisbon Treaty, an explicit objective to underpin national actions towards meeting the employment, innovation, climate, education and poverty targets of the Europe 2020 growth strategy (finalised National Reform Programmes for 2011-2013 are to be delivered by each Member State by April);
- Avoidance of a ‘one-size-fits-all’ development approach in favour of a clear definition of region-specific investment needs;
- The adoption of a clearly defined and expanded intermediary (“transition”) category of Structural Funding assistance - including special recognition for regions whose GDP levels have fallen significantly due to the current economic crisis;

- An approach to performance monitoring where the delivery and impact of results are prioritised in the first instance over financial accountancy considerations;
- Greater joined-up design and management of the major funds (ERDF, ESF, EAFRD and EFF) via a common strategic framework - complemented by national-level strategic priorities;
- Maximising the complementarities between the Structural Funds and sectoral EU policies and programmes;
- Future EU Financial Engineering Instruments (e.g. non-grant support initiatives for regeneration and enterprise financial) to be developed at a scale and complexity realistic and appropriate to the needs and administrative capacities of regions of all sizes;

[Joint submission](#)
or contact this office for a copy.

Fifth Cohesion Forum

The consultation phase arising from the Cohesion Report closed with the recent Fifth Cohesion Forum – a high-level event in Brussels where possible future policy directions and their relationship to the Europe 2020 strategy were debated at length. The presentations and speeches from the forum will be available from the DG REGIO website shortly.

The next important step in this process is the publication of proposals on the rules for Structural Funds post-2013, which, along with the proposals for the next multi-annual financial framework, are expected to be ready in June. In the meantime, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions will prepare their own reports informing the future policy.

The Hungarian presidency of the EU is working on ensuring that Member States adopt formal conclusions on the Fifth Cohesion Forum before resuming discussions and negotiations at the Informal Regional Policy Council on 20 – 21 May.

[Cohesion Forum](#)

‘Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion’

In what is being touted as the beginning of a new phase in European policies for social inclusion the Commission has presented its ‘European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion’ – the penultimate Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative to be launched.

The Platform establishes a framework of initiatives designed to address the causes and impacts of deprivation and to ensure that those experiencing poverty and social exclusion are enabled to live in dignity and take an active part in society.

This ‘framework for social and territorial cohesion’ is intended to represent the EU contribution to addressing these challenges within the Europe 2020 strategy. It aims to create a joint commitment among the Member States, EU Institutions and key stakeholders with a view towards lifting at least 20 million Europeans above the poverty line over the next decade.

The Commission has identified the following growth- and employment-focused areas for action along with a host of “key initiatives”:

- Delivering actions across the policy spectrum (access to the labour market; social protection and access to essential services; education and youth policies; migration and integration of migrants; social inclusion and anti-discrimination; sectoral policies; and the external dimension);

- Greater and more effective use of the EU Funds to support social inclusion – including through developing an evidence-based approach to social innovations and reforms;
- Working in partnership at local, regional, national and European level and harnessing the potential of the social economy;
- Enhanced policy coordination among the Member States.

Building on the legacy of the 2010 'European Year against Poverty and Exclusion' is listed as a further objective.

['The European platform against poverty: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion'](#)
[Planned Key Initiatives](#)

Modernising public procurement - Green Paper

Last October, the Commission announced in the Single Market Act that it will make legislative proposals by 2012 at the latest to bring EU public procurement rules up-to-date. A Green Paper on the modernisation of public procurement was subsequently published on 27 January with the intention of opening a general debate on this issue to ensure that the eventual proposals will be informed by stakeholders' views.

The consultation paper sets out to make the award of public contracts easier and more flexible and to enable them to be put to better use in support of other policies. It places a high priority on the need to ensure better value for money and to reflect the needs of small contracting authorities through simplified procedures. The paper also explores ways of allowing procurement to support other objectives, such as reducing carbon emissions, increasing energy efficiency, and promoting innovation – including through taking

account of emerging regulations, standards and requirements.

Deadline: 13 April
[Further details](#)

Socially responsible public procurement guide

In a related development, the Commission has published a guide to help public authorities to buy goods and services in a socially responsible way in line with EU rules. This is of particular relevance to social services and updates a set of clarifications on issues of State Aid and public procurement published in November 2007.

['Buying social: a guide to take account of social considerations in public procurement'](#)

Green public sector vehicles – directive kicks in, new website

From December 2010 onwards, the Clean Vehicles Directive requires that purchasing decisions on road transport vehicles by public authorities must take into account the operational lifetime energy and environmental impacts. This encompasses energy consumption as well as emissions of CO₂, nitrogen oxides (NO_x), non-methane hydrocarbons (NMHC), and particulate matter as a minimum. This is to be achieved by either setting technical performance specifications for each of the impacts considered or by including energy and environmental impacts in the purchase documentation including using these impacts as procurement award criteria.

It is therefore timely that an easy-to-use website to help public authorities to choose the cleanest and most energy efficient vehicles available has just been launched by the European Commission.

The Clean Vehicle Portal provides information on legislation for clean and energy-efficient vehicles at EU level and in all Member States; provides access to technical data in the largest vehicle database in Europe; and facilitates joint procurement opportunities.

[Clean Vehicles Directive](#)
[Clean Vehicle Portal](#)

Criteria for financing services of general interest

Clarification of European rules applicable to the financing of services of general interest is the intention behind a new set of guidelines for public authorities released by the Commission. The guidance deals in particular with how Member States may ensure compliance with State Aid rules by applying levels of funding appropriate to the requirements of providing high quality and efficient services. A particular emphasis is placed on the local level in this regard.

Additionally, the guide clarifies the conditions under which the provision of social services can be limited to non-profit providers as well as specific guidance on the application of the Internal Market rules, and of the Services Directive, to social services.

[Guide](#)

Commission seeks to integrate periphery into transport networks

Siim Kallas, European Commissioner for Transport, has given a strong indication of the EU's interest in Transport Policy improving the accessibility of peripheral regions, including through the development of short and medium-distance maritime transport.

Speaking after a 26 January meeting with representatives of the 160-region Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) on developing a

partnership approach to the better integration of peripheral maritime regions in the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), the Commissioner gave the positive message that “on the basis of concrete ideas put forward by the CPMR, we can introduce, under the TEN-T, a special programme to improve the situation of peripheries”.

The CPMR’s 15 April seminar ‘For the revival of the European Maritime Transport Policy’ will now be largely devoted to elaborating the maritime aspect of this new approach with a view to its inclusion in the White Paper on Transport which should be adopted during the coming year.

[Further details](#)

Sustainable water management at local & regional level

With the European Commission due to carry out a review of EU water policy by 2012 (part of the Resource Efficiency Flagship Initiative - see earlier article), the Committee of the Regions (CoR) has been requested by the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU to undertake an ‘Outlook Opinion’ ‘The role of regional and local authorities in promoting a sustainable water policy’.

Given that water supply and conservation has become a significant issue for Irish local authorities, submissions are welcome via a brief online survey. The finalised report is to be presented in June. Input will also feed into the second CoR Monitoring Report on Europe 2020, to be published in December.

Deadline: 4 March

[Survey](#)

Research reveals prospects for cities, rural areas and energy

The ESPON 2013 Programme (see Funding section) has presented the methodologies used within its projects by bringing together researchers, practitioners and policy makers to explore comparative advantages and develop concepts, indicators, typologies and maps on territorial development, competitiveness and cohesion. A new report, including three scientific papers, addresses the importance of metropolitan agglomeration, the potential of rural areas and the territorial impacts and opportunities for the production of renewable energy..

[‘Scientific Dialogue on Cities, Rural Areas and Rising Energy Prices’](#)

Societal role of sport

In a Communication published on 18 January, the Commission has brought forward proposals to strengthen sport’s societal role, its economic dimension and its organisation.

The Lisbon Treaty gave the EU a mandate to support, coordinate and supplement sport policy measures taken by Member States and this is the first policy document to be issued accordingly. It builds on the 2007 White Paper on Sport by proposing concrete ideas for EU-level action to address challenges in sport and to help the sector develop. The paper proposes to develop European guidelines on combined sports training and general education, and to promote women’s access to leadership positions in sport.

[‘Developing the European Dimension in Sport’ \(Communication\)](#)

Maritime Spatial Planning Communication

The European Commission has published a Communication outlining a way forward for maritime spatial planning in the EU. The report looks at the results of a consultation process conducted during 2009, and concludes that action is needed at EU level. The rationale for further action is based on a number of reasons:

- proving legal certainty and transparency,
- further exploiting the potential of cross-border work – notably through a ‘sea basin’ approach),
- enhancing sustainable growth in the different maritime sectors, and,
- supporting the implementation of existing EU legislation.

The Commission has launched an impact assessment exploring a range of options to promote and develop maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management, which will be presented in 2011. Although the approach is generally supported by Member States, further legislative action in that area is likely to prove controversial as it infringes upon Member States’ territorial sovereignty.

[‘Maritime Spatial Planning in the EU - Achievements and Future’ \(Communication\)](#)

Single Market for Services

On 27 January the Commission presented the main results of a ‘mutual evaluation’ process to assess how the Member States have implemented the Services Directive to remove obstacles to the provision of services across the EU. The structural reforms required to create a Single Market for services are seen as being central to the Europe 2020 growth strategy.

Last October’s ‘Single Market Act’ brought forward a number of concrete

proposals to further deepen this ambition. Now the Commission has elaborated a set of actions which it believes can unlock the relatively untapped potential for business growth, employment and consumer benefits that are thought to exist in an integrated European market for services. This will entail:

- A "performance check" over the next two years to benchmark how the market and its various rules are or are not working from the (potential) service deliverers' perspectives;
- Removing obstacles, notably unnecessary regulatory barriers, to providing cross-border services without being permanently established in the country in question (a progress report on this is expected by the end of the year);
- Ensuring an ambitious implementation and thorough application of the Services Directive – including by carrying out an economic assessment of its effects and its impact on the functioning of the services markets.

[Further details](#)
[Single Market Act](#)

Entrepreneurial dimension of Cultural and Creative Industries

The European Commission has published a study concerning the growing importance of the creative economy, in particular the role of the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) in promoting entrepreneurship. It illustrates particular problems common to all CCIs, such as access to finance, market barriers, and intellectual property rights. A Call for Proposals relating to the European Creative Industries Alliance (ECIA) – a new platform that should help to better exploit the innovation potential of Europe's CCIs by helping to bring the

sector together – is expected to be published very shortly.

'The Entrepreneurial Dimension of the Cultural and Creative Industries'

Employment & Social Affairs Survey

The European Commission is inviting organisations and institutions active in the field of employment and social affairs, as well as those involved in national and EU policy formulation or implementation, to participate in the 2010 Annual Survey of the EU Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (PROGRESS).

[Survey](#)

PUBLICATIONS

LIFE+ Projects developed by local and regional authorities

'Life and local authorities' is a new compendium of LIFE+ projects developed at local and regional level in the fields of transport, waste, climate change, water and spatial planning. The document highlights how local and regional authorities play a key role in implementing EU environmental policy and reaching national and European objectives.

[Further details](#)

Comparative Local & Regional Government in Europe

The latest edition of 'Key Figures on Local and Regional Europe' has been released by Dexia and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). This annual statistical booklet,

reflecting figures for 2009 in this case, presents a comparative analysis of the extent, organisation and finances of local and regional government within each EU Member State.

[Report](#)

EVENTS

Sustainable Energy Week Brussels, 11-15 April

The EU's Sustainable Energy Week (EUSEW) for 2011 entails a calendar of seminars and workshops to discuss and promote renewable energy and energy efficiency. In tandem with the events scheduled to take place in Brussels, the organisation of 'Energy Days' events at local level over the course of the week is very much encouraged. None have yet been announced for Ireland.

[Further details](#)



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