

EU News Bulletin

The latest monthly EU funding opportunities, news and events of relevance to Ireland's local and regional levels

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In association with the Institute of Public Administration (IPA)



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FUNDING

Competitive & sustainable tourism

This DG Enterprise grant action under the Competitiveness & Innovation programme aims to support the competitiveness of networks of destinations at local and regional level so as to create a favourable framework for tourism sustainability. This is to be achieved by improving cooperation on relevant issues through tourism networks, increasing the level of awareness of enterprises about good practices, and fostering sustainability-driven innovation in the tourism sector.

Deadline: 20 May

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/document.cfm?action=display&doc_id=2599&userservice_id=1&request.id=0

Island energy strategies

The European Commission, DG for Energy & Transport, is launching a call for proposals under FP7 Energy and the Intelligent Energy Europe programme to award grants for preparatory actions relating to sustainable energy on islands. Actions to define, develop and implement medium to long-term Island Sustainable

Energy Actions Plans (ISEAPs) for the applicant islands; development of a set of ready-to-finance and bankable investment projects based on renewable energy sources/energy efficiency (RES/EE); and public relations campaigns to involve residents in their island's strategy may be considered for support.

Deadline: 29 May

http://ec.europa.eu/energy/sustainable/grants/doc/2009/2009_tren-prep-2009-d3-islands.pdf

Eco-Innovation

A call for eco-innovation projects has been opened under the Entrepreneurship & Innovation programme (EIP) targeting organisations that have developed an environmental product, service, management practice or process which has a proven track record but which has experienced barriers to full market penetration. Applications from SMEs are particularly encouraged.

Deadline: 10 September

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eco-innovation/call_en.htm

Anti-discrimination & diversity

Support is available under PROGRESS to activities to promote diversity and eradicate discrimination in the implementation of national policy and legislation. Projects may take the form of training activities; awareness-raising events; identification analysis; or dissemination of good practices.

Deadline: 25 May

Contact: Niall McCutcheon/ Deirdre Ni Neill, Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=1907&langId=en>

RegioStars

The Commission's DG Regio has launched the 2010 RegioStars Awards under the Regions for Economic Change initiative to identify, disseminate and

communicate the best in innovative practices funded through EU Cohesion Policy. The themes selected for this year are:

- Urban brownfield sites;
- Integration of migrants/marginalised groups in urban areas;
- ICT applications for e-inclusion;
- ICT applications by or for SMEs;
- Broadband coverage in less developed regions/rural areas; and
- Websites of European added value.

Deadline: 17 July.

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperation/interregional/ecochange/regiostars_en.cfm?nmenu=4#2010

Other recent calls:

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

Partner Searches received by the IRO from other regions:

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

NEWS & POLICY

Less Favoured Areas criteria

The European Commission has published (21 April) a Communication, 'Towards a better targeting of the aid to farmers in areas with natural handicaps' which focuses on modifications to the existing rural development support scheme to Less Favoured Areas (LFAs). Following efforts in 2005 to better focus the thirty year-old scheme towards land management objectives, especially on areas where the threat of flight from the land is most pronounced, Agriculture Ministers were unable to agree on a common LFA classification - specifically the grey area of an "intermediate zone" - and the Commission was charged with bringing forward recommendations for the scheme's modification by 2010.

This Communication proposes a new 'biophysical' criterion based on 8 soil productivity and climate criteria rather than socio-economic disadvantage factors and asks Member States to contribute towards the legislative process by carrying out national projections on this basis. The data and "simulation" maps, which are to consider eligibility rules at the level of individual farms in order to "exclude areas where agriculture has overcome these handicaps" are to be submitted to the Commission within six months and must include "elements to ensure that areas where natural handicaps have been offset are not eligible". Currently, 77% of Irish agricultural land is classified as part of an LFA. The new system would apply from 2014.

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/lfa/comm/index_en.htm

Regional Policy: a "place-based" future?

An independent review of EU Regional Policy's rationale, objectives, achievements and structures with the post-2013 period in mind was published on 27 April. The main thrust of 'An Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy' (*Barca Report*), authored by the Director General of Italy's Ministry of Finance and Economy, is that comprehensive reform is required to allow the policy to achieve maximum effect and that this will need renewed policy engagement, more concentrated priorities, and modified governance arrangements.

A central element of the findings is the need for what is termed a well-resourced "place-based" economic and social development strategy approach tailored to the specific needs of very diverse regions and cities as a means of ensuring harmonious development and reducing disparities. This implies a spatially aware policy, probably operating at the level of functional regions, with an emphasis on addressing persistent underutilisation of potential, chronic economic inefficiencies, and persistent social exclusion. This differs from the current regime which is primarily based on a logic of redistribution to allow GDP per capita across the EU to converge.

The report suggests that the current funding architecture should be largely maintained but with greater coherence between the various programmes. As such, integrating all forms of support for territorial development including the rural development elements of the European Agriculture Rural Development Fund and

the territorial actions of the Fisheries Fund under the umbrella of Cohesion Policy is one of its key recommendations.

Barca also favours increased checks and balances on Member State spending with a greater role for the European Parliament; and enhanced strategic contracts between Member States/regions and the Commission in developing programmes in order to ensure the proper effect of subsidiarity and to guarantee quality performance and results.

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/future/barca_en.htm

Informal Regional Council

On 23 and 24 April, European Commissioner for Regional Policy Danuta Hübner addressed the informal meeting of Ministers for Regional Policy in the Czech Republic and presented a reflection paper based on two years of debate and discussion between the Commission and governments, regions and stakeholders. The paper outlined her vision for a stronger European development policy which "can unlock the full potential of every region and help people and businesses make the best use of their territorial assets". Hübner also presented the preliminary results of the public consultation on last winter's Green Paper which aimed to settle upon a common definition of "territorial cohesion" – a new concept which would be introduced by an approved Lisbon Treaty – and a better understanding of how to maximise the impact of European regional diversity to deliver growth, sustainable jobs and competitiveness. The 'Sixth Progress Report on Economic and Social Cohesion' is expected to be published in June and will clarify where the debate stands.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/616&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Late payments clampdown

The scourge of delays in payments for commercial transactions is coming under added fire after the Commission launched a new policy approach to tackle the situation on 8 April. This announcement is based on a commitment in last year's Small Business Act to reform the Late Payments Directive (2000) in a bid to improve the cash flow of European businesses, particularly SMEs - a

problem brought into sharper relief by the economic crisis.

With public bodies being implicated in recent surveys as the worst offenders - taking an average 65 days to pay - the Commission is keen to redress the balance and have this sector lead by example in their dealings with private contractors and suppliers. It intends to have the recast directive transpose a rule into national law whereby those authorities who fail to pay their bills within 30 days will face the automatic prospect of having to pay compensation for recovery costs plus a flat-rate compensation of 5 per cent of the amount due as well as further charges for every day's delay thereafter. The proposal would also make it easier and cheaper for firms to claim interest on overdue business-to-business bills although business-to-consumer transactions are not included.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/infocentre/detail.cfm?item_id=3000&tpa_id=128&lang=en

Out of (Working) time

For the very first time since the adoption under the Amsterdam Treaty of new rules for the co-decision procedure whereby the European Council and Parliament jointly decide the fate of legislation, a proposal has failed at the Conciliation Committee stage. The revision of the Working Time Directive stalled on 28 April after Council representatives and MEPs could not reconcile their positions on maintaining the so-called 'opt-out clause' allowing Member States the option not to apply certain aspects of the Directive – notably for working weeks in excess of 48 hours (Parliament favours a gradual phasing out of this option); a definition of on-call time; and additional safeguards for workers employed under more than one contract. The current Directive 2000/34/EC will remain in force, but the Commission is likely to reignite the issue in the future.

www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/048-54485-117-04-18-908-20090427IPR54484-27-04-2009-2009-false/default_en.htm

Innovation Support

A public consultation to assess the effectiveness and accuracy of existing European innovation support is open until 31 May. The exercise is also intended to explore ways of improving and better adapting support to the needs

of innovation stakeholders. The results will form the basis for the development of future EU innovation support actions.

<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/jpm/forms/dispatch?form=InstitStakeholders>

Budget: 2008 underspend; 2010 growth?

In 2008, European Union spending amounted to 98.5% of Member States' contributions to the EU budget. The high implementation rate of funds leaves a record low surplus, reflecting the effect of reforms to promote tighter and more effective budgetary management and ongoing efforts to ease the pressure on national exchequers by only calling on Member States for payments that are strictly necessary. As recently as 2001 the surplus was 16%. 2008's end-of-year excess amounted to €1.79bn which will be returned to Member States after a 15 April decision by the European Commission. The Irish share is €23.6 million. Meanwhile on 29 April the Commission tabled a preliminary proposal for a 3.4% increase on the 2009 figure to bring the 2010 EU budget to €138.6 billion.

2010 Budget:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/655&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Globalisation Fund access

The European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs has adopted a regulation to revise the eligibility criteria of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) – the scheme to provide support in instances of large-scale redundancy caused by economic displacement to cheaper economies – in order to ensure easier access to funding during the current economic crisis. The revision was part of the measures proposed by the Commission in last November's EU Economic Recovery Plan.

The proposal aims to lower the minimum eligibility criteria to instances of 500 (from 1000) redundancies per enterprise (including subcontractors and buyers) or per sector; to extend the duration of support to up to 2 years; and to increase the co-financing rate of aid to 65%. The fund may be used for schemes in retraining, lifelong learning activities, worker mobility, careers advice or transition to self-employment.

In early May the negotiated agreement will be put to a full vote in the European

Parliament before passing to the Council of Ministers. It remains unclear whether the latter will fully endorse the proposal, as several Member States fear that lowering the eligibility criteria will deplete resources too rapidly.

www.eu2009.cz/en/news-and-documents/press-releases/agreement-on-european-globalisation-fund-brokered-by-presidency-17564/

Fisheries reform underway

Seven years after the previous reform, on 22 April the European Commission began its public consultation on how the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) should look beyond 2012 by publishing a Green Paper on its reform. The discussion document critically examines the CFP's shortcomings – fleet overcapacity; imprecise policy objectives (e.g. ecological responsibility and integration with general maritime issues); an over-centralised decision-making system that emphasises short-term solutions over long-term sustainability and local community/stakeholder engagement; and the absence of political will to achieve compliance with fishing limitations – and suggests ways in which both policy and delivery can be improved.

The new options and ideas for improving the current policy include the potential introduction of a differentiated fishing regime to protect small-scale coastal fleets; long-term management plans for all European fisheries to involve sustainable yield limits; the development of market efficient fisheries; integrating the CFP within the broader maritime policy context; improving the quality of public financial support; and better synergies with aquaculture. The next Agriculture and Fisheries Council on 25–26 May is certain to see divergent views expressed. The public consultation remains open until 31 December.

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0163:FIN:EN:PDF>

State Aids simplification

A simplification package to improve the effectiveness, transparency and predictability of EU state aid decisions was adopted by the European Commission on 29 April. The package includes a Best Practice Code to provide practical guidance on "day-to-day" process issues, particularly as regards the duration, transparency and predictability of complicated Commission

decisions not covered by the General Bloc Exemption Regulation and not put forward in the context of the current financial and economic crisis (where specific and temporary frameworks apply). The code is based on a joint Commission-Member States commitment and voluntary arrangements whereby the former will enhance the quality and completeness of notifications provided the latter react promptly and completely to case-related requests.

The second element is a Simplified Procedure Notice document. This aims to improve the Commission's treatment of more straightforward cases which are based on previous decisions, measures and guidelines. It is the Commission's intention that this mechanism should allow for the approval of clearly compatible aids decisions within one month. The Notice includes an illustrative list of aid measures, including certain SMEs, environmental, innovation and rescue and restructuring aid, which are in principle eligible for simplified treatment. Interested stakeholders will henceforth be able to comment on the envisaged aid measure.

http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/reform/reform.html

Port tourist facilities

A cost-benefit analysis to examine port investment in tourism infrastructure and facilities, notably through cruise liners, has been compiled by the European Commission's DG for Maritime Affairs & Fisheries. The study's aim is to determine whether evidence exists that such activities and expense are justified in terms of creating new revenue streams and long-term employment for ports and tourism businesses in coastal regions. This follows upon the October 2007 'Action Plan on Integrated Maritime Policy' which set out measures required to develop synergies and resolve potential conflicts between different marine and coastal policy areas.

The study pays especial attention to the issues of the development of sustainable tourism facilities and the costs associated with compliance with environmental legislation in order to develop indicators to calculate the economic return to be expected when undertaking such investment.

Study:

http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/tourist_facilities_en.html

Action Plan:

http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/pdf/ActionPaper/action_plan_en.pdf

Entrepreneurial city rankings

Results from a survey published in early April of entrepreneurs' satisfaction and perceptions of how supportive local policies and circumstances in major EU cities are to start-up business development, have placed Dublin 27th overall of 37. Helsinki took the European Cities Entrepreneurship Ranking plaudits for the most favourable climate for enterprise thanks in the main to numerous research programmes to foster entrepreneurship; the presence of several dedicated enterprise support institutions who play a pivotal role in promotion and training; and the existence of multiple economic and social networks which have developed partnerships with local-development agencies. Nordic and German cities dominated the top ten.

Dublin's strongest area is apparently how the local environmental quality impacts on entrepreneurial performance including access to suitable property, internal and external logistics, networking facilities, knowledge capital (universities and laboratories), skills availability, and the quality of the living environment. The capital was weakest in the provision of 'pre-creation support' including identification of potential entrepreneurs. Its ranking in terms of entrepreneurship promotion, funding, and 'post-creation support' (e.g. consultancy services and operational management) approximately reflected its overall position.

www.ecer.fr

More urban transport funding?

A comprehensive EU 'action plan for urban mobility, expected last year but shelved by the Commission after the Council of Ministers' response to the September 2007 Green Paper, may be back on the table. Both the European Parliament and Committee of the Regions have recently compiled their own reports making the case that this is a worthwhile ambition.

Parliament's draft report to kick-start proposals for an action plan was adopted on 23 April. It argues in favour of respect for the subsidiarity principle to add value to local decisions, to encourage urban transport to help achieve general objectives on environmental protection and combating climate change; a 'user-centred' approach; and better linking all modes of transport in an 'urban travel systems' approach. It recommends the expansion of EU financial instrument for urban mobility towards supporting, *inter alia*, integrated actions in pricing/ticketing systems; information programmes to

enable optimisation of travel choices; (CIVITAS); and intelligent traffic management systems to tackle pollution, noise, congestion and accidents (ITS).

It also proposes that public financing for transport in urban areas of more than 100,000 population should be made conditional on the existence of 'integrated urban travel plans' to be coordinated with wider regional transport and general urban planning policies. These would include mobility diagnostics, indicators and targets and an assessment of the economic, social and environmental impacts; as well as plans dealing with the development and interconnection of transport networks, soft traffic infrastructure (cycling and walking), parking, improved accessibility, and freight provisioning.

Draft Action Plan:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+COMPARL+PE-416.379+01+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN>

Impacts of ageing strategy

A strategy for tackling Europe's demographic challenge was unveiled on 29 April as the Commission published a Communication on the impacts of an ageing population. The Communication is largely based on the findings of a working group of national experts from EU Member States set up to look at the impact of this issue on public services. The Communication presents the age-related expenditure projections on the basis of new Eurostat population projections up to 2060.

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/the_matic_articles/article14761_en.htm

Heritage Label consultation

The consultation to ascertain the added value in the creation of an EU Heritage Label scheme closes on 15 May. Key questions include how this new label should differ from similar existing schemes, appropriate selection criteria, and how this proposal could best target young people. An impact study is also ongoing. Results will be published in the autumn and, if deemed worthwhile, a formal proposal would be put before the Council and Parliament in 2010.

http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc1983_en.htm

PUBLICATIONS

NSS gateway development

A new report on the development of the nine National Spatial Strategy Gateways and the extent to which they are progressing as drivers of regional growth has been launched. The 'Gateway Development Index' is an initiative of the Border, Midland & Western (BMW) and Southern & Eastern (S&E) Regional Assemblies and was prepared in close cooperation with the Spatial Planning Unit of the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government as a policy analysis tool to evaluate the impact of investment under the current National Development Plan and the Regional Operational Programmes and to identify areas for attention. The ERDF co-financed report covers population, enterprise, environment, economic, employment and social factors as well as public perceptions of quality of life and the impact of Gateway designation.

www.bmwassembly.ie/news/reports/bmw_qdi_report.pdf or contact aodonoghue@bmwassembly.ie

EVENTS

15 May, Dublin Intelligent Energy Europe

The National Information Day to coincide with the current call for proposals under IEE (see last month's *Bulletin*) will be hosted by Sustainable Energy Ireland. This is the EU's non-technological programme in the field of energy, focusing on the removal of market barriers, changing behaviour, creating a more favourable business environment for increasing energy efficiency and renewables markets, and making EU energy policy better understood and implemented in Europe's cities and regions. Typical project budgets range between €0.5 and €2.5 million.

Contact: Fiona.Smith@sei.ie

15 May, Lyon, Deprived neighbourhoods

26 May, Brussels, Migration & integration

The URBACT programme is holding two Open Events under the banner "Cities ahead, Cities in charge". These are intended as opportunities for discussion

among city professionals and elected officials on key topics of wide European experience. In the case of these two conferences this relates to ensuring that migrants and the economically disadvantaged do not suffer disproportionately from the ongoing economic downturn. The themes are based on extending the work of two ongoing URBACT pilot networks, URBAMECO and MILE, by gathering together experiences and initiatives from other European programmes and networks, and adding perspectives from other stakeholders who are directly impacted by the issues.

<http://urbact.eu/news-open-calls/urbact-news-events.html>

15 May, Paris **Sustainable development and metropolitan regions**

Representatives from 40 European metropolitan regions will consider how sustainable development principles and a fresh look at the concept of strategic planning through improved monitoring and evaluation systems and joined-up governance can reduce the consumption of space, energy and resources. The conference is jointly organised by the OECD, METREX (the Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas) and IAU (France's national urban planning institute).

www.iau-idf.fr/index.php?id=737

20 May, Edinburgh **Development during recession**

This event will examine UK and EU perspectives and options for funding physical regeneration plans in the current financial climate in order to encourage social development and the creation of thriving and sustainable local communities and economies.

<http://conferences.holyrood.com/content/view/1063/142/>

25-27 May, Cork, **ICT for local government**

Cork City Council and the Heads of Information Systems Group in Ireland is hosting this year's Major Cities of Europe IT Users' Group (MCE) annual conference entitled 'Innovative current & future ICT practices across European Local Governments'. The programme includes industry contributions as well as international perspectives on the role of technology in delivering change. Topics include innovation at work; new models

of service delivery; the role of the Chief Information Officer; and trust, service and information continuity.

www.corkcity.ie/majorcities/ or contact
ruth_buckley@corkcity.ie

On request and whenever possible, IRO staff can attend meetings and seminars in Brussels on behalf of local & regional authorities.

25 May, Brussels **Local sustainable development policy through planning**

UCD's Urban Environment Project team (funded by the Environmental Protection Agency) are co-hosting, with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, Institute for Environment and Sustainability, a half-day workshop on the role of land use planning and management in delivering sustainable development at local and regional level. The event's key aim is to demonstrate on a European platform how planning can appropriately take various sectoral factors into account in order to provide a dynamic policy instrument for the benefit of society. The main focus will be on highlighting the contribution of decision-support systems based on land-use and spatial concerns, notably the MOLAND modelling tool, by integrating the consideration and analysis of economic, environmental, demographic and institutional influences and constraints. This provides a means of underpinning policy formulation and implementation as well as dealing with its effects - particularly impacts on natural resources.

www.uep.ie/news/brussels.htm or
contact Sheila.convery@ucd.ie

29 May, Rotterdam **Local economic zones**

This Integrated Development conference will present Rotterdam's 'Kansenzones' (neighbourhood Economic Opportunity Zones) initiative. The main goals of this pilot programme have been to establish a better business climate, improved liveability and an improved socio-economic position for entrepreneurs and the local community - thereby increasing entrepreneurial activity, consumer satisfaction and new jobs and investment in the districts concerned.

www.nicis.nl/nicis/bijeenkomsten/2009/05/Economic-Opportunity-Zones---Accelerating-integrated-urban-development-1000.html

2-4 June, Copenhagen **Local level Climate Change**

Local, regional and national representatives will gather in Copenhagen for the 'Local Government Climate Change Leadership Summit' to promote a widespread national-local partnership approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to call on national governments to include a reference to the role of local governments in tackling climate change. This should provide a key input into the new post-Kyoto protocol agreement, up for discussion at next December's UN Climate Summit to be held in the Danish capital. The programme will present the latest knowledge on the issue as well as profiling successful local level measures that have been taken on climate and energy issues.

<http://www.kl.dk/ncms.aspx?id=90e67c3c-ec12-40e7-b410-d69a2d4a819e>

16 June, Dublin **EU Finance for SMEs**

The European Commission is organising a series of national 'EU Finance Days for SMEs' to raise awareness of the various financial instruments available from Europe to support small businesses and to provide a forum for sharing good practices in helping innovative SMEs to get easier access to finance. The Irish event will take place at the Holiday Inn Hotel in Pearse Street, Dublin.

www.sme-finance-day.eu/index.php?id=10



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