



Irish Regions Office

EU Bulletin No. 4 (22/04/04)

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FUNDING

INTERREG IIIB call

The second call for proposals for the INTERREG III B "Atlantic Area" programme was launched on April 1st 2004. This call is open only for priorities B (Developing efficient and sustainable transport systems and improving access to the information society) and D (Strengthening and promoting the Atlantic area identity in the context of globalisation) of the programme, and it will be open until the 30th June 2004. Further information is available in the "Practical Information" section of the website: <http://www.interreg-atlantique.org/iiib/eng/index.htm>

LIFE Programme Extended

On April 21 the European Parliament and the Council agreed on a proposed extension of the regulation concerning the LIFE programme. The proposed regulation will extend the programme by 2 years, until the end of 2006. *Further details at:* <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life/news/index.htm>

Mobility of Older Persons

The Commission is calling for proposals for "cooperation and exchange projects designed to improve the mobility of older persons". Applications should consist of specific proposals to promote mobility, active participation in social and cultural activities or contact with people of other generations.

The primary aim is to enable older people to acquire skills (linguistic, etc.), make the most of skills acquired previously and share experiences. Proposals must involve partners from at least three Member States. Budget: €5.5 million. Maximum grant rate: 80% of eligible costs. Deadline: 17 May 2004. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/employment_social/tender_en.htm. See call for proposals VP/2004/006.

Gender Equality

Under the Community action programme relating to the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality for the period 2001-2005, DG "Employment and Social Affairs" has issued a call for proposals for transnational exchanges to promote gender equality. For 2004, the priority theme is "promoting change in gender roles and overcoming gender stereotypes". Possible initiatives include: a comparison of the effectiveness of processes, methods and tools; mutual transfer and application of good practice, exchanges of personnel; and joint development of products, processes, strategies and methodologies. Projects must have partners from at least 3 Member States. Max 80% Community funding. Max grant €500,000. Expected budget: €4,750,000. Deadline: 7 June 2004. *Further information at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/tender_en.html (see VP/2003/31).

Youth Environment Prizes

The city of Vienna (Austria) has organised a European Youth Competition to reward

projects that help to avoid or separate waste. Eligible projects may have been carried out in 2002 or 2003 and must be completed by May 2004. Participation in the competition is open to teams comprising at least three young people. Three age groups have been provided for: 6-10 year-olds, 11-14 year-olds and 15-18 year-olds. Deadline: 16 May 2004. The winners will be invited to receive Scarabeo 2004 awards in Vienna on 24 and 27 June. Prizes include a three-day stay in Vienna for up to 10 representatives of the three best projects (including children, young people and accompanying adults). *Further details at:* <http://www.scarabeo2004.net> or *contact:* info@scarabeo2004.net.

Social Inclusion Awareness Actions

The Commission recently published a call for proposals for National awareness raising actions on social inclusion. This call is aimed at increasing awareness of the EU's social inclusion process so as to mobilise support for and participation of all relevant actors in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion (NAPs/inclusion) and Joint Memoranda on Social Inclusion (JIMs). The Commission is particularly interested in proposals from organisations with an active interest in promoting the development of NAPs, such as national, regional or local authorities, social partners or NGOs. Total budget: €800 000. Between 10 and 20 projects will be supported. Maximum grant rate: 80% of eligible costs. Deadline: 4 June 2004. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-prot/soc-incl/calls_en.htm

Civil Protection

The European Commission's DG Environment has just published the 2004 Call for proposals in the field of Community Cooperation in Civil Protection. The purpose of this call is to support and supplement the efforts being made by Member States at national, regional and local levels, for the protection of persons, property and, in so doing, the environment, in the event of natural or technological disasters. Activities envisaged include, workshops, training course and other cooperative projects. Indicative budget: €1.37 million. Max 75% funding. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/funding/intro_en.htm

European Refugee Fund

On the 15th April the Commission published the 2004 call for proposals under the European Refugee Fund. This call is open to NGOs and national, regional and local authorities and will support actions which aim to help build the capacity of actors active in fields covered by the European Refugee Fund. 2004 Budget: €2 million. Max. 80% funding. Deadline: 28 May. *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/funding/refugee/funding_refugee_en.htm

NEWS UPDATE

Additional €8 billion for Structural Funds Programmes

In the framework Performance Reserve, and following a mid-term evaluation of over 200

regional programmes, Commissioner Barnier recently (April 1) announced the allocation of an additional €8.246 billion to successful Structural Funds' programmes. This represents 4% of the Structural Funds' resources for the period 2000-2006. The Performance Reserve is an innovation of the 2000-2006 programming period to assign additional funds to regional programmes deemed to be particularly effective. Overall, about 90% of Structural Funds programmes will receive an allocation, although to varying degrees. For the most successful programmes, increases range between 6% and 9% of their initial allocations. Ireland has been allocated an additional €134 million under the Economic & Social Infrastructure Operation Programme (ESIOP). *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/newsroom/document/reserve_en.pdf

Council Divided on Financial Perspective

At the latest meeting of EU Finance Ministers, seven Member States expressed opposition to the European Commission's budgetary proposals (Financial Perspective) for 2007-2013. Denmark has now joined the original six Member States (Germany, UK, Netherlands, France, Sweden and Austria) that have called for a cap of 1% of GDP on Community spending for the 7-year period. Echoing the views of his six colleagues, German Finance Minister Hans Eichel emphasised the need for "strict compliance with the 1% limit". However, he said that this should not be read as meaning that the EU Budget should be frozen, since the European economy will continue to grow throughout the period. Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown took a similar line and further called for structural policy to be concentrated in the

new Member States. Mr Brown said he could not understand why 50% of all structural aid for the period 2007-2013 should be allocated to current Member States.

MEP's Call for 5-Year Programming Period

Holding their first debate on the EU's proposed Financial Perspective for 2007-2013, MEPs expressed astonishment that the Commission plans to try to cope with the needs of an EU of 27 Member States with payment appropriations capped at 1.14% of Community GDP. MEPs also restated their wish for the next Financial Perspective programming period to move in step with the terms of office of the Commission and Parliament. This would mean introducing a five-year programming instead of a seven-year period, which was chosen by the Commission and implicitly dictated by the Council.

Future Policy on Regional State Aid

While the shape of Europe's future cohesion policy is now apparent, one key issue still being negotiated between the European Commission's Competition and Regional Policy Directorates is the future rules on regional State Aid. Current State Aid rules are modeled to varying degrees on the way regions are ranked under European regional policy: state aid is regarded as complying with Article 87,3(a) of the Treaty for Objective 1 regions and with Article 87,3(c) for Objective 2 regions. However, the future of EU regional policy will affect the way the regions are ranked and therefore their State Aid regimes. The Council of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR) is treating this issue as a

priority in its deliberations on the future of Regional Policy. The CPMR has called for: the "statistical effect" regions to benefit in full from Article 87 3(a), similarly to the future Convergence regions; Article 87 3(c) to apply to the "phasing-in" regions (inc. the BMW region), and all the areas with natural or demographic handicaps. For the future Competitiveness and Employment objective (including the Southern and Eastern Region), the CPMR propose two categories of regions within horizontal objectives or exemption condition. This would enable different rates to be applied based on a criterion of wealth (per capital GDP) and on specific criteria related to each objective (expenditure on research for example, for the R&D horizontal objective, etc.). Regions in the higher bracket could have their aid capacities reduced, while regions in the other bracket would retain the standard level of aid provided for by the horizontal or block exemption frameworks.

Further details at: <http://www.cpmr.org>

New Regional Policy Commissioner

Following a recent Cabinet reshuffle in France, Michel Barnier, Commissioner responsible for Regional Policy and Institutional Reform, has been appointed France's new Foreign Minister. His replacement in Brussels will be UMP (Union pour le Mouvement Populaire) member Jacques Barrot. Mr Barrot, who has held a number of ministerial positions, has been President of the Haute-Loire General Council (FR) since 1976.

New General Secretary at the CoR

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) has appointed Mr Gerhard Stahl (Germany) as its

new General Secretary for the next five-year period. Mr Stahl has been serving as acting General Secretary since 8 October 2003. He replaces Vincenzo Falcone (Italy).

Does the EU need a Mountain Policy?

On March 23 The European Commission presented the results of a new study on mountainous regions in Europe. The study concludes that "the need for an EU policy specifically directed to mountains areas (...) is not unequivocal", contrary to long-standing claim by leading local and regional players in these areas. The study's findings have been challenged by the European Association of elected representatives of mountain regions, which reiterated its demand that, "a transversal approach to mountain regions is at least needed at the European level". This would allow for account to be taken of the specific circumstances of these regions in the definition of other European policies. *The study is available at:*

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/study_en.htm

New Legislation on Fresh Water Quality

At the beginning of March the European Commission presented a proposal for a Directive (COM(2004)19) aimed at streamlining the Directive on the quality of fresh waters needing protection or in order to support fish life. This Directive (78/659/EEC) defines the waters to which it applies, specifies quality parameters (biological, temperature and maximum acceptable concentrations of chemical pollutants) to be respected, the analysis and inspection methods to be used and the frequency of

sampling required. The adoption of the new text will repeal Directive 78/659/EEC, currently in force, and its successive modifications (Directive 91/692/EEC and Regulation EC 807/2003). *Further details at:* http://europa.eu.int/prelex/detail_dossier_real.cfm?CL=en&DosId=188211

EU Competitiveness Driven by 'Super Regions'

The 2004 European Competitiveness Index (ECI), released at the end of March, suggests that if EU regional policies are not refocused the gap between the most and least competitive regions in Europe threatens to grow ever wider. The report concludes that efforts to achieve both a competitive and a cohesive Europe are pulling in contradictory directions. The findings reveal a major competitiveness gap between the best and poorest performing regions in the EU and suggests that this gap is likely to widen unless European regional policy embraces a more cohesive approach with a stronger focus on promoting knowledge and innovation in the EU's weakest regions. According to a wide range of indicators the most competitive regions are Uusima (Finland), Stockholm (Sweden), Brussels (Belgium) and Ile de France (France). The report predicts that the least competitive regions, located mostly in Greece and Spain, will soon be overtaken by some of the more ambitious regions from the new Member States. The findings suggest that particularly regions receiving EU structural funds are facing major problems in building a knowledge and innovation-based environment, calling for a more effective regional policy. *Further details at:* http://www.hugginsassociates.com/latest_news.php

EVENTS

3/4 May 2004, Gothenburg (Sweden)

The fifth conference of the Sustainable European Regions Network will focus on the topic of "Low Carbon Economy in European Regions". The seminar will examine how regional governments can work to put mechanisms in place to create low carbon economies. The main topics to be discussed are regional systems for energy-efficiency and for renewable energy sources. *Further details at:* http://www.sustainable-euroregions.net/gothenburg_registration.php

10-11 May, 2004, Brussels

Details (including the draft programme, issues for debate, question form, practical information and hotel reservation form) for the Third Cohesion Forum have just been published on the Europa website, at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/debate/forcom2004_en.htm

13-14 May 2004, Cyprus

The Innovating Regions in Europe (IRE) network are holding a workshop on the 'Implementation and Monitoring of Regional Innovation Strategies'. The workshop will present selected examples of how to transform strategic priorities identified in Regional Innovation Strategies into concrete actions. This event will also serve to present successful mechanisms to manage and monitor regional innovation activities.

Further details at: http://www.innovating-regions.org/services/pub_library/index.cfm?level=4&name1=AABP&cat_id=305

1-4 June 2004, Brussels

This year's Green Week, an annual event organised by the Commission's DG Environment, will focus on the theme of, "Changing our behaviour: informed choices for a greener Europe". The themes for each day include: "From a single to a shared view"; "From an economic environment to an environmental economy"; "From idealism to action"; and "From the Baltic to the Black Sea." Green Week is aimed at local, regional and national decision-makers, businesses, associations and NGOs. *Further details at:* www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/green_week/index.htm

9-11 June 2004, Budapest (Hungary)

The IANIS 2004 Annual Conference will offer delegates a choice of four thematic workshops: eLearning, eGovernment, eCommunities and eContent. The conference will include plenary and parallel session presentations, debates and discussions regarding information society and regional development. Invited speakers include EU Commissioners; Director Generals of the Commission; Prof. Nicholas Negroponte (Director, Media Lab, MIT); Kálmán Kovács, Minister of Informatics and Communications, Hungary; and Dermot Ahern, Minister of Communications, Irish Presidency, Ireland. *Further details at:* <http://www.ianis-budapest2004.net>

23-24 June 2004, Zakopane (Poland)

The main themes of this eGovernment conference, "Cities on the Internet", are: the modernisation of public administration and how it can help innovation at local and regional level; the e-development of cities and regions in an enlarged EU; and the needs of citizens and SMEs for online public services. There will also be a presentation of examples of good practice in the implementation of e-government at local and regional level. Other issues to be discussed include broadband technologies for rural areas and the Free/Libre and Open Source Software (FLOSS) project. *Further details at:* <http://www.miastawinternecie.pl/8konferencja>

PARTNER SEARCH

Villages of Culture

The South East Region (UK) Brussels office is inviting expressions of interest from organisations interested in a proposal to create cultural links between rural and small communities in Europe. The objective is to initiate a scheme which will allow villages and small communities throughout Europe to raise awareness of, promote and exchange arts and culture. It is hoped that the project would also encourage cultural tourism and contribute to rural regeneration. *Further details from:* *Korrina Hegarty, South East Partners Brussels Office. Tel: 0032 2 5040733, Fax: 0032 2 5040722, E-mail:* korrina.hegarty@southeastpartners.seeh.net
Web: <http://www.southeastpartners.org>
Youth Exchange

Preston City Council is searching for partner organisations in all EU Member States who would be willing to host young people under the Leonardo da Vinci Mobility Programme. Preston City Council's intention is to apply for funding to the Leonardo da Vinci Mobility Programme for a transnational placement (exchange) project for young people who have received local training in art and the performing arts.. Involvement in Leonardo would build on the achievements of a local funding programme to ensure that young people can take advantage of the new opportunities. Deadline for applications is June 2004. *Contact: Ayub Babu, T: +44 1772 563961, e-mail:* a.babu@preston.gov.uk.

NETWORKS

New Strategic Planning Action Network

A new Strategic Planning Action Network (SPAN) was launched on April 5, 2004 to develop and test innovative strategic approaches for regional development. The Network will focus on engaging the participation of civil society in projects at regional, infra-territorial and local level. From March 2004 through August 2007, a series of pilot projects on territory "laboratories", selected by the regional partners, will be carried out. The Institute for Environmental Management and Regional Development at the Free University of Brussels will manage the project. Partners include actors from academia, associations and institutions from the four partner regions: Wallonia (BE); Champagne-Ardenne (FR),

Northern Ireland and Ireland. The Irish Partners are NUI Maynooth (Prof. Jim Walsh) and Southside Partnership (Marie Carroll). SPAN is an Interreg III B project and is eligible for regional and European financing of €4 million. *Contact: Dominique-Paule Decoster, Codirector, Institute for Environmental Management and Regional Development. Tel: +32 71 60 02 70, e-mail:* igeat.charleroi@ulb.ac.be.

PUBLICATIONS

Guide to Environmental Funding

DG Environment has just published a new "Handbook for Environmental Project Funding". The guide has been written as a practical guide to EU funding mechanisms for local environmental projects. *The guide is available at:* http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/funding/handbook_2004.pdf

New EU Youth website

The EurOg.ie is a new website designed to help young people make more sense of the European Union. The website was developed by the National Youth Council of Ireland and features news, views and general information about the EU. *See:* <http://eurog.ie>

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