



Irish Regions Office

EU Bulletin No. 2 (21/02/04)

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FUNDING

Interreg IIC

The third call for project proposals in all four Interreg IIC programme zones (North, East, South, West) will be launched on 8 March 2004. The deadline for submission of project applications will be 30 April 2004. For those considering an application, it is worth visiting the "operation idea and partner search database" available on the Interreg IIC website, which contains over 200 projects ideas. To coincide with the call for proposals, a Europe-wide INTERREG IIC Partner Search Forum will take place on 8-9 March in Berlin. *Further details at:* <http://www.interreg3c.net/>

Sustainable Urban Development

The Commission has published a call for proposals concerning the Community Cooperation Framework to Promote Sustainable Urban Development. The call aims to support networks of local authorities in the implementation of EU environmental law, sustainable urban development and Local Agenda 21. It will encourage the conception, exchange and implementation of good practices in the following fields: preparation of sustainable urban transport plans; preparation of urban environmental management plans; preparation of environmental management systems for urban areas; and local strategies to increase the use of sustainable construction methods and techniques. Up to EUR 4,750,000 is

available for 2004. Deadline: 31 March 2004. (see partner search below). *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/funding/1411_2001_ec_en.htm

EQUAL

On the basis of a new Communication (COM/2003/0840) from the Commission, preparations for the second round of the EQUAL Community Initiative have begun. The Communication, which builds on the mid-term evaluation, gives more flexibility to the Member States (new Member States will also participate in the second round) while strengthening the need for capitalising on and disseminating lessons and results. In the coming months Member States will launch the next call for projects and start Action 1. Successful projects should be ready by 1 January 2005, which is the key date for launching the transnational cooperation search via the publication on the EQUAL Common Database of the Development Partnerships selected by the Member States. *Further details at:*

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal or on the EQUAL website for Ireland <http://www.equal-ci.ie/>

Town Twinning

At the General Affairs Council of 26 January, EU ministers agreed on the legal basis for funding future twinning schemes. The new five-year programme (2004-2008), which aims to support bodies working in the field of active European citizenship and promote actions in this field by allocating

additional resources to twinning schemes from 2004 onwards, will make it possible to meet requests for the establishment of links with towns and municipalities in Central and Eastern Europe. Further details at http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2003/com2003_0276en01.pdf or visit the web site devoted to twinning: http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/towntwin/index_en.html.

EU Prizes for Cultural Heritage

The Europa Nostra 2004 contest rewards outstanding heritage achievements with six cash prizes of €10,000 each (in addition to medals and diplomas) in the following categories: 1/ An outstanding restoration project (architectural heritage; cultural landscapes; collections of works of art; archaeological sites); 2/ An outstanding study in the field of cultural heritage; 3/ Dedicated service to heritage conservation by individuals or groups. Deadline: 15 September 2004. Contact: Laurie Neale at Tel: +31 70 302 4052, e-mail: ao@europanostra.org or visit: http://www.europanostra.org/lang_fr/0260_activities_eu_en_awards_call_2004_fr.html Entry forms (available for downloading from 1 March 2004).

Renewable Energy

The Commission has published a call for tenders to conduct and coordinate a broad public awareness campaign covering all four areas of the programme 'Intelligent Energy for Europe'. Deadline: 22 March 2004. Contact: European Commission,

Directorate-General for Energy and Transport, FAO: Mrs Paula Abreu Marques, rue de Mot 24, B-1049 Brussels, T: +32 2 295 38 05, E-mail: Paula.Abreu-Marques@cec.eu.int, web site: http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/energy_transport/index_en.html

POLICY

€336 billion for Regional Policy post 2006

On 10 February, the European Commission adopted a Communication on the future EU budget, the "Financial Perspective" for 2007-2013. The Communication proposes a budget for regional policy of 0.41% of Community GNI. In absolute figures, this translates into €336.3 billion for the 7 year programme period (a 40% increase on current period). In 2007, based on the Commission's proposals, cohesion policy will become the EU's top-priority policy, with commitment appropriations rising to EUR 47,570 billion (with agricultural at EUR 43,500 billion). However, the Council and Parliament must now adopt the proposals before the end of 2005. In terms of the overall budget, the Commission has calculated a level of 1.14% of the EU's GNI (in payments) with an own resources ceiling of 1.24%. Further details at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/pdf/financialfrwk/enlarg/COM_2004_101_en.pdf

The Future of Regional Policy

On February 18 Michel Barnier presented the Commission's long-awaited Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion, which outlines the progress of the EU's existing regional policy and proposes recommendations for the period 2007-2013. In terms of future policy, the proposals are pretty much as anticipated. It is proposed that 78% of the future regional policy budget will go to a new **Convergence** priority, which will have the same criteria as the current Obj. 1, (regions with a GDP of less than 75% of the EU average). There will also be a phasing out for the 18 to 20 regions affected by the "statistical effect". The statistical effect regions will receive 85% of what they would have received if they had remained in Obj. 1 for the first two years. From then on their allocation will be reduced by 5% per annum. A new **Regional Competitiveness and Employment** priority will replace the former Obj. 2 and Obj. 3. This will have two strands, a national strand focusing on employment, and a regional strand focusing on the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies. The latter will have three themes: innovation and the knowledge economy, accessibility and services of general interest, and the environment and the prevention of risks. 18% of the overall budget will be allocated to this measure. Former Obj. 1 regions (BMW region) will also benefit from a special "phasing in" provision. GDP, employment levels and population density will be used to determine how much regions will receive under this priority (as a general rule €20 per person per year was quoted). 4% of the overall budget (up to

€10 billion, or double the current Interreg allocation) will go to the third priority, **European Territorial Cooperation**, which will also integrate the Lisbon and Gothenburg priorities. This priority will build on the experience of Interreg, which will be expanded and simplified. There will also be a specific action across all three priorities for urban areas (**Urban+**), in which city authorities will be actively involved in the design and management. Finally the report also proposes specific measures for areas suffering from permanent handicaps and the outermost regions, plus a new neighbourhood instrument for cooperation across external borders. Other proposals involve the simplification of rules, and the decentralisation of management and audit arrangements, implying less stringent checks for smaller programmes. The Commission will organise a forum to discuss the proposals with stakeholders on 10-11 May and is expected to present the new legislative proposals for the Structural Funds in June 2004.

Implications for Ireland

Commissioner Barnier indicated that the BMW region would benefit from the special “phasing in” arrangements under the new Competitiveness and Employment strand. Under the Commissions proposals the Southern and Eastern Region will also receive support under this strand, but with no special arrangements. Based on the above, Ireland could expect to receive in the region of €600 million in Structural Funds for the period 2007 to 2013, compared with €3.8 billion for 2000 to 2006. Post 2006

Ireland will no longer qualify for Cohesion Funds. *Further details:*

Financial

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

Third Cohesion Report:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/cohesion3/cohesion3_en.htm

Perspective:

Dialogue with Local and Regional Authorities

On 19 December 2003 the European Commission adopted a Communication setting out the framework for a more systematic dialogue 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 (CoR) will have a role in the selection of relevant associations. The process of selecting associations is currently being discussed by the CoR and will be debated at the CoR Bureau meeting in Dublin on March 19. *Copies of the Communication are available at:* http://www.eu-ophlysningen.dk/upload/application/pdf/c1219a61/com2003_0811en01.pdf

European Road Safety Charter Launched

The European Road Safety Charter was officially launched by Transport

Commissioner Loyola de Palacio on January 29. The Charter, open to all parties concerned by road safety (including local and regional authorities), aims to “encourage road users to behave better, make vehicles safer and improve road infrastructures”. It outlines ten concrete commitments to enhance road safety, which signatories pledge to implement according to their capacity and an eleventh commitment by signatories to indicate what specific additional measures they pledge to implement. Signatories will be authorised to use the campaign logo. A conference on the Charter, with a signing ceremony, will take place on April 6 in Dublin in the context of World Road Safety Week. *Further details at:*

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/roadsafety/charter.htm>

Packaging Waste Directive Adopted

At the end of January 2004 the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament formally adopted the updated Directive on packaging and packaging waste. The new Directive, which modifies the 1994 Directive (currently in force), raises the minimum recycling target from 25% to 55% by 2008, sets recovery and recycling objectives for some specific packaging materials and clarifies the definition of terms such as “packaging”, “recovery” and “chemical” and “mechanical” treatment. Member States that have less effective schemes, such as Greece, Ireland and Portugal must, no later than 30 June 2001, at least attain 25% for recovery or incineration at waste incineration plants with energy recovery. Certain targets may

be postponed to a deadline no later than 31 December 2005. Others, such as those relating to the recycling of glass and metals may be postponed until 31 December 2011. *Full details at:* http://wwwdb.europarl.eu.int/oeil/oeil_ViewDNL.ProcViewByNum?lang=2&procnum=COD/2001/0291

Environmental Liability Directive

The European Parliament and the Council have finally reached agreement on the new and groundbreaking Environmental Liability Directive. The new Directive is the first EU law specifically based on the "polluter pays principle". It is aimed at ensuring that future environmental damage in the EU is prevented or remedied and that those who cause it are held responsible. Public authorities will play an important role in the proposed liability scheme. It will be their role to ensure that responsible operators undertake themselves, or finance, the necessary preventive or remedial measures. The political agreement now needs to be formally adopted by Parliament and Council within 6 weeks. Once the Directive is published and enters into force, Member States will have three years to implement it into national law. *Further details:* <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/liability/>

Commission Strategy for a better Environment in Towns and Cities

On 11 January 2004, the Commission adopted an interim Communication

COM(2004)60, "Towards a Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment", which sets out the Commission's ideas for the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment. The Communication sets out the Commission's approach to helping Europe's towns and cities improve their environments and meet demanding environmental requirements. The Commission is inviting comments on these ideas up until 15 April 2004. The Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment is one of the key actions outlined in the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme. The 7 Thematic Strategies set out in the Programme are a new way of developing environmental policy for complex priority problems that require a broad approach. The final Strategy will be presented by the Commission in summer 2005. *Further details at* http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/urban/thematic_strategy.htm

Council Endorse Public Procurement Directive

On February 2 the Council of Ministers formally adopted a major reform of the European Union's rules on public procurement for contracts. The legislative package has two main objectives. Firstly, to simplify and clarify existing Directives; and secondly, to adapt them to modern administrative needs, for example by facilitating electronic procurement and, for complex contracts, by introducing more scope for dialogue between contracting authorities and tenderers in order to determine contract conditions. The final

text also allows authorities to use a company's "production methods" (e.g. whether the electricity they supply comes from renewable sources) or policy on employing people with disabilities, as an award criterion. The amended Directives will soon be published in the EU's Official Journal and must be written into national law within 21 months of publication. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/en/publproc/general/2k-461.htm

Positive Evaluation of LEADER II

The ex-post evaluation of LEADER II was accepted by the Commission at the end of December. The report is generally positive. According to the evaluators, LEADER has been an effective initiative, capable of adapting to all rural socio-economic contexts and all forms of governance. It has also created synergies between local actors, public authorities and support structures. In terms of employment, it is estimated that some 100,000 full-time permanent jobs have been created or maintained. The evaluators suggest that the principles underlying LEADER should be applied in future Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) and support the idea of maintaining a Community Initiative for Rural Development. They also recommend the setting up of a similar initiative for the benefit of new Member States. *The report is available at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/eval/reports/leader2/index_en.htm

EVENTS

14-15 April, 2004, Maastricht (NL)

The European Institute of Public Administration is organising a seminar on "The Financial Management of the Structural Funds". The objective of the seminar is to discuss ways to implement financial management rules such as the n+2 rule, eligibility rules, financial controls, etc. The seminars are intended for practitioners from national, sub-national and local authorities and other public bodies of the EU Member States and associated countries working with Structural Funds. *Contact Ms Lisette Borghans, Tel: +31(0)43 3296 334; e-mail: l.borghans@eipa-nl.com. Web: <http://www.eipa.nl>*

22-23 April 2004, Martigny (CH)

Co-organised with the Municipality of Martigny, the Energie-Cites 9th annual conference: "Sustainable local energy policies: Working in synergy with the private sector?" will focus on creating new opportunities for intelligent local energy policies. Topics include: finding the best financing schemes; using energy services where appropriate; optimising the use of concessions; integrating know-how of local authorities and private sector businesses and mobilising private sector investment and investment from cooperative or semi-public organisations. Further details at: <http://www.energie-cites.org/conference/>

27-30 September 2004, Brussels

The Irish Regions Office, in association with the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels have been selected with 10 other regional offices in Brussels to host this years Open Days event. This is the second year of the event, which is jointly organised by DG REGIO and the Committee of the Regions. The theme for this year's event is "The Practice and Reform of Regional Policy" and over the four days the selected regional offices will open their doors for exhibitions, seminars, workshops and debates. The event will be preceded by an opening conference at the Commission. *Further details from the Irish Regions Office.*

PARTNER SEARCH

Sustainable Urban Development

Westminster City Council (London, UK) is currently undertaking work in the area of sustainable urban development, and would like to make contact with other local authorities interested in becoming partners in a bid for funding under the EUs Framework for Cooperation to Promote Sustainable Urban Development (see above). The work of Westminster includes the development of a public realm strategy to link design, street management and management of green spaces in urban areas. The aim is to improve the quality of

life for residents and visitors by: illustrating parts of the public realm strategy through demonstration projects, for example on street environment services; developing tools to help this process, including GIS maps and a guidebook, etc.. *Further details from: Dr. Martin Whittles Project Manager - Research and Development Environment and Leisure Department, Westminster City Council. Tel: +44 20 7641 3040, fax: +44 20 7641 2644, E-mail: mwhittles@westminster.gov.uk, Web: <http://www.westminster.gov.uk/>*

Renewable Energy

An Italian Local Authority is looking for partners for a project proposal to be submitted under the "Intelligent Energy Programme". The project concerns the development of a new distribution system for energy from renewable sources. Potential partners could include local or public organisations interested in developing project proposals on these issues. The deadline for submitting project proposals is: 30 April 2004. The tender is available at: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/energy/intelligent/index_en.html. *Contact: Claudia Salvi, Formez Via Rubicone, 1100193 Roma ITALIA. Tel: +39 06 84892220. E-mail: csalvi@formez.it. Web: <http://www.europa.formez.it>*

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