

EU News Bulletin

The latest EU funding opportunities, news and events for local & regional government



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FUNDING CALLS

Fundamental Rights and Citizenship programme

Around 30 transnational projects of European interest will be supported from a total budget of €5.8 million for Action Grants under 6 themes:

- Protection of the rights of the child;
- Combating racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism;
- Fighting homophobia through enhanced understanding and tolerance;
- Active participation in democracy;
- Training and networking between legal professions/practitioners;
- Data protection and privacy rights.

Deadline: 22 April

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/rights/funding_rights_en.htm

TEN energy networks

The Commission is seeking proposals for projects of common interest relating to Trans-European Energy Networks (TEN-E). The aim is to encourage the effective operation and development of the internal market; reinforce the security of supplies and the diversification of energy suppliers and routes; facilitate the development and reduced isolation of less-favoured regions; and contribute to sustainable development and protection

of the environment by optimisation of network capacity and involving renewable energies. Initiatives relating to interconnectivity between networks are also encouraged.

Deadline: 24 April

http://ec.europa.eu/energy/infrastructure/grants/doc/2009/2009_ten_e_call_en.pdf

Drug Prevention

This call is launched within the Drug Prevention and Information Programme framework and aims at developing transnational projects on reducing drug dependence and related harm.

Deadline: 8 April

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/drugs/funding_drugs_en.htm

Study visits for education and vocational training specialists

To develop cooperation between Member States on Lifelong Learning issues and policies, CEDEFOP, the EU vocational training agency, is making funding available for short stay study visits from September onwards for groups of education and training specialists and decision-makers. Preferred themes include environmental education, youth entrepreneurship and opportunities for disadvantaged students.

Deadline: 9 April

<http://studyvisits.cedefop.europa.eu/index.asp?cid=1&artid=&scid=&artlang=EN>

Industrial Relations

- Information, Consultation and Participation of representatives of undertakings.

Deadline: 16 April

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=630&langId=en&callId=195&furtherCalls=yes>

- Information and training measures for workers' organisations.

Deadline: 24 April

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId>

Fight against violence

Grants are available under DAPHNE III for transnational awareness-raising projects on the prevention of violence against children, young people and women and on the protection of victims and groups at risk.

Deadline: 22 April

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/daphne3/funding_daphne3_en.htm

ICT for the Elderly

The Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) Joint Programme is supporting ICT based solutions to allow elderly citizens to remain active and socially connected.

Deadline: 5 May

<http://www.aal-europe.eu/>

Contact:

Gerard.Butler@enterprise-ireland.com

Combating Discrimination

PROGRESS support is available to national activities aiming at the identification of good practices in combating discrimination and promoting equality.

Deadline: 25 May

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=630&langId=en&callId=199&furtherCalls=yes>

Pending deadlines:

- 8 March: **PRO-INNO**
- 9 March: **Integration of Third Country Nationals**
- 23 March: **Refugee Fund**
- 31 March: **ICT and Energy**
- 1 April: **FP7 ICT**

Further details on these calls:

http://www.iro.ie/funding/news/funding_calls/

Partner Searches received by the IRO from other regions:

http://www.iro.ie/funding/news/partner_searches/

NEWS & POLICY

TENs transport review

In early February, the Commission launched a consultation Green Paper, 'Towards a better integrated Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) at the service of the Common Transport Policy'. This broad review process seeks the opinion of national governments, regional and local authorities, infrastructure managers, transport operators, financial institutions, and citizens on a set of the outlined policy objectives and options proposed to make the network of almost 100,000 km of roads and a similar length of railways plus inland waterways and over 800 airports or ports, more than the sum of its parts.

These revolve around the Commission's starting positions that TEN-T policy needs to progress beyond transport to account for future challenges such as EU-level objectives in relation to climate change and sustainable development, economic growth, and social cohesion plus the need to connect with the wider world. The Commission also proposes that a shift is needed to place infrastructure "at the service of the transport sector" through improved logistics and services, and seamless inter-connections between different modes of transport.

Among the options set out are a broadening of focus to better integrate the existing 30 (sometimes isolated) priority projects, including the Cork-Dublin-Belfast road/rail route, with a wider "priority network" while equally catering for a broad range of evolving projects that may be identified on the basis of pre-established specifications and criteria. Input will be taken into consideration when preparing future legislative action including renewed Guidelines or other initiatives. This need not be limited to the Issues Paper on which the Green Paper is based – in fact free rein is encouraged. The public consultation remains open until 30 April.

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/infrastructur/e/consultations/2009_04_30_ten_t_gree_n_paper_en.htm

EIB to bankroll SME credit

Europe's beleaguered small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have received a shot in the arm as the EU's long-term lending institution, the European Investment Bank (EIB), announced in

mid February that it would be providing this key sector of the economy with €30 billion in loans over the next three years.

The EIB is to use the conventional banking sector as the means to reach SMEs with much-needed credit while assuming half of the risk, thus reducing the capital requirements of lending institutions. Ireland's three largest retail banks are already known to have submitted applications totalling €100 million each. Investments in research, distribution and patents are among the credit uses being encouraged for these sums.

The EIB, which had its capital for 2009 increased from €50 billion to around €65 billion by EU finance ministers in December, had been asked by Member States to prioritise SMEs and consequently worked on devising new lending products. However, an initial attempt to establish a European Microfinance Fund has stalled having failed to attract sufficient funds from national governments due to what EIB President Philippe Maystadt described as "a lack of solidarity" and an insistence on attaching strict conditions to the money to be lent.

www.eib.org/sme

Financing green transport

Credit to SMEs isn't the only area where the EIB has been busy of late - the bank has also been active in prioritising energy efficiency projects. Last year, it lent more than €10 billion to the energy sector, with more than 20% going to renewable energy projects.

An additional €2.6 billion was granted for urban public transport system and a conference in Brussels on 11 February heard that the EIB intends to pursue this approach using green public procurement rules as a lever, while strongly promoting new technologies like hydrogen or hybrid buses in urban contexts. Funding will go to projects that can demonstrate their ability to deliver on the EU's so-called '20-20-20' policy of reducing greenhouse gases by 20% by 2020, and meeting 20% of its energy needs with renewables by the same date.

In advance of unveiling a fully-fledged financing facility to help cities and transport providers improve their energy efficiency and buy cleaner bus fleets, the EIB is currently working with the European Commission to set up an initial €15 million fund to offer "technical

assistance" in developing more elaborate projects of a much greater scale. The facility has not yet been officially approved, but this is expected imminently. It is envisaged that up to 75% of costs could be financed.

These ambitions tie in with December's EU Economic Recovery Plan where, amongst other things, some €4 billion was made available to help Europe's motor manufacturers to make cleaner vehicles. EIB support for investment in energy-efficient buildings has also been forthcoming to a number of cities and regions recently and the bank is set to increase its financing for climate change and energy infrastructure by as much as €6 billion per year, while the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development will double its efforts in energy efficiency, climate change and financing for municipalities.

<http://www.eib.org/about/press/2009/2009-020-eib-to-support-europes-cities-and-regions-in-promoting-energy-efficiency.htm>

Leipzig Charter on Sustainable Urban Development

The URBACT II Programme for Urban Sustainable Development is creating a Working Group on the implementation of the Leipzig Charter. The Charter is an understanding, signed in May 2007 by all EU Ministers responsible for urban development, to establish common principles and strategies for urban development policy.

The platform will:

- work on systems of reference/sets of criteria to implement the Charter principles and objectives and monitor policy implementation;
- constitute a test group to trial agreed frameworks and provide a set of related good practices in the design, monitoring and assessment of sustainable urban development policies which will be made available to all European cities; and
- react to projects from involved cities and develop concrete, realistic proposals for future actions.

Candidate cities (defined in the broadest sense and "of different scales and contexts") are invited to submit an expression of interest or more concrete proposals to the URBACT Secretariat by 21 March.

http://urbact.eu/no_cache/home.html

First European SME Week

6 - 14 May has been designated as the inaugural 'European SME Week' and the programme of events across the continent is taking shape. The emphasis will be on both boosting European entrepreneurship and highlighting the various EU, national and local supports available in the form of information, advice, motivation to realise business potential through expansion and growth, platforms for sharing experiences with like-minded entrepreneurs, practical start-up information and assistance, and even inspirational ideas for business growth and development.

The array of associated events planned in Ireland over the next 2 months include several 'Bridging the Border' seminars in different locations from Enterprise Ireland and Invest NI; an Enterprise Europe Network Regional Roadshow in the South-West; a focused workshop on bidding for public contracts (Cork); and an exhibit on promoting entrepreneurship across Europe (Sligo). The Small Firms Association National Small Business Awards and Galway Chamber Awards ceremonies are also included under the week's banner.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/entrepreneurship/sme-week/index_en.htm

EU's local links come to fore

A special Eurobarometer survey published on 27 February indicates that 50% of EU citizens trust their local and regional authorities above their national government (34%) or European bodies (47%). Unsurprisingly the figures are generally highest (up to 72%) in countries with relatively empowered local and regional government systems.

A corollary is that 59% of respondents across Europe believe this level's proximity to citizens and familiar channels of communication are best placed to explain the way EU policies affect daily life for local communities and should consequently be afforded an enhanced role in the Union's decision-making process.

In a subsequent speech to the Committee of the Regions (CoR), Commissioner Margot Wallström recognised the findings, arguing that regional and local bodies "are well placed to do the job" of communicating Europe. Wallström, who has spoken on numerous occasions of the importance of informing citizens about how the EU affects their lives, also asked the CoR through its

local and regional authority members for help in boosting turnout at June's European elections.

Extracts from Eurobarometer survey:
<http://www.cor.europa.eu/pages/PresentationTemplate.aspx?view=detail&id=016489d2-2ea22-4b5f-9bc8-b41cc68188c7>

Rethinking energy efficiency

Energy efficiency may well have become the Commission's number one priority after the Second Strategic Energy Review (last November) made commitments to go beyond the objective of improving energy efficiency by 20% by 2020, but with only around a third of its 85 measures having been implemented to date, the EU's 2007-2012 Action Plan for Energy Efficiency is falling far short of reaching even this original target.

With its mid-term evaluation looming this year, the Action Plan is ripe for a revision which, according to a Commission official speaking at an 11 February conference, could include incorporating additional policies. This is felt to be warranted by the increased scope of Community legislation introduced to the field in the past year – notably the extension of the product list for the Eco-Design Directive and the recast Energy Performance of Building Directive.

An obvious stumbling block towards more effective and ambitious energy efficiency measures is providing sufficient financing options. It is thought that the Sustainable Energy Financing Initiative - currently under preparation between the Commission, the EIB and other financial organisations - may be a key component here in helping to mobilise large-scale private funding for investments as well as financing for cleaner energies.

Action Plan for Energy Efficiency
<http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l27064.htm>

Mobility Week success in Cork & Galway

Both the city of Cork and Co. Galway were among ten local authority areas recognised by the European Commission for their outstanding efforts in raising public awareness on the theme of "Clean air for all" during last September's European Mobility Week (EMW) 2008.

Cork City Council used the momentum of EMW to introduce 'Gocar', the first Irish

car-sharing programme, and an innovative car-pooling service called 'Avego'. Over the course of the week, the public were able to avail freely of local bus services, bike maintenance courses, and personal health screenings focusing on lung and cardio-vascular function, blood pressure evaluation, carbon monoxide tests, and lifestyle counseling. Sustainable transport exhibitions, social events and the 'Rebel Pedal' bike parades were also organised.

Newcomer to this annual event, Galway County Council developed an ambitious week-long programme promoted through dedicated media work and a Sustainable Mobility Information Point. This included a series of themed events to encourage walking and cycling such as "Free wheel Friday". The occasion of EMW was used to implement permanent sustainable transport measures including introducing and promoting a new integrated traffic and parking management system, plus installing new bicycle stands and racks and signage. Schools in the county also made a commitment by adding sustainable transport as a permanent topic to their environmental programmes.

Over 2000 separate European towns, cities or local authorities (10 from Ireland) took part in EMW 2008. The 2009 version will be held from 16-22 September.

www.mobilityweek.eu
Contact: harling_hayes@corkcity.ie
Contact: mowens@galwaycoco.ie

'Erasmus for SMEs' launched

The long-running Erasmus student exchange programme is widely acknowledged as one of the deepest expressions of building understanding among EU citizens of different nationalities. Now a pilot project has been launched (19 February) to bring the concept to the business world by part-funding young entrepreneurs to move to another EU country for up to 6 months in order to experience another business culture, gain invaluable skills and earn a greater appreciation of the workings of the internal market and international business.

The European Entrepreneur Exchange Programme will function by means of a 'mix and match' system whereby people with a viable plan to start their own businesses will be paired up with more experienced counterparts who run established SMEs. Intermediary organisations including South Dublin Chamber of Commerce will assist in putting both sides of the equation

together. A target of 870 such arrangements are to be established by the end of this year.

The scheme is a direct output of last year's Small Business Act - the first comprehensive SME policy framework for the EU and the Member States - and is an initial response to findings that Europe has a serious deficit in its entrepreneurial culture and that too few SMEs are sufficiently engaged in business beyond their own countries.

<http://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/>

Other recent news stories:

<http://www.iro.ie/news.shtml>

EVENTS

16 March, Brussels **City governance for growth**

'Cities for Cohesion – What future for the urban dimension?' is a half-day seminar examining how innovative city governance can help Europe unlock economic growth and jobs. In particular, organisers Greater Manchester present the merits of their unique new governance model, arising from an Independent Economic Review, which emphasises granting local areas the power and resources to deliver. This is set against the backdrop of discussions on how urban issues are treated in current EU programming and how post-2013 Regional Policy may shape up.

www.manchesterweek.com

16 March, Brussels **Public services 2.0**

This workshop on how to implement and promote user-driven open innovation in public services aims to bring together the best experiences from all over Europe in terms of projects that apply second generation web tools for government. It will also look into existing policies on how to enable and promote web 2.0.

<http://www.epractice.eu/workshop/40>

25-27 March, Prague **eEnvironment**

The *Towards eEnvironment* conference is dedicated to information exchange among public administrations, EU institutions, environmental agencies,

scientists and businesses involved in developing and using environmental informatics for the delivery of modern eEnvironment services in Europe. The main topics will include: ICT research towards the development of a Single Information Space in Europe for the Environment (SISE); best practices in the implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS); and cooperation and integration of Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) and Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (INSPIRE) activities.

www.e-envi2009.org

2 April, Berlin **Diversity & integration**

The third *Integrating Cities* conference – a partnership between EUROCITIES and the European Commission – focuses on the role of diversity management and equal opportunities in local integration policy and how public administrations, in their roles as service providers, employers and buyers of goods and services, can best harness the enriching opportunities of diversity in Europe's cities. An 'information market on campaigns' will allow participating cities to present their own efforts at awareness-raising targeting both migrants and society at large.

www.integratingcities.eu

21-22 April, Brussels **Creativity Forum**

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) will host a conference showcasing innovative ideas and best practices from Europe's vibrant regions and cities, to highlight the role of creativity and innovation for resilient economic development. The CoR and the European Commission are inviting 100 young creative talents - entrepreneurs, artists, architects, designers, film directors and others - from all over Europe to the event in a bid to share ideas and visions, which will lead to creative collaborations across cultures and borders.

<http://cor.europa.eu/pages/EventTemplate.aspx?view=folder&id=8cdee184-62e2-45e0-95ce-c44b9acca193&sm=8cdee184-62e2-45e0-95ce-c44b9acca193>

IRO staff can attend Brussels-based events on behalf of Irish local and regional authorities.

27-29 April, Freiburg **Local Renewables**

The 2009 Local Renewables Conference will present flagship examples, proven successes and state-of-the-art technologies and approaches in the transition towards renewable energy at the community level. Study visits to innovative sustainable energy solutions are available.

www.local-renewables.org/freiburg2009

2-3 April, Turin **Regions for Better Broadband**

The European Commission is launching a consultation on issues surrounding the development of an EU Broadband strategy and how this will fit into the future EU ICT policy framework after the current i2010 initiative. This free event, organised by the B3 Regions – an innovative project aimed to tackle the difficulties of implementing broadband connections in remote or disadvantaged areas – will mainly focus on the EU's recently-announced decision to channel part of its unspent budget into rural broadband investments as part of the European Economic Recovery Plan.

<http://www.regione.piemonte.it/innovazione/regions4ict.html>

PUBLICATIONS

Communicating the EU

The Committee of the Regions has produced a Communication Toolkit to enable members of local and regional authorities to explain EU policies to citizens more effectively.

www.cor.europa.eu/COR/cms/ui/ViewDocument.aspx?siteid=default&contentID=5b0536d8-a415-4a2d-8e20-0f1b1f31ed7d

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