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FUNDING

Regions of Knowledge

The European Commission has decided to extend the Regions of Knowledge pilot action, with a new call now expected in early January 2005. 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 at:*

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

Town Twinning

A reminder that the forthcoming deadlines for calls under the Town Twinning initiative are January 3rd, 2005 (for actions between 1 May-15 June 2005) and February 15th, 2005 (for actions between 16 June-31 July 2005). *Further details at:*

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/towntwin/call_en.html

Intelligent Energy for Europe

"Intelligent Energy - Europe" (EIE) is the Community's support programme for addressing non-technological barriers (legal, financial, institutional, cultural, social, etc..) in the field of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources (it includes the ALTENER, SAVE, COOPENER and STEER programmes). The programme runs from 2003-2006 and has a total budget of €250 million. The programme's first call for projects was launched in December 2003 and next call is expected in December

2004. It is understood that it will have a strong local focus. EU funding per project of around €500,000 is anticipated. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/intelligent/index_en.html.

Combating social exclusion

The European Commission recently published a call for proposals for transnational co-operation and exchange projects to combat social exclusion. Through cooperation action the call aims to encourage mutual learning and to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of policies and programmes to combat poverty and social exclusion. Potential applicants include all public and/or private bodies and institutions involved in the fight against social exclusion, including national, local and regional authorities, bodies responsible for combating social exclusion, social partners, NGO's, universities, etc.. Deadline for applications: 18th February 2005. Total budget: €4.5 million per year (€200,000 to €300,000 per project per year). Up to 80% Community co-financing is available. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/calls/2004/vp_2004_004/tender_en.htm

Good Practice from ESF Article 6 Projects

The European Commission recently launched a call for proposals for the "Transfer and Dissemination of Innovation from ESF Article 6 Projects". This call relates to the transfer and dissemination of innovative approaches and methods that have been developed by Article 6 projects in the 2000-2006 programming period. Applicants must be a promoter of, or a named partner in a 2000-2006 Article 6 project. The "receiving agent" must include at least one

private or public body that has been identified as being a potential beneficiary of the innovative content developed as part of the project. There are two deadlines for applications February 16th, 2005 and February 16th 2006. The budget for each round is approx. €2 million. Co-financing of up to 85% is available. *Further details* at: http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/empl/vp_2004_017/library

Innovative government

The fourth call for proposals for Information Society Technologies, under the 6th Framework Programme for Research was published on November 25th. This call includes a specific action aimed at modernising and innovating public administrations at all levels, to foster good governance, to provide citizens and industries with new service offers, and thus create new public value. The call will focus on: Innovative ICTs for democratic involvement, in particular eParticipation; Intelligent, inclusive and personalised eGovernment services; Adaptive and proactive eGovernment support systems; and Secure pan-European eGovernment. Closing date: 22nd March 2005. A further call is expected in May 2005. *Further details* at: http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/call_details.cfm?CALL_ID=174#

Consultation on new Programme for Competitiveness and Innovation

DG Enterprise has launched an open consultation on a proposed new Framework Programme for Competitiveness & Innovation (see EU Bulletin no. 8). The new programme

will bring together a number of programmes in fields considered to be critical to boosting EU growth and competitiveness. These include: the Multiannual Programme for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship; Intelligent Energy-Europe; certain LIFE programme measures; Modinis, e-Content and e-TEN; and certain innovation related activities of the Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. Closing date for submissions: 7th of February 2005. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/cip/consultation.htm

€108 million for extension of PEACE programme

At a meeting on November 25th the European Council and the Parliament agreed on a budget of €108 million for the extension of the PEACE II programme to 2006. This includes a budget of €60 million for 2005, with €50 million coming from the EU and a further €10 million for the UK government, and a budget of €48 million for 2006, with €16 million coming from the EU and €32 million from the UK and Irish governments. The European Commission has also given an undertaking to try and find additional funds for 2006. It is expected that the decision will be formally approved by the European Parliament in January 2005 and that the extended programme will be up and running by March 2005. Agreement was also reached on an EU contribution of €15 million per year in 2005 and 2006 to the International Fund for Ireland (IFI). It is expected that this decision will be formally approved by the Parliament in December 2004. *Further details from the Irish Regions Office.*

Ireland favours compromise on EU budget

At the meeting of Finance Ministers in Brussels on December 7 it emerged that 13 countries now back the Commission's budgetary proposals for the 2007-2013 period (1.14% of EU gross national income (GNI)). Spain, Portugal and Greece, with the backing of the ten new Member States and Ireland, Finland and Italy as "observers", presented a statement saying that the Commission's proposal was a "good starting point for negotiations". This position counters that of the six net contributor countries who are calling for a budget ceiling of 1.0% of GNI over the seven year period. While Ireland has not yet taken a definitive position it would appear to favour a compromise, possibly 1.1% of GNI, as proposed by the Finnish delegation. Ireland has, however, made it clear that if cuts are to be made it would not support any cuts to farm spending (some Member States are calling for cuts to be shared between policy areas, including the CAP). Meanwhile, the European parliament has warned that it will not give its backing to the 2007-2013 budget unless it is sufficient to meet identified EU priorities. Without Parliament's approval the multiannual financial framework would have to be scrapped, requiring instead annual agreement between the Council and the Parliament on the EU budget. *Further details from the Irish Regions Office.*

Calls for continuation of Interreg IIIC

Participants in the Interreg IIIC Forum in Rotterdam on December 10th commended the record of the programme to date and criticised

the Commission's proposals to end it in 2006. In a panel debate, Jan Olbrycht, MEP and Vice-President of the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development said that there was widespread agreement that Interreg IIC works and that it was a very flexible instrument which would be especially important for new Member States. Elisabeth Helander, Director of DG Regional Policy, argued that the Commission was not proposing that transnational cooperation be discontinued but that it should be mainstreamed in Objective 1 and 2 programmes and through a "networks" programme in Objective 3. However, Claude Marcori of the French regional development agency, DATAR, said that this could not replace a European-level structure such as Interreg IIC, which was necessary for creating new partnerships between regions that did not already work together. Over 600 representatives from regional, national and European authorities took part in the Forum. *Further details at:* <http://www.interreg3c.net/sixcms/detail.php?id=6358>

Local and Regional Authorities say "Yes" to the new EU Constitution

In November, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the main European associations of local and regional authorities gave their endorsement to the ratification of the new European Constitution and pledged their commitment to assist in its promotion. There is general agreement among these organisations that the new Constitution will enhance the status of local and regional authorities in the EU. In particular it; reinforces the principle of subsidiarity and the principle of proportionality; requires early consultation and impact assessment, particular in relation to the financial and administrative costs to local and regional

authorities of EU legislation; recognises territorial cohesion as a new objective of the EU; recognises cultural and linguistic diversity as a new Community objective; recognises cross-border and inter-regional cooperation as factors for integration; and consolidates the position of the Committee of the Regions as the representative body for local and regional authorities and confers on it the power to bring matters to the European Court of Justice on the basis of a breach of the principle of subsidiarity. CoR President Peter Straub encouraged local and regional authorities to support the debate on the new Constitution through the "1000 debates for Europe" initiative. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/futurum/1000debates/index.cfm?page=dsp_content_page&lng_id=1

Proposals for Open Days 2005 presented

On December 14th, the European Commission (DG REGIO) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) jointly presented proposals for Open Days 2005 (annual event organised jointly by the Commission, the CoR and Regional Offices in Brussels, which aims to highlight important aspects of EU regional policy). Next years event will take place from the 10th-13th of October and will focus on the theme, "Preparing for Regional Programmes Post 2006". The event will attempt to enhance visibility of local and regional perspectives during this crucial time in the Structural Funds negotiations. It will, in particular, focus on the proposed new Structural Fund Objectives as well as on Programme Management post 2006 and other key issues (innovation, sustainable regional development, regional state aids, etc..). Once again, Regional Offices in Brussels are being invited to participate as partners in Open Days. This year, each partnership must include a minimum of three Regional Offices, including one from a

new Member State or Candidate Country. The deadline for submissions of interest is January 31st. *Further details at:* http://www.cor.eu.int/document/presentation/open_days2005.pdf

Regions invited to participate in Forum 2005

In 2005, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Commission will jointly organise three fora on the following topics: Bringing the EU Constitution Closer to the Citizens of Regions and Cities (22nd-24th February); Mutual Learning Platform: Research Policy at the Local and Regional Level (5th-7th July); and Implementing the Lisbon Objectives in Regions and Cities (15th-17th November). Regions and cities are being invited to participate in these events by presenting successful projects or policies pursued at local or regional level, and by contributing to the debate on the development and implementation of these European policies. *Further details from the Irish Regions Office.*

New nature conservation sites approved

On December 8th the European Commission approved the inclusion of more than 7,000 nature sites, including more than 400 in Ireland, in the Natura 2000 network. The Natura 2000 network was set up under the EU Habitats Directive to safeguard Europe's most important wildlife areas and species. The lists of sites provided for in the Directive are divided into seven bio-geographic regions: Pannonian, Boreal, Continental, Atlantic, Alpine, Macaronesian (Madeira, Azores and Canary Islands) and Mediterranean. The recent designations cover the Atlantic and Continental

region and the Member States concerned are now required to designate the listed sites under national law, granting them appropriate national protection status, and establishing the necessary management regime. However, the Commission decision stresses that some Member States, including Ireland, have not proposed sufficient sites to meet the requirements of the Habitats Directive for certain habitat types and species and that the final list will therefore require further revision. *Further details at:* <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/home.htm>

Study on Waste Management and the Landfill Directive

The EU Committee of the Regions (CoR), at the request of the European Commission, is to undertake a major study on Waste Management and the implementation of the EU's Landfill Directive. The study will examine problems associated with the implementation of the Landfill Directive and will attempt to identify examples of good practices. It is expected that a questionnaire will be circulated to relevant authorities in May 2005 and that the information collected will then feed into the final report, which should be sent to the Commission in November 2005, following approval by the CoR. A follow-up conference will be organised in Dec. 2005. The Landfill Directive was adopted on July 16th, 1999 and was transposed into Irish law on July 2nd, 2002. The Directive aims to improve standards of landfilling across Europe and sets targets for the reduction of the amount of biodegradable municipal waste sent to landfill. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/waste/landfill_index.htm

The Information Society Beyond 2005

The European Commission recently adopted a Communication on a European Information Society strategy to 2010. The Communication calls for wider use of information and communication technologies (ICT), in particular for bringing ICT closer to citizens' needs and expectations. It highlights the need to step up research and investment in ICT and to promote take-up throughout the economy. It also refers to the need to promote the benefits of ICT and, more generally, of the Information Society, and to address fears of new technologies and concerns about a widening of the "digital divide". Some of the issues identified as relevant for the development of a European Information Society policy beyond 2005 are e-Inclusion and citizenship, content and services, public services, skills and work, and ICT as a key industrial sector. The Commission is now launching an on-line public consultation on the Communication. The final strategy will be adopted during 2005. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/2005/index_en.htm

Consultation on Future Programme for Active Citizenship

On December 15th the European Commission launched an on-line consultation on the future of the Community Action Programme to promote active citizenship, which includes the Town-Twinning initiative. The current programme, which ends on 31st December 2006, promotes links between citizens of different countries, notably via town-twinning initiatives, and stimulates initiatives in the field of civic participation. The Commission has begun working on its proposals for a future

programme, to begin on 1st January 2007, and as part of this process is now seeking views and opinions from stakeholders. The on-line consultation will run until February 15th, 2005 and the Commission expects to publish its final proposals in the first half of 2005. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice/consultations/index_en.htm

Commission Annual Work Programme Delayed

The European Commission has delayed the publication of its annual work programme for 2005 until after its weekly meeting on January 26th, 2005. *Further details in the next Bulletin.*

EVENTS

27-28 January 2005, Brussels

"Keys to Car-Sharing: moving the city of tomorrow" is the final conference of the European Project Mobility Services for Urban Sustainability (MOSES). The conference is part of the EU research project "City of Tomorrow and Cultural Heritage", which aims to develop the concept of car-sharing throughout the EU. The event will present the findings of over three years of research and will feature various related demonstration activities. *Further details at:* <http://www.moses-europe.org>

17-18 February 2005, Bonn (Germany)

The conference, "Silver Economy in Europe 2005" is part of a wider initiative called the

"Senior Citizens Economy", which was initiated by the region of North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany). The objective is to establish regional networks to promote the development of the newly emerging silver economy market. The conference will present existing experiences in the development of the silver economy in different European regions. The "Silver Economy Network of European Regions" (SEN@ER), which includes two Irish members (the Midland and the Mid-East Regional Authorities) will also be officially launched at the conference. *Further details at:* http://www.silvereconomy-europe.org/konferenz/programm_en.htm

17-18 February 2005, Maastricht (NL)

The European Institute of Public Administration is organising a seminar on "Developing the Project Pipeline for EU Structural Funds". The aim of the seminar is to help Managing Authorities and potential project managers and project partners with successful project development. Specifics topics include: developing project ideas; designing good projects; building partnerships and securing finance; and ex-ante appraisal techniques and the process of getting projects approved. Project management and monitoring responsibilities will also be considered. *Further details at:* <http://www.eipa.nl> (Click on Conferences).

9-12 March 2005, Graz (Austria)

The first ECOPROFIT (Ecological Project for Integrated Environmental Technology) conference is being organised by the city of Graz and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI).

The ECOPROFIT project aims to promote cooperation between local government and the private sector with a view to promoting sustainable economic development. It was established by the city of Graz in 1991. The main aim of the conference is to introduce the ECOPROFIT concept to local authorities throughout Europe. *Further details at:* <http://www.iclei-europe.org/1192.html>

17-19 April 2005, Ljubljana (SI)

The 4th Innovating Regions in Europe (IRE) Plenary Conference is being organised by the European Commission in collaboration with the IRE Secretariat and the host city of Ljubljana. The conference will include presentation from the Commission on the latest policy developments and actions in the field of regional innovation, as well as presentations by IRE member of projects and suggestions for further action. The conference will provide an opportunity to meet members of the IRE network and to exchange experiences and information. *Further details at:* http://www.innovating-regions.org/network/events/eventDetails.cfm?eve_id=264

PUBLICATIONS

New Irish Regions Office website

On December 15 Minister for Communications, Marine & Natural Resources, Mr Noel Dempsey TD launched the new Irish Regions Office (IRO) website (www.iro.ie). The new

website includes sections on EU news, events and partner searches, an EU funding monitor and an archive of all IRO publications (including the EU Bulletin). The site also provides information on the IRO and its activities and presents an overview of Ireland's sub-national authorities and the EU projects and programmes in which they are currently participating.

NETWORKS

Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling

The Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling (ACRR) is a network of more than 70 local and regional authorities with the common aim to promote the sustainable management of waste and resources, encouraging prevention at source, reuse, recycling and all forms of recovery. The Association welcomes the involvement of politicians and officials who wish to share their expertise and play a proactive role in the development of municipal waste management policies and techniques. *Further details at:* <http://www.acrr.org/about-us/home.htm>

MERRY CHRISTMAS & BEST WISHES FOR 2005!

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