



Irish Regions Office

EU Bulletin No. 1 (21/01/04)

In this issue

FUNDING

- ICT in Education
- Intelligent Energy Europe
- ESF Article 6 – managing change
- Town Twinning
- The LIFE Programme
- Culture 2000
- EU Year of Education through Sport

POLICY

- The future of Regional Policy
- Dialogue with Local and Regional Authorities
- Public Sector Information
- LEADER+ Update

EVENTS

- Evaluating the Structural Funds
- The knowledge Society
- Successful Clusters
- Interreg IIIC Partner Search
- Structural Funds and Health

NETWORKS

- English Regions Network
- Urban Sustainability

FUNDING

ICT in Education

On 31 December the Council of Education Ministers adopted without debate a budget of EUR 44 million for the 2004-2006 e-Learning programme. The ministers followed the recommendations of the Parliament and endorsed the addition of EUR 8 million to the programme budget, thus demonstrating the importance that they attach to this initiative, which is designed to improve the integration of information and communication technologies in the education systems. The call for tender is to be published in April 2004. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/elearning/index_en.html

Intelligent Energy Europe

On 30 December the European Commission published a Call for proposals for actions under the Intelligent Energy — Europe (EIE) Programme. EIE is the Community's support programme for non-technological actions in the field of energy (energy efficiency and renewable energy). The programme is structured in four fields: *SAVE* – improvement of energy efficiency. *ALTENER* - promotion of new and renewable energy sources. *STEER* - energy aspects of transport and bio-fuels. *COOPENER* - renewable energy and energy efficiency in developing countries.

The estimated total budget for the coming year is EUR 41,57 millions. It is expected that a maximum of 80 contracts and agreements will be concluded, with grants of up to 50 % of the total costs. *Further information is available at:*

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/energy/intelligent/index_en.html Or e-mail: TREN-Intelligentenergy@cec.eu.int

Article 6 of the European Social Fund (ESF) Regulation

A Call for Proposals is currently open under Article 6 of the ESF. For the period 2004–2006, Article 6 will support the development and testing of "*Innovative approaches to the management of change*". Within this theme, innovative measures will focus on two sub-themes:

- *management of demographic change* - innovative initiatives to promote active ageing and to raise the employment rate of older workers, and
- *management of restructuring* - innovative solutions to restructuring by enhancing the capacity for adaptation and anticipation of workers, enterprises and public authorities.

Actions must involve organisations from at least two of the EU15 Member States. Co-financing of up to a maximum of 75% is available. There are three rounds of calls with the following deadlines: 18.02.2004; 26.01.2005; 25.01.2006. *Further information is available at:* http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/esf2000/article_6-en.htm or E-mail: empl-article6MC@cec.eu.int

NOTE: Information on projects seeking partners for the above calls is also attached.

Town Twinning

Just a reminder that the 2004 deadlines for applications for Town Twinning grants are: 18.02.2004, 02.04.2004, and 01.06.2004. Two kinds of actions will be supported in 2004: A) Meetings of citizens of twinned towns and municipalities; and B) Conferences on European themes relating to town twinning, and training and information seminars for town-twinning officers. Eligible applicants include towns and municipalities and their twinning association/committees, other levels of local and regional government and federations and associations of local authorities. *Further information is available at:*

Web:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/towntwin/index_en.html

Or Tel: +32 2 295 2685, *E-mail:* or Towntwinning@cec.eu.int

The LIFE Programme

On 22 December the Environment Council had a first exchange of views on the Commission proposals for renewing the Financial Instrument for the Environment (LIFE), for the 2004-2006 period. Member states appear to be in favour of this extension. The most essential element of this discussion is the method of financing, especially given the growing importance

of the Natura 2000 network. Member States in southern Europe want financing for environmental policy to be given more importance, whereas other countries consider that financing for Natura 2000 should come under the CAP, the Structural Funds and rural development. *The Council's press release is available at:* <http://ue.eu.int/pressData/en/envir/78524.pdf>

Continuation of Culture 2000

At its plenary session on 15-18 December, the European Parliament presented a report highlighting the need for continuity of Community support for culture, given that the current 'Culture 2000' programme is due to expire during a crucial period of change for the EU. The Commission has proposed to extend 'Culture 2000' unchanged for 2005 and 2006. It then plans to propose a new framework programme for culture to commence in 2007. In order to be able to start financing projects in 2005 a legal basis will have to be adopted in early 2004, with call for proposals published by the end of the first half of 2004. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/index_en.html

European Year of Education through Sport

1 January 2004 marked the launch of the European Year of Education through Sport. Over the next 12 months, 28 countries (fifteen member states, ten accession countries, Norway, Island and

Liechtenstein), will participate in promoting the educational values of sport. In May 2003 the Commission published a call for tender, which will enable the selection of transnational projects for the first semester of 2004. The last phase of this call will close on 1 March 2004 and will concern projects starting in July 2004. In every participating state, a national coordination unit (Leargus in Ireland) has been selected. *Further information is available at:* <http://www.eyes-2004.info>

POLICY

The future of Regional Policy

The latest indications are that the long awaited *Third Cohesion Report*, which will present the Commission's proposals for regional policy and the Structural Funds in the period beyond 2006, will now be published on the 17th of February. It is expected that this will be preceded by the publications of the draft *Financial Perspective* (the Commission's budgetary proposals for the period beyond 2006) on February 10th. An informal meeting of Regional Policy Ministers will take place in Portlaoise on 26-27 February. This meeting will be preceded by a meeting between the Irish Regional Assemblies and the Regional Policy Commissioner, Michel Barnier.

The Economic and Social Committee (ESC) recently published an Opinion on

the future of regional policy (2004 C10/19), which is available at:

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2004/c_010/c_01020040114en00880092.pdf

Dialogue with Local and Regional Authorities

On December 19th the European Commission adopted a Communication setting out the framework for a more systematic dialogue on policy formulation with associations of regional and local authorities. The objective is to facilitate consultation with these associations (on a range of policy issues that impact at the local and regional level) at the early stages of policy formulation. It is proposed that the Committee of the Regions will have a role in the selection of relevant associations. An update, including possibilities for Irish participation, will be provided in the next Bulletin. Copies of the Communication are available at: http://www.eu-ophlysningen.dk/upload/application/pdf/c1219a61/com2003_0811en01.pdf

Re-using Public Sector Information

On December 31 the Council and Parliament approved Directive (2003/98/EC) of November 17 on the re-use of public sector information. This Directive, which Member States must transpose into national law by 1 July 2005 establishes a minimum set of rules governing the re-use of existing documents held by public sector bodies

(State, regional and local authorities and their associations). The objective of the proposed action is to facilitate the creation of Community-wide information products and services based on public sector documents, to enhance an effective cross-border use of public sector documents by private companies for added-value information products and services and to limit distortions of competition on the Community market. *Further details are available at:* http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/archive/2003/l_34520031231en.htm

LEADER+ update

The first meeting of the LEADER+ Steering Committee took place in Brussels on 3 December 2003. A Commission assessment on the automatic decommitment rule (n+2) concluded that Ireland, Austria, Finland, Portugal and Sweden will avoid automatic decommitment in 2003. The selection of LAGs is almost finished, and the national animation units have been selected in all participating countries, except Ireland, Belgium and Luxembourg. To overcome difficulties encountered in "cooperation" actions, the Commission has amended the rules. From now on it is possible for a LAG to cooperate directly with a European rural territory ("organised according to the LEADER approach") without another LAG partner. *Website of the LEADER+ initiative:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/index_en.htm

EVENTS

9-10 Feb., 2004 Maastricht (NL)

The European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) is organising a seminar entitled "Appraisal, Monitoring and Impact Assessment Techniques for EU Structural Funds". The aim of the seminar is to help managers and economic actors with the essential practical tasks involved in evaluating Structural Funds actions. The seminar will focus on 3 principle stages of evaluation: ex-ante appraisals, monitoring procedures, mid-term/ex-post impact assessment studies. The seminar will bring together local, regional, national and European Commission officials, as well as expert consultants. Language: English. Fee: EUR 695. *For more information, go to:* <http://www.eipa.nl/home/eipa.htm> (click on "Conferences") or contact Ms Lisette Borghans, Tel: +31 43 3296 334, Fax: +31 43 3296 296, E-mail: l.borghans@eipa-nl.com.

19 – 20 Feb., Brussels

The IANIS (Innovative Actions Network for the Information Society – www.ianis.net) coordinating team, in cooperation with the Regional Council and the University of Castilla La Mancha (Spain), is organising a workshop on "Creating the European Knowledge Society: Innovation, RTD and Regional Development – the role of Regional

Universities.” This one and a half day event will analyse the changing role of the university in sustainable regional development in the context of the European knowledge society. Further information is available at: <http://rivendel.idr-ab.uclm.es/portal/index.php?id=320>

26-27 Feb. 2004, Abruzzo (I)

The Innovation Relay centres (IRC), the Innovating Regions in Europe (IRE) Central Unit, and the region of Abruzzo (I) are organising a workshop to examine how successful clusters have been created and supported in European regions. The objective is to determine if the different experiences share common issues that could lead to the identification of a common methodology/process to create and support clusters. Language: English. Fee: Free. *Further information is available at:* <http://www.innovating-regions.org>

8-9 March 2004, Berlin (DE)

The 2004 INTERREG IIC Partner Search Forum is open to local and regional representatives from 25 countries. Participants will have the opportunity to meet potential partners, share ideas, and find out more about the programme and its funding opportunities. Particular attention will be given to the challenges and opportunities of interregional cooperation in an enlarged Europe and across its new borders. An open exhibition will also be available for participants to display operation ideas, partner profiles, and

approved INTERREG IIC operations. *Further details are available at:* http://www.interreg3c.net/psf/berlinpsfmar_ch04 or contact: Amy Cook on +33 (0)3 28 38 11 16 (and amy.cook@interreg3c.net)

13-15 June 2004, Le Havre (Fr)

This seminar is being organised by DG REGIO and will focus on good practice in the field of social inclusion. In particular it will explore the role that health development can play in social and economic regeneration. Recognising that it has been difficult in the past to obtain Structural Funding to support health developments, DG REGIO now wants to change this. REGIO wishes to identify models of good practice in this field from around the EU, which can be put on show in Havre (presentations, etc.), and that could in the future attract DG REGIO funding. If you are aware of any such projects, please contact: *Monika Kosinska, European Liaison Officer. Tel. +32 2 229 5387, Fax. +32 2 229 5383, or E-mail: monika.kosinska@merseyside-europe.org*

NETWORKS

English Regions Network

The English Regions Network (ERN) is an umbrella organisation for the English Regional Assemblies. The role of the Network is to bring members and officials

together to discuss matters of mutual interest and to coordinate joint activity. It also seeks opportunities for Regional Assemblies to strengthen the voice of English regions at national and EU level. The ERN Chair and Secretariat rotates between the Assemblies on an annual basis. *For further information, contact: ERN Secretariat 2003-4, North East Assembly, The Guildhall, Quayside, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 3AF T: 0191 261 7388, web site: <http://www.northeastassembly.gov.uk/>*

Urban Sustainability

Campaign Interactive, a network comprised of associations of European local authorities such as the Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling (ACRR), Climate Alliance, Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), Energie-Cités, Eurocities, etc., was created to support transfer of knowledge and exchange of experience in the field of urban sustainability and Local Agenda 21 in Europe, and to help implement the concept of sustainable development. It provides central access to comprehensive and up-to-date information relevant to all those working towards sustainability in an urban context. The Network is funded by the DG Environment. *For further information: <http://www.sustainable-cities.org/home.html>.*

Irish Regions Office

6 Rond-Point Schuman,
B-1040 Brussels

Robert Collins
Tel: +32 2 282 8477

Eamon O'Hara
Tel: +32 2 282 8477

E: robert.collins@pophost.eunet.be E: eamon.ohara@pop.kpn.be