



Irish Regions Office

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FUNDING

Managing Change

For the period 2004-2006, Article 6 of the European Social Fund (ESF) Regulation will support the development and testing of innovative measures to anticipate and manage change under the overarching theme of "Innovative approaches to the management of change". Within this theme, innovative measures should focus on two, more specific sub-themes: the management of demographic change (measures to promote active ageing and the employment of older workers) and the management of restructuring (measures to enhance the capacity for adaptation and anticipation of workers, enterprises and public authorities). The next deadline for proposals is 26 January 2005. *Further details at:*

http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/empl/vp_2003_021/library

Support for research infrastructures

This call for proposals under the 6th Framework Programme for Research & Technological Development will provide support for "research infrastructures", which includes facilities and resources that provide essential services to the research community, whether academic or industrial. Research infrastructures in this context can refer to a single resource at a single location, a network of distributed resources, including Grid-type architectures, or even 'virtual' services that are provided electronically.

They can include singular large-scale research installations, museum collections, special habitats, libraries, databases, arrays of small installations, communications networks, Grid networks, and infrastructural centres of competence. Budget: €145 million. Deadline for proposals: 3rd March 2005. *Further information on the Call, including information on previously successful projects, is available at:* <http://www.cordis.lu/infrastructures/>

Networking of Clusters

On October 26th the European Commission issued a call for proposals under the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) on 'Entrepreneurial innovation: networking key players and users'. Support under this call will facilitate networking between clusters from the same or from different sectors with a view to generating new innovations, in particular non-technological innovation (e.g. management structures, communication channels, business strategies, etc.). Support is also available for actions aimed at tackling sector-specific innovation finance issues. A number of pan-European networks per sector will be created involving innovation financing professionals, such as investors, incubators as well as industry federations and relevant associations. Total indicative budget: €20 million. Up to 20 projects will be supported. Deadline for proposal: January 27th, 2005. *Further details at:* http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/call_details.cfm?CAL_L_ID=172

NEWS & POLICY

Report predicts €1.0 billion for Ireland in 2007-2013 period

A working paper published on November 15th by the European Policies Research Centre (EPRC) predicts Structural Funds transfers to Ireland for the period 2007-2013 of just over €1 billion (from €3.8 billion in 2000-2006). The EPRC estimates that the BMW region will receive approximately €602 million and the Southern & Eastern Region around €415 million. However, the EPRC's analysis is based on the optimistic assumption that the €336 billion budget for future regional policy proposed by the Commission will remain unchanged (see next article). The working paper, entitled, "*Searching for Consensus: The Debate on Reforming EU Cohesion Policy*", examines the key questions associated with EU cohesion policy reform. It considers how Member States will benefit under Commission's proposals for future cohesion policy; it examines the potential allocation of funding to each Member States, and assesses the ongoing debate with respect to the overall financial framework for 2007-13. The EPRC believes that Ireland has adopted an 'intermediate' position in this debate, between that of the six net contributors (who wish to limit the EU budget to 1.0% of EU GDP) and the Commission (which proposes a ceiling of 1.14%). A second EPRC paper looks at EU competition policy and regional state aids. *Both papers are available at:* http://www.eprc.strath.ac.uk/eprc/publications_downloads.htm

Future Structural Funds budget under increasing pressure

The Irish Regions Office has learned that the European Commission is now preparing for the very real likelihood that the proposed regional policy budget (Structural and Cohesion Funds) for 2007-2013 will have to be reduced. A Commission official has indicated that a compromise on the overall EU budget for 2007-2013 was now probable and that the final figure was likely to be closer to the 1% of EU GDP, as requested by the six net contributor Member States, than to the 1.14% proposed by the Commission. In this context the Commission is currently considering a new scenario whereby the regional policy budget would be reduced by about €40 billion (from €336 billion to €290 billion). The expectation is that most, if not all of this would come from the budget for the new Competitiveness and Employment Objective, which could end up being less than half that originally proposed (i.e. from €58 billion to €20 / €30 billion). As both the BMW region and the Southern & Eastern region would fall under this Objective this would mean that potential transfers to Ireland would face a proportionate reduction (from the €1 billion predicted above).

Concerns over co-financing of future Territorial Cooperation

EU regions have expressed concern over European Commission proposals to only regard public spending as being eligible co-financing for future territorial co-operation programmes. If implemented this would represent a significant departure from the present situation, whereby spending by semi-

public and private authorities involved in programmes is also considered eligible. Two of the EU's most important regional bodies, the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) and the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) have voiced concern over the proposals, which they say would undermine the capacity to involve all regional development stakeholders in cooperation projects, a recognised positive feature of the current programmes. Both organisations otherwise welcome the new Commission proposals on territorial co-operation, which they say will "pave the way for greater efficiency, more transparency and better partnerships". Territorial Cooperation is the third objective of the proposed future cohesion policy, alongside Convergence and Competitiveness, with a proposed budget allocation of €13.2 billion. *Further details on the draft Structural Funds Regulations at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/newreg10713_en.htm

Court of Auditors critical of Interreg III

In an Information Note published on November 16, the European Court of Auditors strongly criticise the programming of the Interreg III Community Initiative and call for immediate changes to ensure greater effectiveness and facilitate improved evaluation. The Court is particularly critical of: the delay by the Commission in publishing the detailed guidelines for the programmes; the lack of clear and measurable objectives; delays in the adoption of programmes; the absence of genuinely shared implementation structures; and the

failure of some projects to contribute significantly to the resolution of problems specific to border areas. The Court recommends that project selection criteria are strengthened in order to enhance the added-value of projects and that greater attention is given to measuring impact. For future programmes (2007-2013) the Court recommends: a greater focus on specific "border" issues; the establishment of detailed criteria for the assessment of programme proposals; the setting of specific objectives for each programme to assist in evaluation; and the issuing of the guidelines and methodology documents before work starts on preparing programmes. In order to encourage more cooperation, the Court also recommends that the financial resources allocated to the Initiative should no longer be assigned by Member State and it lends support to the idea of new cross-border implementation bodies. *Further details at:* http://www.eca.eu.int/audit_reports/special_reports/docs/2004/rs04_04en.pdf

3 Irish applications under Interreg IIC

A total of 57 partnerships, including regions and cities from across the enlarged EU, have submitted funding applications to Interreg IIC West in its third application round, which closed on the 8th of October 2004. In total 18 applications were received from the UK, 10 each from both Belgium and France, 9 from the Netherlands, 7 from Germany, and 3 from Ireland. The total amount applied for comes to over €52 million. The applications are now being assessed in the Interreg IIC West secretariat in Lille (France). Funding decisions will be taken by representatives of the West zone Member

States on 17 January 2005. *Further details from: Keelie Reader at: E-mail: Keelie.reader@interreg3c.net or Tel: +33 3 28 38 11 16*

"Motorways of the Sea" bypass regions

Europe's maritime regions have expressed dissatisfaction at being excluded from the project to create "motorways of the sea". The Conference of Peripheral & Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) has criticised the fact that only the Member States can issue calls for proposals. It has also demanded that accessibility and cohesion are included as project assessment criteria, to give smaller ports a chance of winning funding. The CPMR, which represents some 150 maritime regions in Europe, expressed its regret that improving accessibility and cohesion - included among the objectives of motorways of the sea - is not included in the project assessment criteria. The CPMR fears the criteria for the selection of projects will apply more to links between major ports serving powerful regions than to relations between peripheral regions. The new "motorways of the sea" initiative is designed to cut road congestion by supporting the development of maritime transport (of particular interest to Ireland). It will be subsidised under the EU's Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T). The Guidelines provide for projects to be selected by Member States and submitted for approval to the European Commission. The Commission aims to launch up to ten motorways of the sea by 2010. *Further details at:*

http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/intermodality/motorways_sea/index_en.htm

Irish regions retain low unemployment

A report published by Eurostat, the EU's statistical body, on November 9th shows that, while unemployment rates varied widely across the EU25 in 2003, from 2.0% in the region of Bolzano in Italy, to 31.8% in Reunion in France, rates in Ireland remained well below the EU average. Unemployment rose slightly in the EU25 as a whole between 2002 and 2003, from 8.9% to 9.1%, and this was reflected at regional level, with rates rising in almost 60% of the NUTS II regions in the EU25. Of these 254 regions, 53 had an unemployment rate of 4.5% or less in 2003, i.e. half the EU25 average. The Southern and Eastern Region (Ireland) continued to fare well, at 4.5%. Although this did represent an increase from 4.1% in 2002 and the unemployment rate among young people (15-24 years) increased from 7.7% to 8.7%. The BMW region experienced a slight drop in unemployment levels, from 5.6% in 2002 to 5.5% in 2003. Between 2002 and 2003, the overall unemployment rate for women in the EU25 rose slightly, from 9.9% to 10.0%. *Further details at:* http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/cache/ITY_PU_BLIC/I-09112004-AP/EN/I-09112004-AP-EN.PDF

EU must act on Lisbon Agenda

Presenting his report on "EU Progress Towards the Lisbon Agenda" on November 3rd, former Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok said that unless the EU pursued urgent reform it would not only fail to meet its target of becoming the world's most competitive economy by 2010, but would also have difficulty maintaining its social and

environmental standards. In the report Mr Kok calls for the urgent revitalization of the Lisbon strategy. In particular, he stresses that Europe needs more people in work, working longer and working more productively. He proposes a shift away from early retirement, and a massive expansion of training and education to equip workers with the skills to work longer in a rapidly changing economy. He also argues for a major communications effort to secure the widest possible backing among politicians and the general public for the Lisbon objectives. Mr Kok outlined five areas in which the EU needs to step up its efforts: The Knowledge Society; The Internal Market; The Business Climate; The Labour Market; and Environmental Sustainability. He calls on Member States to present national action plans by 2005 setting out what concrete steps they will take to boost employment and growth. The report will now feed into decisions to overhaul the Lisbon strategy to be taken at the Spring European Council in March 2005. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/lisbon_strategy/index_en.html

EU Action Plan for Organic Farming

On October 18th, EU Agriculture ministers adopted the "European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming", which provides the framework for a common approach to the development of organic farming in Europe. Priorities in the Plan include: increasing public information and consumer awareness; promoting the EU logo; improving the collection and analysis of relevant statistical data; integrating organic farming into the rural development programmes; strengthening research; completing and

further harmonising standards for organic production; clarifying GMO-related issues; adapting inspection rules and improving cooperation among inspection bodies; and implementing measures to facilitate trade. The Council invited the Commission to bring forward proposals on implementation of the plan in 2005. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/qual/organic/plan/index_en.htm

New Deputy Director-General for Regional Policy

The European Commission has appointed Mr Jean-Charles Leygues as the new Deputy Director General for Regional Policy. Mr Leygues, a 62-year-old Frenchman, was previously a Director in DG REGIO. As new Deputy Director General, Mr Leygues will be responsible for coordinating the EU's Cohesion policy and, in particular the negotiation of the reform of Cohesion policy within the Financial Perspectives for the 2007-2013 period. He was deputy head of cabinet to President Jacques Delors, before being made a Director in DG REGIO in 1992.

EVENTS

29 November 2004, Genoa (Italy)

The seminar, "European Culture: Community Initiatives - the local and regional perspective" is being co-organised by the Commune of Genoa and the Committee of the Regions Education and Culture Commission (chaired by Seamus

Murray, President of the Irish Delegation). The seminar will examine the role of culture in promoting local and regional development. In particular, it will examine: the role of cultural in providing employment, in attracting investment and making a region more attractive, in promoting social cohesion and curbing social exclusion, and in stimulating local innovation and creativity. *Further details at:* http://www.cor.eu.int/document/activities/local_and_regional_perspectiveen.pdf

29 November 2004, Brussels

The ESPACE International Technical Conference will bring together experts from across Europe to present their work, research and projects on adaptation to climate change and to discuss how this can be incorporated into spatial planning at all levels, including the local and regional levels. Speakers will include representatives of the European Environment Agency, the European Commission, the Finnish Environment Institute and the Dutch National Institute for Inland Water Management. *Further details from Jill Rankin at:* jill.rankin@hants.gov.uk or contact the Irish Regions Office.

2 December 2004, Brussels

The Dutch region of Randstad, in association with the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, is organising a seminar on "Regional Innovation Policy and the Role of the EU". The seminar will include speakers from the European Commission and will examine the experiences and lessons of regional innovation in Germany, the UK, Finland,

Poland and Holland. Further details from the Irish Regions Office or Egbert de Vries at: vries@hbo-raad.nl, Tel: +31 70 3122133.

10-12 March 2005, Åre (Sweden)

The 3rd Assembly of European Regions (AER) Seminar on Sustainable Quality Tourism will focus on "Seasonality in tourism, a common problem for winter and summer tourist destinations in the Regions of Europe – What impacts? What solutions?" Seasonality can be a source of major economic, social and environmental problems for regions. The aim of the AER Seminar is to illustrate some of the main problems and to identify good practices from the Regions of Europe in overcoming them. Deadline for registration: 14 February 2005. Further details at: <http://www.ere-regions-europe.org/COMMUN/A213b3bisJamtland.html>

1-2 July 2005, Norbotten (Sweden)

The Assembly of European Regions (AER) is currently planning a seminar on "Renewable and alternative energy sources: exchange of good practices between European regions". The seminar will be divided into three parallel workshops: 1) Green electricity - affordable solar and wind power; 2) Heating efficiency - reducing energy demand in buildings and alternative sources of heat; and 3) Clean vehicles and city centre transport solutions. Regions with experience in any of these areas that would like to contribute to the seminar are invited to contact *Charlotte Aumaître (by Dec. 8th)*

at: E-mail: aer7@a-e-r.org or Tel +33 3 8822 0707 or contact the IRO

PARTNERS

Municipality of Thermaikos (Greece)

The Greek municipality of Thermaikos has expressed an interest in cooperating with local and regional authorities in Ireland on the following areas: the development of coastal areas with tourist attractions; environmental issues in rapidly developing areas; integration policies for immigrants; and strengthening economic opportunities in the services sector. Thermaikos is a coastal area which has developed rapidly in recent years. Between 1991 and 2004 the resident population of the municipality increased from 5,800 to 30,000. The population doubles during the summer season. Restaurants and leisure businesses account for over 65% of local economic activity. Contact: Nancy Theodoratlopoulou, Tel: +32 479-575958, E-mail: anantheo@yahoo.gr or the IRO

PUBLICATIONS

Handbook for Environmental Project Funding

The European Commission recently published a new "Handbook for Environmental Project Funding". The

handbook is intended to guide users through the sources, procedures and practices of EU environmental project funding and thereby increase their capacity for undertaking local environmental interventions. The handbook is intended for use by members of municipalities, NGO's, businesses, governmental or non-governmental institutions and concerned individuals, working or involved in the activities of environmental protection, improvement or education. Copies available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/funding/pdf/handbook_funding.pdf

Handbook on Integration of Immigrants

On November 10th the Commission published the first edition of the "European handbook on integration". The handbook contains best practices and lessons from the 25 Member States. It also contains recommendations and general principles illustrated with concrete examples of policies or projects carried out at local, regional or national level by governmental and non-governmental actors. Annexed to the handbook is a summary of the seven steps to follow when designing and implementing integration programmes. Copies available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/doc_centre/immigration/integration/doc/handbook_en.pdf

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