



Irish Regions Office

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FUNDING

Culture 2000

On 6 July the European Commission published the 2005 call for proposals for the Culture 2000 programme. Culture 2000 supports annual and multiannual (2-3 years) cultural events and projects carried out in partnerships or in the form of networks. The programme provides support for music and performing arts, cultural heritage, plastic and visual arts, literature and books and translation. The total budget for this call is approximately €28 million. Funding for projects ranges from €50,000 to €300,000, and to a maximum of 60 %. Deadlines for applications: 15 October 2004 for annual and translation projects, 29 October 2004 for multi-annual projects. *Further details at:* <http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/index.en.html>

Cultural Cooperation

The European Commission has launched a call for applications concerning European cultural cooperation projects and the analysis of information on cultural cooperation. Projects selected must involve some form of experimentation and must relate to at least two of the following objectives: to increase the mobility of operators in the cultural sector; to increase the circulation of cultural products and works; and to develop intercultural dialogue. Total budget: €2.14 million. Maximum rate of Community funding: 70% of eligible costs. Deadline for

applications: 15 September 2004. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/other/actions/exp_act/exp_act_en.html

LIFE III

The European Commission has published the application files for 2005 for LIFE Environment demonstration projects, preparatory projects, and LIFE Third Country projects. However, because the Council has not yet adopted the Regulation for the extension of the LIFE III programme to December 2006 the documents published are only for information purposes until the Regulation is finally adopted (expected in late July 2004). A formal call for proposals will be published after adoption of the Regulation. *Further details at:* <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life/funding/index.htm>

NEWS & POLICY

New Cohesion Policy Regulations Adopted

On July 14 the European Commission adopted a proposal for five new Cohesion policy regulations for the period 2007-2013. The proposal adopted include a general regulation laying down a common set of rules for all Structural instruments, specific regulations for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund,

and a new regulation to establish a European grouping for cross-border co-operation (EGCC). The new proposals confirm the guidelines set out in the Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion, published on February 18, namely focusing investment on the Lisbon and Gothenburg priorities through three key objectives: Convergence (78% of budget or €264 billion); Regional Competitiveness and Employment (17% or €7.9 billion), which will concern Ireland; and European Territorial Cooperation (4% or €13.2 billion). The regulations retain the key principles of the current Cohesion policy: programming, partnership, co-funding and assessment. However, in future programming will be: more strategic - Cohesion policy is now linked to the Community's long-term strategic priorities and to the annual debate in the Spring Council; less bureaucratic - decentralisation of the funds management, proportionality of rules, less instruments and a simplified delivery system (the Community Support Framework and the Programme Complement are to be abolished; authorities involved will have greater flexibility in the financial management of funds; eligibility rules will in future be defined at Member States level – except a limited number of exemptions); more focused - geographical concentration on Member States and regions with greatest needs in the larger EU and on competitiveness (Lisbon-Strategy) and sustainable development (Gothenburg-Strategy). For the regional competitiveness and employment objective financial allocations will be based on eligible population, national and regional prosperity, unemployment and population density. As far as possible programmes will be financed from a single fund. The Commission expects a final decision on the new regulations by the

Council and the Parliament in 2005, with a view to programme implementation from the beginning of 2007. *Further details at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/debate/forum_en.htm*

Structural Funds Programming 2007-2013

Three key stages will govern the adoption of Structural Funds programmes for the 2007-2013 period. First of all, the Council of Ministers will adopt strategic policies on the basis of a Commission proposal. These strategic policies will define the key Cohesion policy priorities for the Structural Funds' three new Objectives (Convergence, Competitiveness/Employment, Territorial Co-operation). They will be adopted no later than three months after the new regulations have been passed. This will set the stage for each of the Member States to adopt a "national reference framework" describing the theme-specific and territorial priorities and including a list of regions selected for the Regional Competitiveness & Employment Objective. An "operational" part will also describe the list of operational programmes and the indicative allocation by each Fund per programme. Each national framework will then be negotiated with the Commission. Member State will also submit their planned operational programmes for adoption by the Commission. Unless an exemption is granted, each planned programme will cover only one of the three future Objectives. Each programme will be assessed to ensure it makes a contribution to the aims of the national reference framework and to the EU's strategic policies. If not, the Member States in question may have to

revise its plans. The operational programmes may be reviewed at the instigation of the Commission or Member States to reflect major social and economic changes or an adjustment in the EU's priorities (subsequent to Council Conclusions, for example). The Funds' rate of participation will be limited to 50% of government spending for regions covered by the Regional Competitiveness & Employment Objective and 75% of government spending for the Territorial Cooperation Objective.

Boost for LEADER in 2007-2013

On July 15 the European Commission unveiled proposals for a new EU Rural Development Policy, which could see a significant increase in EU funding for non-farming LEADER-type rural development activities, from about €5 billion for the current period (LEADER+) to a possible €20 billion, for the period from 2007 to 2013. The Commission's proposals envisage both a mainstreaming of the LEADER approach, for which Member States would have to allocate at least 7% of their overall rural development budgets, as well as a separate objective for non-farming rural development activities, which would receive a minimum of 15% of the national envelope. The new policy will have three main objectives: Axis 1: Improving competitiveness of farming and forestry (on-farm investment, food quality schemes, support for young farmers, etc.), which must receive a minimum of 15% of the national envelope; Axis 2: Environment and land management (payments to farmers in Less Favoured Areas (LFAs), NATURA 2000 payments, agri-environment measures - REPs, etc.), which must receive a minimum

of 25% of the national envelope; and Axis 3: Improving quality of life and diversification (diversification to non agricultural activities, support for micro enterprise and tourism, village renewal, etc.), which must receive a minimum of 15% of the national envelope. A fourth implementation axis (LEADER) mainstreams the LEADER approach to bottom-up rural development. A minimum of 7% of programme funding is to be reserved for the LEADER axis, which can address one or more of the three Axes above through a LEADER approach. Total EU funding will amount to €13.7 billion per year for 2007-2013. By introducing a single funding and programming instrument, the new policy will aim to be much simpler to manage and control. *Further details at:* http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/capreform/rurdevprop_en.pdf

Ireland to lose under Revision of Less Favoured Areas

Amid criticism from the EU Court of Auditors the European Commission in its new Rural Development Policy is proposing to re-examine how it defines Less Favoured Areas (LFAs). The current definition of LFAs encompasses traditionally mountain areas or areas with specific handicaps (such as wetlands or islands) and intermediate LFAs, which are partly defined on socio-economic criteria. The Commission is now proposing to re-examine how it defines the intermediate zones, which would in future be based solely on permanent geographical handicaps, such as low soil productivity and poor climactic conditions. This change could have serious implications for Ireland, where a large proportion of the designated LFAs

qualify on the basis of socio-economic criteria. The Irish Farmers Association has suggested that up to 100,000 farmers could be affected, with a loss of funding of up to €230 million a year. Irish farm groups have voiced their objection to the proposals and to the proposals to divert rural development funds to off-farm schemes.

Commission Present Budget for 2007-2013

On July 14th the Commission presented detailed plans concerning its budget needs for 2007-2013. This follows the publication of the Financial Perspective in February 2004. In its recent proposals, the Commission continues to insist on the need to increase the EU's budget (now just under €100 billion per year) to €124.6 billion in 2007 and €143.1 billion in 2013. On average, that would mean an increase in expenditure to 1.14% of the Union's GNI (gross national income). The Commission insists that the increased budget is necessary to fund its new proposals for Regional Policy, CAP reform, R&D and other policy areas, and is justified on the basis of the 30% increase in population following enlargement and the adding of new tasks (e.g. in Justice and Home Affairs) to the Community brief. However, the Commission proposals are strongly opposed by six Member States (the UK, Germany, France, Sweden, the Netherlands and Austria), which have demanded that the Community budget should be capped at 1% of GNI. The Commission's proposals also call for the introduction of a generalised correction mechanism for net contributors to the EU budget, which would replace the 'chèque

britannique' (UK budget rebate secured in 1984), and the introduction by 2014 of a new self-funding system, based on a European tax on energy, VAT or corporate income. *Further details at:* <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/04/910&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

EU Leaders call on Regions to Debate new Constitution

The Presidents of the European Parliament (Pat Cox), the European Commission (Romano Prodi) and the Committee of the Regions (Peter Straub) are calling on regional and local authorities to organise public debates in their areas on the new EU Constitution. Launching the campaign, "1000 discussions for Europe", the three Presidents called on all elected representatives to help present and explain the Constitution to EU citizens. The new Constitution enhances the role of local and regional authorities in the EU in a number of ways, including: recognition of regional and local self-government as part of the national identities of the member states (Article I-5); extension of the concept of Subsidiarity to include the regional and local levels (Article I-9); and the requirement for effective consultation by the Commission on new legislative proposals, in particular on their local and regional dimension (Article I-46); The Protocol on Subsidiarity also requires the Commission to assess and take into account the financial and administrative impact on local and regional governments of proposed new legislation; The principle of Territorial Cohesion is recognised amongst the shared competences of the Union and the

Constitution also gives special State aid status to rural areas, regions in industrial decline, insular, border and mountain areas (Article III-116). *Further details on the "1000 discussions for Europe" campaign are available at:*

<http://europa.eu.int/futurum/1000debates/>

The Constitution is available at:

http://www.euabc.com/upload/rfConstitution_en.pdf

Ireland's Environmental Record Criticised

THE EU has launched nine separate legal actions against Ireland for failing to address illegal dumping, poor wastewater controls and for failure to protect wildlife and habitats. Environment Commissioner Margot Wallstroem delivered a stinging indictment of Ireland's ability to safeguard its natural beauty and singled out the failure to halt illegal dumping for particular attention. Specific problems highlighted include: overgrazing in Co Mayo leading to loss of habitat and threatening the survival of the Red Grouse, and causing serious damage to the massive blanket bog at Owenduff-Nephin Beg (Co Mayo); wildlife, including whales, dolphins, the lesser horseshoe bat and the Natterjack toad are not getting the legal protection they require; inadequate protection of Natura 2000 sites, with complaints of damage from quad bikes. While the EU supported measures such as the creation of a national Office of Environmental Enforcement, it criticised ineffective sanctions against illegal waste operators. Five final written warnings were sent about sites in Granny Ferry, Co Kilkenny; Tinnapark, Co Wicklow;

Murphy's Rock and Blackpool, Co Cork and Ardristan, Co Carlow. *Further details at:*

http://europa.eu.int/comm/secretariat_general/sgb/droit_com/index_en.htm#infractions

Ireland Behind on Wastewater Treatment

The Commission has sent a first written warning to Ireland for failing to meet a December 2000 deadline for installing proper treatment systems for wastewater discharges from cities and towns with more than 15,000 inhabitants. The EU's Urban Wastewater Directive set a deadline of the 31 December 2000 for so-called secondary treatment to be in place before water is discharged from towns and cities of this size. The Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive requires that urban centres (cities, towns and settlements) meet minimum wastewater collection and treatment standards within deadlines fixed by the Directive. *Further details at:*

http://europa.eu.int/comm/secretariat_general/sgb/droit_com/index_en.htm#infractions

EVENTS

1-3 September 2004, Turku, (Finland)

The City of Turku is organising a Forum on "Science Parks as a Tool for Regional Development: Possibilities and Limitations". The Forum will look at: how regions can benefit from science parks and what kind of

investments should be made in them; creating and maintain a vital science park; the role of science parks in the business and innovation policies of the EU; attracting businesses to regional science parks. *Further details at:*

<http://www.turkudevelopmentforum.fi/english/index.html>

23-24 Sept. 2004, Waterford (Ireland)

The Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly, the Managing Authority for the Region's ERDF-funded Innovative Actions Programme, is inviting Irish and UK regions to an event to exchange ideas and information on their respective Innovative Actions Programmes. The Event will take place at the Assembly's offices in Waterford. *Further details from: Paul McElhinney at 00 353 51 860700, E-mail: pmcelhinney@seregassembly.ie*

13-15 October 2004, Rovaniemi (Finland)

DG Regional Policy, the Finnish Ministry of the Interior and the region of Lapland are organising a conference on "competitive regions" on 13-15 October 2004 in Rovaniemi, Lapland. The seminar aims to promote the exchange of experience and the dissemination of best practice between authorities involved in the implementation of Objective 1 and Objective 2 Structural Fund programmes in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Sweden and the UK. Implementing authorities from other Member States will also be invited to attend. *Further details at: <http://www.lapinliitto.fi/bestpractice>*

15-16 October 2004, Budapest (HU)

The European Commission is organising the 3rd European Tourism Forum, where representatives of the tourism industry and civil society, as well as international, European, national and regional institutions and authorities will discuss the challenges faced by the sector. The three main workshops will centre on the following themes: the Internal Market for Services in the EU25, Employment and Training in the Tourism Industry, and New Trends in Tourism. Participation in the event is free of charge. Registration ASAP. *Full details at:* <http://www.etf2004budapest.hu/>

18-19 Oct 2004, Leiden (NE)

The European Commission and the Dutch government are co-organising a "City Summit" in Leiden-Noordwijk in the Netherlands. This event will focus on: the Commission's proposed regulations for the Structural Funds after 2006 and their urban dimension; the work of the Dutch government in strengthening co-operation on urban issues in the European Union; the results of the Urban Audit 2004; and lessons and good practice drawn from the URBAN programmes as well as from URBACT. *Further details from DG Regional Policy (Urban unit), at, e-mail:* Regio-Affaires-Urbaines@cec.eu.int

18-19 Nov 2004, Lille (France)

"Territorial cooperation in North West Europe - stepping up a gear: Achievements – Lessons to be Learned - Future Perspectives"

is the theme of this INTERREG IIIB NWE (North West Europe – includes Ireland) conference. With a greater proportion of EU Structural Funds going to the new member states in the period 2007-2013, the Territorial Cooperation objective will become an increasingly important instrument of territorial development in North West Europe. In this context, the conference will consider: the purpose of territorial cooperation; how to get started; results achieved so far; added-value; future orientations; and future funding opportunities to support territorial cooperation. *Further details at:* www.nweurope.org/MTE/

NETWORKS

EU network for protection of Regional products

The Aquitaine region (France) recently announced the official launch of the "Association européenne des productions d'origine" (European Association for Produce of Origin). The aim of this initiative is to bring together the regions and interested economic players of EU Member States to protect and promote the denomination of origin of agricultural produce, exchange experiences and create a cooperation network in this area. Pascal Lamy, European Commissioner for Trade has welcomed the creation of the network, highlighting the fact that "geographical indications are a tool for quality development in agriculture and therefore an instrument to ensure the long-term health of the agricultural sector."

Further details at: http://www.aquitainagri.net/exporigine/origine_index.html *Contact:* Laurent Gomez, *e-mail:* lgomez@aquitaine.chambagri.fr *Tel:* +33 5 56 01 33 22.

PUBLICATIONS

Guide to Recycling Plastic

A set of guidelines for local and regional authorities on the management of waste plastics has been published by the Europe-wide Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling (ACRR). Developed with several of the plastics industry associations, ACRR's good practice guide aims to address many of the issues facing local authorities that want to tackle plastic waste. It looks at how local and regional authorities can improve their collection and sorting of waste plastics and related activities, and provides advice on how to promote the supply and demand for recycled plastics. *The guide can be found on the ACRR website at:* www.acrr.org/news *Copies are also available in CD ROM, e-mail:* fra@ibgebim.be.

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