



Irish Regions Office

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## FUNDING

### **INTERACT**

The second call for proposals for projects under Priority 2 (local and regional initiatives) and Priority 3 - Measure 2 (development of Interreg participation) of the Interact Programme will be published in early May 2004. An Info Day on the call will be held in Brussels on Thursday 29 April. The event is aimed at all those involved in cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation programmes and will provide detailed information on the application process for the second call, as well as up-to-date information on the activities of the five newly contracted Interact Points. It will also provide an opportunity to discuss Interact Project ideas with the Commission and the Interact Secretariat and facilitate networking and partnership building. *Further details at:* [www.interact-online.net](http://www.interact-online.net)

### **Regional Innovation Policies**

The European Commission has just issued a call for proposals for indirect actions under the specific programme for research, technological development and demonstration: 'Structuring the European Research Area' *Research and Innovation: Regional Innovation Policies including new tools and approaches*. Areas covered by the call include: Development of regional innovation strategies (€ 9.3 million); Innovation policy impact assessment at regional level (€ 5.5 million); Support to RIS-NAC processes (€ 2,5 million).

Participating organisations can be regional authorities, regional development agencies or other organisations charged with regional innovation / economical / structural development. The closing date is 16 June 2004. An Information Day and Partner Search Forum will take place in Brussels on 2 April 2004 from. *Further details at:* [http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/call\\_details.cfm?CALL\\_ID=125](http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/call_details.cfm?CALL_ID=125)

### **eTen Call for Proposals**

The European Commission is launching a call for proposals for the implementation of projects related to services supported by trans-European telecommunications networks. The proposed services should address the common objectives of the themes defined in the eTEN work programme for 2004: eGovernment, eHealth, eInclusion, eLearning, Trust and security, SME's. Support will also be provided for programme and project awareness. eTEN projects partners are organisations who intend to offer e-services that are in the common interest (must be approved by National Authority). Deadline for submissions: 9 June 2004. *Further information at:* [http://europa.eu.int/information\\_society/programmes/eten/calls/cfp20041/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/information_society/programmes/eten/calls/cfp20041/index_en.htm)  
*Irish Contact: Mr Shane Carton, Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources. Tel: 01 604 1608*

### **Leonardo da Vinci programme**

The European Commission recently published a call for proposals for the second phase of the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

The aim of the call is the transfer to and by various structures (private and public training centres, companies, schools, etc.) of innovative content developed under the Leonardo da Vinci I and II programmes into the vocational training practice of one or more public or private entities in at least one other participating European country. The deadline for proposals is 1 June 2004. The total budget is €1.5 million, from which a total of 10-12 projects will be funded. The maximum grant aid will be 50% of eligible expenditure, with a ceiling of EUR 150 000 per project. *Further details at:*

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/leonardo/new/leonardo2\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/leonardo/new/leonardo2_en.html)

### ***Culture 2000 Programme Extended***

A Decision extending the Culture 2000 programme until 2006, with an extra €9.5 million, was formally adopted by the EU Council of Ministers on March 8. The programme was originally supposed to end on December 31, 2004. A call for proposals is expected in April 2004 (and will be highlighted by the IRO). Looking beyond 2006, the European Parliament and the Council will consider the planned new Framework Programme later this year (see article below on "Future EU Education and Citizenship Policies"). *Further details at:* [http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/index_en.html)

### ***Environmental Protection***

DG Environment recently published a call for proposals in the field of environmental protection. The call covers actions in the

areas of: biodiversity / implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives; cooperation with civil society, NGOs and businesses in the Candidate Countries; and strengthening the environmental capacity of developing countries. The total budget available is €1.3 million and between 17 and 22 projects will be supported. Up to 90% funding is available. Deadline: 7 May 2004. *Further details at:*

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/funding/general/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/funding/general/index_en.htm)

## **POLICY**

### ***Regional and Local Authorities Respond to 3<sup>rd</sup> Cohesion Report***

European regions have generally welcomed the Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion adopted by the European Commission on February 18. The Committee of the Regions and a number of European associations of regional and local authorities say they are satisfied by the report but remain cautious about the budgetary conversion of published policy ambitions, particularly in view of the ongoing debate between the Commission and the Council on the Financial Perspective for 2007-2013. Eurocities, the network of EU cities, has indicated its satisfaction with the urban focus in the future cohesion policy. The Association of European Regions (AER) highlighted the importance of better coordination between cohesion policy and other EU policies, especially the internal market and competition policies. Both AER and the

Conference for Peripheral & Maritime Regions (CPMR) are questioning the future of State Aid for regional development, especially for regions eligible for funding under the new competitiveness and employment strand (Obj.2). The Commission recently began an in-depth study of existing arrangements vis-à-vis regional aid and while aid possibilities are not called into question for the less developed regions, things are less clear for other regions. A joint statement from the European Associations is accessible at: *at:* [http://www.ccre.org/news\\_detail.htm?ID=117](http://www.ccre.org/news_detail.htm?ID=117)

### ***Ministers Debate Future Cohesion Policy***

Meeting in Portlaoise on February 26, EU Regional Affairs Ministers also gave a generally enthusiastic reception to the Commission's Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion. However, the six Member States who recently called on the Commission to cap the EU budget at 1% of Community GDP repeated their policy stances. While nobody queried the need to focus structural support on the Lisbon and Gothenburg targets, certain sides did qualify the inextricable link the Commission is making between the two. The Irish Presidency intends holding a further high-level conference on territorial cohesion from May 25 to 27 in County Galway. This will deal more specifically with regions suffering permanent natural handicaps, such as islands, and mountainous and sparsely populated regions.

### ***Dialogue with Local and Regional Authorities - Update!***

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) recently circulated a list of the organisations to be invited to a first meeting on the new *Systematic Dialogue with European & National Associations of Local and Regional Authorities*, which the Commission will host on 10 May 2004 (coinciding with the Cohesion Forum). Provisionally, three Irish organisations are to be invited, the Association of Irish Regions, the Irish Association of Municipal Authorities, and the General Council of County Councils. 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. The CoR has a specific role in the nomination of participants. *Copies of the Communication are available at:* [http://www.eu-ophlysningen.dk/upload/application/pdf/c1219a61/com2003\\_0811en01.pdf](http://www.eu-ophlysningen.dk/upload/application/pdf/c1219a61/com2003_0811en01.pdf)

### **2001 Regional GDP figures published**

Eurostat, the EU's Statistical Office, recently published regional GDP figures for the 25 member Union. This data was used in drafting the European Commission's Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion and will also be used to determine which regions can continue to benefit from European structural aid after 2007. A fifth of regions in the current Union and nine out of ten in the acceding countries have a GDP of below 75% of the EU average. In the 25-

member EU, regions ranged from 53% of the EU15 average in Dytiki Ellada in Greece, to 263% of the average in the Inner London region of the UK. Regional GDP in the acceding countries varied from 29% of the EU15 average in the Lubelskie region of Poland to 135% in the Prague region of the Czech Republic. *The full report is available at:* <http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/Public/d/atashop/print-product/EN?catalogue=Eurostat&product=2-18022004-EN-AP-EN&mode=download>

### **Future EU Policy for Education and Citizenship**

On March 9 the European Commission adopted two communications, "The new generation of education and training programmes" and "Citizenship in action", setting out the guidelines for future programmes intended to replace the current Community programmes Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, Tempus, Youth, Culture 2000 and Media Plus from 2007. "The new generation of education and training programmes", which will run from 2007 to 2013, will consist of a new Integrated Programme for mobility and co-operation in lifelong learning throughout Europe, and a new Tempus Plus programme for co-operation between Member States and countries bordering the EU and the existing Tempus countries. The Commission sets a number of ambitious targets for the period 2007-2013, including a trebling of participants in a number of programmes, and a significant increase in funding is being sought. *Further details at: (Education)*

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/newprog\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/newprog_en.html) and (Citizenship) [http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education\\_culture/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm) and

### **The Future of EU Enterprise Policy**

The European Commission has just opened a consultation to define its next Multi-Annual Programme (MAP) for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship. In the course of 2004, the Commission intends to submit a formal proposal to the Council of Ministers and to the Parliament, to replace the current programme, due to expire on December 31, 2005. The new "Support Programme for Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Competitiveness (2006-2010)" aims to establish a special framework to accelerate enterprise adjustments to changing conditions, encourage enterprise development and entrepreneurship (in particular at the SME level), and promote business to business co-operation. It also seeks to ensure that European business makes the most of technology, innovation, and expertise and to address gaps in debt and equity finance for SMEs. *The draft proposal and a questionnaire (available until May 10, 2004) can be downloaded at:* [http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise\\_policy/spec/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/spec/index.htm)

### **Boosting Entrepreneurship in Europe**

On March 2 the Commission launched a new Action Plan setting out Europe's agenda for entrepreneurship. The Action Plan, which builds on the Entrepreneurship Green Paper published in 2003, outlines key actions in five strategic areas, based

around the following objectives: fostering a more entrepreneurial mindset among young people; reducing the stigma of failure; providing support for women and ethnic minorities; reducing the complexity of complying with tax laws; and making it easier to transfer a business to new owners.

*Further details are available at:*

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/librariy/enterprise-europe/news-updates/2004/20040226.htm>

### ***New Rules for Local Services of General Economic Interest***

The European Commission intends to propose a new set of rules to increase legal certainty for services of general economic interest at the local level. In a Communication on the public funding of services of general economic interest, published on 18 February, the Commission proposes giving local authorities more legal certainty by clarifying the conditions for compensating undertakings that provide services in the general economic interest. The document includes a draft decision which would exempt the public funding of small-scale services from the obligation of prior notification, as well as a directive concerning the public funding of large-scale public services. The thresholds applicable to the locally active undertakings that should not be obliged to notify their compensation payments to the Commission will be established following consultations with the Member States, the European Parliament and other stakeholders. *The text of the Communication is available at:* [http://europa.eu.int/comm/competition/state\\_aid/others/#interest](http://europa.eu.int/comm/competition/state_aid/others/#interest)

### ***State Aid Exemptions in the Transport Sector***

On March 3, the European Commission decided to extend the *de minimis* rules to the transport sector for state aid not exceeding €100,000 per enterprise over a three-year period. This means that Member States will now be responsible for monitoring these subsidies instead of the Commission. There is one exception however: subsidies for the acquisition of road transport vehicles will still be subject to notification and prior authorisation. Until now, the transport sector was completely excluded from the scope of Regulation 69/2001/EC, which stipulates that aid below a ceiling of €100,000 per enterprise (over any three year period) does not constitute unfair state aid. *Further details at:* <http://europa.eu.int/comm/competition/index.en.html>

### ***New Database on Pollution***

In February the European Pollutant Emission Register (EPER) database was launched. The EPER database allows public access to information on the main pollutant emissions to air and water reported by around 10,000 large and medium-sized industrial facilities in the 15 EU Member States and Norway. Over 50 different pollutants are covered. All reported emissions data is accessible through the EPER website, which is hosted by the European Environment Agency. The website also provides descriptions of each substance, their uses, emission sources and their impacts on human health and the environment. *Further details at:* <http://www.eper.cec.eu.int/eper/introduction.asp?i=>

## **EVENTS**

### ***29-30 March 04, Copenhagen (DK)***

The INTERREG IIC North Joint Technical Secretariat is organising a two-day event for lead applicants in the North zone intending to submit an application to the third call, which closes on 30 April 2004. The purpose of the event is to assist lead applicants in preparing high-quality applications and to set up professional management and implementation structures. *Further details at:* <http://www.interreg3c.net/> or contact: *Kristin Schwamm, Tel +49 (0) 381 45484 5279, Email: [kristin.schwamm@interreg3c.net](mailto:kristin.schwamm@interreg3c.net)*

### ***21 April 2004, Brussels (B)***

The International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), in association with DG Research, will officially launch 'Local Evaluation 21', a new European assessment tool for local sustainable development, on April 21. "Local Evaluation 21" is an on-line tool for local authorities across Europe to regularly self-assess their local sustainability progress and processes. The project was funded by the European Commission under its 5th framework research programme. *Further details from: Silke Moschitz, ICLEI European Secretariat, Tel +49-761-36892 0, E-mail [silke.moschitz@iclei-europe.org](mailto:silke.moschitz@iclei-europe.org) Website: [www.iclei.org/europe/](http://www.iclei.org/europe/)*

### ***27 April 2004, Limerick (IRL)***

Shannon Development is organising a major international conference on the theme of "Dynamic Regions – Building European Competitiveness". The one-day conference will focus on the role of "Dynamic Regions" in propelling international competitiveness and innovation through local action, and will stimulate debate on how to create dynamic and globally competitive regions for the future. EU Commissioner Erkki Liikanen, the Taniste, Mary Harney and a number of internationally acclaimed experts will address the Conference. *Contact:*

*Ms Meg Laffan, E-mail:*  
[laffanm@shannondev.ie](mailto:laffanm@shannondev.ie), *Tel:* 353 61  
710241, *website:*

[www.shannondev.ie/DynamicRegions](http://www.shannondev.ie/DynamicRegions)

### **30 April 2004, Florence (IT)**

The Conference of Peripheral & Maritime Regions (CPMR) is organising a conference to explore EU rural development policy post 2007. This is a follow-up to the Salzburg conference, which was organized by the Commission in November 2003, and is aimed at facilitating an exchange of views between the Commission and the regions in advance of the preparation of the Community regulations for rural development post 2007. *Contact: Mme. Sylvia Langlais, Tel: 00 33 (0)2 99 35 40 68 E-Mail: sylvia.langlais@crpm.org*

### **12-14 May 2004, Barcelona (ES)**

To coincide with the completion of the EU LIFE project, "The Green Belt: a sustainable territorial planning proposal", the Provincial Council of Barcelona is organizing a seminar on "European

periurban agriculture". The aim of the seminar is to reflect on and debate the current issues affecting metropolitan agricultural areas and to present initiatives on the preservation and development of these areas. The programme for the conference will also include the presentation of projects carried out within the framework of the LIFE project.

*Further details at:*  
<http://www.diba.es/parcsn/life/Angles.htm>

## **PARTNER SEARCH**

### ***Sustainable Resource Management***

CameronSDS, a Brussels based consultancy, is currently developing a project aimed at improving environmental governance at the local level. The project is a response to the European Commission's 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme and aims to: Provide a forum for dialogue between companies, municipalities and academics on sustainable urban and resource management; Showcase the success of leading municipalities; Promote the transfer and implementation of good practice through partnership and better information sharing. CameronSDS are currently looking for interested municipalities to participate in the project. *Contact Edward Cameron at [edward@cameronsds.com](mailto:edward@cameronsds.com)*

### ***Preserving Oral Heritage***

The French "Fédération Nationale des Foyers Ruraux" (National Federation of Rural Households) is urgently looking for partners with a view to submitting a

proposal within the framework of the forthcoming call for projects under the Culture 2000 EU programme (expected in April 2004). The aim of the initiative is to research oral heritage, gathering life-experiences from senior members of rural communities in several countries of the "Wider" Europe. *Contact: Macarena Nuno, Fédération Nationale des Foyers Ruraux. Tel. +33 1 45 78 01 78, E-mail: [macarena.nuno@mouvement-rural.org](mailto:macarena.nuno@mouvement-rural.org), website: <http://www.mouvement-rural.org>.*

## **NETWORKS**

### ***New Innovative Actions Network***

The new Sustainable European Regions Network (SERN), the third network to be funded under the Innovative Actions Programme (in addition to IANIS and Erik) has been launched. Commissioned by DG REGIO, the networks cover the three Innovative Actions themes. The lead partner in SERN is Wales. There is currently 11 other EU partner regions (no Irish partners), plus shadow partner regions from the accession countries. The network is open to the participation of other regions with an interest in sustainable development. The network enables partner regions to come together, pool knowledge and understanding and to work together to create sustainable regions. *Further details at: <http://www.sustainable-euregions.net/>*

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