



Irish Regions Office

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FUNDING

Interreg IIIB Targeted Call

In order to reallocate decommitted funds a restricted call for proposals has been announced under the Interreg IIIB North West Europe programme. A condition for approval under this call will be the submission of a payment claim (without auditor’s statement) by 30th Nov. 2004, the same as for projects already approved. If projects are not able to meet this deadline, they will not be eligible. Approximately €25 million will be available under the call. The deadline for applications is October 7th, 2004. *Further details at:* <http://www.nweurope.org/page/document.php?p=148>

New Framework Programme for Competitiveness and Innovation

The European Commission is currently in the process of drawing up proposals for a new Framework Programme for Competitiveness & Innovation. It is understood that the new programme, which would come into effect in 2007 would incorporate certain “innovation” aspects of the current 6th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development as well as the current ERDF Innovation Actions Programme and the “Regions of Knowledge” pilot action (see below). It is thought that the new Programme would be coordinated by DG Enterprise, with input from DG REGIO and DG Research. Further details in future editions.

Extension of “Regions of Knowledge”

The European Commission has decided to extend the Regions of Knowledge pilot actions, with a new call expected at the end of 2004/early 2005. Further details of the Commission decision will be announced at a conference on October 22nd. It is understood that the new call will primarily support regional innovation networks, which facilitate collaboration between regions in developing their innovation potential. *Further details on the Regions of Knowledge Pilot Actions are available at:*

http://www.cordis.lu/era/knowreg_about.htm

Innovation in Clusters

DG Enterprise will launch a Call for Proposals entitled *Entrepreneurial Innovation in Clusters* on October 26th, 2004. This call will address three specific strands: Sectoral Aspects of Innovation; Networking between clusters; and Networks of Financial Innovation Action (dealing mostly with venture capital). The following will be eligible to apply for funding: Companies as “leaders” representing whole clusters; Regional Authorities involved in creating clusters; Regional Authorities in New Member States that are interested in creating new clusters; Academics with experience in working with clusters; and Business Federations. This is a Pilot Action providing 100% financing for up to 10 projects in total. The budget is €8m and projects will be two years in duration. A second call is expected in 2005. *Further detail in the November, or consult:*

<http://www.cordis.lu/innovation/en/home.html>

Sustainable Energy

The European Commission has published a Call for Proposals under the 6th Framework Programme (2002-2006), Priority Theme: Sustainable Development, Sub-Priority: Sustainable Energy Systems. EU funding of up to 35% of eligible costs is available for energy demonstration projects. Funding will support demonstration and dissemination actions (with an optional short to medium term research component of up to about 20%) which are carried out with an EU dimension and which involve the application of new, renewable and efficient energy technologies. Deadline: 8th December 2004. Budget: €132 million. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2004/c_224/c_22420040908en00080011.pdf

LIFE III Extension

On July 26th in Brussels, the EU Council of Ministers formally adopted a Regulation extending the LIFE III programme by a further two years (2005-2006). This involves a budgetary extension of €317.2 million. The extension is designed to bring the programme into line with the current Financial Perspectives (EU's multi-annual budget), which runs until 2006. *Further details at:* <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life/news/index.htm>

LIFE Funding for two Irish Projects

Two Irish projects are among the 77 LIFE Nature projects selected in 2004. The European Commission approved a total of

€76 million for the 77 nature conservation project, and a further €76 million for 109 projects under the LIFE Environment programme 2004 (no Irish projects were selected under the LIFE Environment call). Of the two Irish project selected under LIFE Nature, one seeks to develop a model for sustainable agricultural management in the Burren region. The second project, proposed by the Irish Forestry Board, aims to restore a suite of raised bog sites in the Irish Midlands through the removal of conifer plantations and the blocking of drainage ditches. *Further details at:* <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life/news/index.htm>

NEWS & POLICY

Presidency Presents its Cohesion Policy Priorities

Appearing before the European Parliament's Regional Development Committee at the end of August, Dutch Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Karen Van Gennip outlined the Council Presidency's Cohesion Policy priorities for the period 2007-2013. Mrs Van Gennip emphasised the close link between EU Cohesion Policy and the Lisbon Strategy and said she believed "Europe's economic engine is to be found in the regions and in local growth". The Presidency explained that it would focus on content before addressing financial aspects. The new Regulations will be presented in four installments in the course of September and discussions between the Member States will begin in early October. The Dutch hope to

arrive at a consensus on general guidelines by December 2004. In terms of the budget, the Presidency simply referred back to previous discussions between the Member States and highlighted the consensus that will need to be struck. The Netherlands is one of the six EU Member States recommending a cap on the EU Budget of 1% of GNI. *Further details at:* http://www.europarl.eu.int/meetdocs/2004_2009/organes/REGI/REGI_meetinglist.htm

Parliament prepares to fight Council on future EU budget

The European Parliament is set to create a temporary committee to provide a counterweight to the Council of Ministers in the heated debate over the EU's next Financial Perspective (multi-annual budget). Group leaders met on the 9th September to discuss the committee's mandate and decide on its composition before a plenary vote in October. The committee will represent the collective view of relevant committees, including agriculture and regional policy, concerning the Financial Perspective 2007-13. The draft mandate calls on the committee to oppose the Council on the sensitive issues of setting the EU's future budget. The Parliament and the Commission have already voiced concern over moves by certain Member States to cap the EU budget at 1% of GNI (thereby limiting budgets for regional policy and other key areas of EU activity).

Regions Disappointed with Proposals for Future Research Policy

The Conference of Peripheral & Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) has expressed

disappointment that the European Commission's recent strategy paper on research does not reflect the more ambitious regional goals set out in February's proposal on the Financial Perspective (See: EU Bulletin no.2). On June 16th the Commission published a Communication on research policy from 2007-2013, entitled "*Science and technology, the key to Europe's future - Guidelines for future European Union policy to support research*". It suggests doubling EU funding for research to €10 billion a year and identifies six key objectives. These include the creation of European excellence poles, the launch of technology initiatives in growth industries and the creation of a European Agency backing European teams involved in basic research. However, the CPMR believes that more attention needs to be paid to innovation and more detail is needed on how the Commission plans to support the development of venture capital, science parks, business incubators and regional innovation policies. The CPMR also wants to know how public players, especially regions, might be involved in technology platform initiatives outlined in a series of recent vision papers. Technology platforms would be new structures involving various interested players – from industrialists, the research sector and government authorities.

CPMR call for Regional Research & Innovation Programmes

The CPMR also emphasised that the European Research Area must cover regional research and innovation programmes as well as those at the national level. It pointed to the Financial Perspectives adopted in February 2004, where the Commission referred to the co-ordination of national and regional

research programmes and policies. The Commission must, therefore, be very careful on how it co-ordinates two policies (Cohesion Policy and Research Policy) based on different logic and objectives which involve two different commissioners and two directorate-generals. The CPMR believes it is important to use the Regional Innovation Strategies (RIS) because they allow regions to play a leadership role in coordination. It is understood that some of the concerns raised by the CPMR may now be addressed in a new Framework Programme for Competitiveness & Innovation (see above). *Further details, including details of an open consultation on the Commission's new Research proposals, are available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/future/index_en.html*

Higgins and Harkin appointed to Regional Development Committee

At the end of July the appointment of new members to European Parliament committee's was decided. With regard to the new Irish MEPs, Jim Higgins and Marian Harkin were appointed to the Committee on Regional Development, as were Bairbre de Brun and Jim Nicholson from Northern Ireland. Other appointments include: Mairead McGuinness to the Agriculture Committee; Liam Aylward, Avril Doyle and Kathy Sinnott to the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety; Proinsias De Rossa and Mary Lou McDonald to the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs; Sean O'Neachtain to the Fisheries Committee and the Committee on Transport & Tourism; Simon Coveney to the Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Committee, the Internal Market and

Consumer Protection Committee and the Fisheries Committee; Brian Crowley to the Constitutional Affairs Committee; and Eoin Ryan to the Economic & Monetary Affairs Committee. *Further details at:*

http://www.wdb.euoparl.eu.int/ep6/owa/p_meps.short_list?ilg=EN&ictry=IE&ipolgrp=&iorig=

New Commission Portfolios Announced

On August 12th José Manuel Barroso, President-designate of the European Commission, announced the allocation of new Commission portfolios. From November 1st Mrs Danuta Hübner, former Polish Minister for European Affairs, will take over the Regional Policy portfolio. Mrs Hübner has been a "shadow" Member of the European Commission since May 2004. Charlie McCreevy, Ireland's Commission nominee, will be the new Commissioner for Internal Market and Services, one of four key economic portfolios. Former Dutch minister, Ms Neelie Kroes will take charge of the sensitive Competition directorate, while Mariann Fischer Boel (Denmark) will be the new Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development. Mr Barroso has made it clear that the economy, and in particular reviving the Lisbon Agenda, will be a priority for the new Commission. The presence of a number of high profile and experienced politicians is a notable feature of the new Commission and could be an important factor if the Commission is to be successful in pushing through some tough new proposals, particularly in relation to the future EU budget (with direct implications for future Structural Funding). All of the new Commissioners will be located in the new Berlaymont building (opposite the Irish

Regions Office!). *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/commissioners/newcomm_en.htm

Consultation on Sustainable Development

The European Commission launched a 12-week consultation on the EU Sustainable Development Strategy on July 30. The general public, stakeholders and experts in the field are invited to contribute their views before October 31. Adopted in 2001, the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) states that economic growth, environmental quality and social inclusion must go hand in hand. It pinpoints six trends which pose severe or potentially irreversible threats to the welfare of European citizens: climate change, public health, poverty and social exclusion, the ageing society, the management of natural resources and mobility and transport. Goals and policies have been set out for each of these issues. The strategy also tries to improve coordination between different policy areas. A review has to be carried out at the start of each Commission's term of office. The current review will examine progress made since 2001 and plan what needs to be done to achieve long-term sustainable development. Further details at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/sustainable/pages/consult_en.htm.

€20 fee for planning submissions in breach of EU Directives

The EU Commission is to take a case against Ireland to the European Court of Justice over the Government decision to impose a €20 charge on members of the public making submissions through the planning process on

major developments. Although a charge is applicable in Ireland for observations made on any planning matter, the Commission believes that charging to make a submission on any development requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment (most large scale projects) is inappropriate. The Commission already issued a warning before the legislation incorporating the €20 fee was enacted indicating that the fee structure was in breach of EU Directives. Ireland is the only country in the EU which imposes a charge to comment on a development involving an EIA.

Member States miss deadline on Electronic & Electrical Waste Directives

The European Commission has warned that almost all Member States, including Ireland, have failed to implement EU environmental rules on electrical and electronic waste by the deadline of August 13. The Directive on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE Directive or 2002/96/EC) requires the EU15 Member States to set up collection systems for electronic equipment by August 2005 (August 2007 for the new Member States). Member States will also have to collect at least 4 kilos of this waste from households per inhabitant per year. There are also reuse and recycling targets for different products. A further Directive on the Restriction of the Use of Hazardous Substances (RoHS or 2002/95/EC) bans certain hazardous substances such as lead and cadmium from electronic equipment from July 1, 2006 onward. The Directives also require manufacturers to cover the costs of disposing of these goods and encourages them to design and produce more environmentally-friendly products. So far,

only Greece has passed national legislation transposing the new laws. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/waste/weee_index.htm

LEADER+ Contact Point Opens

The new European Observatory for Rural Territories has announced the opening of the Leader+ Contact Point, which will be responsible for carrying out the following tasks: dealing with requests for information; developing the Leader+ website; producing an electronic newsletter and magazine, as well as summaries and analyses; organising seminars; providing methodological support for Leader+ actors; promoting and representing the Leader+ programme. *The Contact Point office is located close to DG AGRI at 81, Rue du Marteau, B-1000 Brussels, Tel. +32 2 235 2020, Fax: +32 2 280 0438, E-mail: contact.point@leaderplus.org, Website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/rur/leaderplus/index_en.htm.*

EVENTS

7-8 Oct. 2004 Ballina, Co. Mayo, (Ireland)

The conference, "Joining across the Water" is being organised to disseminate results of the CYCLEAU project, a current Interreg project on sustainable water management. Cycleau involves partners in Ireland (Moy Valley Resources, Ballina), the UK and France. The project aims to: find innovative

ways of managing and improving water resources; share knowledge and experience of water management; and involve local communities in the management of their local rivers. The UK Environment Agency is the lead partner in the project. *Further details at -*

<http://www.cycleau.com/index.asp?docid=1001771>

15 Oct. 2004, Ballina, Co Mayo (Ireland)

The 7th annual conference of the Association of Irish Regions (AIR) will focus on, "EU Cohesion Policy – Implications for our Regions". The conference will be addressed by representatives of the European Commission (DG REGIO) and the Dept. of Finance and will explore some of the implications for the regions and local authorities of the Commissions regional policy (Structural Funds) proposals for the period 2007-2013. *Further details from: Sarah Coffey, Midland Regional Authority. E-mail: scoffey@midlands.ie, Tel: +353 506 52996.*

10-13 Nov. 2004, Vienna, (Austria)

The Annual General Meeting and Conference of Eurocities will focus on the theme "Gaining from visions - cities for a new perspective on social and economic prosperity". In the context of the Lisbon Agenda the conference will examine the challenges for cities of reconciling the growing tensions between economic competition on the one hand, and social demands and public responsibilities on the other. *Further details at: <http://www.eurocities2004-vienna.at/>*

18-19 Nov. Lille (France)

The Interreg IIIB North West Europe secretariat is organising an event to examine the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Programme. The event aims to demonstrate programme results and examine the added-value of territorial cooperation with a view to contributing to future perspectives on territorial cooperation and to exchanging best practice between project partners. *Further information at: <http://www.nweurope.org/MTE/en/home>*

6-7 Dec. 2004, Rotterdam (NL)

A pan-European Interreg IIIC Forum, similar to the Partner Search Forum held in Berlin in March, is being organised in Rotterdam in December. The focus of the forum will be on the results of interregional cooperation, with presentations on approved operations and workshops for lead partners. The December forum will also aim to facilitate networking between regions from across Europe and the exchange of ideas on regional development. *Further information will soon be posted at: http://www.interreg3c.net/sixcms/list.php?page=home_en*

NETWORKS

ELANET

The European Local Authorities' Telematic Network, ELANET, operates under the umbrella of the Council of European Municipalities & Regions (CEMR) and focuses on the deployment of the

Information Society at regional and local level. ELANET brings together public sector organizations and private-organised bodies represented by their telematic daughter companies. ELANET support is three-fold: promotion of policy discussions and fora; implementation of mainstream EU projects and other information society initiatives; dissemination of ICT solutions and project results to local and regional authorities. *Further details at: <http://www.elanet.org/>*

PUBLICATIONS

Handbook to promote Eco-Friendly Public Procurement

A Handbook to assist public authorities in buying environmentally-friendly goods, services and works was published by the European Commission on August 26th. The guide aims to promote greener public procurement while ensuring that contracting authorities comply with recently updated EU Directives. The Commission said it hopes to improve on the current situation where only 19% of public administrations use environmental criteria in more than half their purchases. *Further details at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/pub licprocurement/key-docs_en.htm*

Irish Regions Office
6 Rond-Point Schuman,
B-1040 Brussels

Robert Collins
Tel: +32 2 282 8474
E: robert.collins@pophost.eunet.be

Eamon O'Hara
Tel: +32 2 282 8477
E: eamon.ohara@pop.kpn.be