

Cllr. Seamus Murray (Meath Co. Council & Mid-East R.A.)

President of the Delegation, Cllr. Seamus Murray (Meath Co. Council) was rapporteur on the opinion on A New Framework for Multilingualism and represented the CoR at multiparty conferences on this theme. Cllr. Murray represented the CoR on the EU Inter-Institutional selection panel for the 2010 European Capital of Culture and is also the Admin. and Budgetary Committee rapporteur for CoR Buildings Policy and is the Delegation representative on the National Forum on Europe.

Cllr. Maria Corrigan (Dun-Laoghaire Rathdown Co. Council & Dublin R.A.)

Cllr. Maria Corrigan (Dun-Laoghaire Rathdown Co. Council) is the President of the UEN-EA political group in the CoR who held their extraordinary group meeting in Tallinn, Estonia. Cllr. Corrigan is a member of the Constitutional Affairs Committee working group established to monitor the EU Constitutional Treaty process and Communicating Europe and represented the CoR at conferences on Subsidiarity and on Decentralisation and the Euro.

Cllr. Connie Hanniffy (Offaly Co. Council & Midland R.A.)

Offaly County Council member Cllr. Connie Hanniffy was the rapporteur on the opinion Modern SME policy for Growth and Employment and as 1st Vice-President of ECOS commission, represents the CoR at the inter-institutional Territorial Dialogue. Cllr. Hanniffy also addressed seminars on behalf of the CoR on the Transfer of Enterprises and The Role of the Regions in the 1st European Congress on Corporate Social Responsibility.

Cllr. Denis Landy (South Tipperary Co. Council & South East R.A.)

Cllr. Denis Landy (South Tipperary County Council) is a member of the COTER (Territorial Cohesion) and RELEX (External Relations) commissions and is a Bureau member of the PES political group. Cllr. Landy also represents his political group on the National Forum on Europe and is very active in communicating the work of the CoR locally.

Cllr. Paul O'Donoghue (Kerry Co. Council & South West R.A.)

Kerry County Councillor Paul O' Donoghue was elected both a Vice-President of RELEX (the External Relations) commission and a member of the CoR Bureau. Cllr. O' Donoghue is a member of the CoR working group on Turkey and represented the CoR at an inter-institutional conference in Kaiseri, Turkey.

Cllr. Patrick McGowan (Donegal Co. Council & Border R.A.)

Cllr. Patrick McGowan (Donegal Co. Council) represented the CoR as an election monitor in the Montenegro independence referendum. Cllr. McGowan is a member of the Sustainable Development (DEVE) and Territorial Cohesion (COTER) commissions and is active in policies relating to cross-border activities and fisheries. Cllr. McGowan also participated in the CoR conference on Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Cllr. Michael Fitzgerald (South Tipperary Co. Council & South East R.A.)

Cllr. Michael Fitzgerald is also a member of South Tipperary Co. Council and is a member of the Sustainable Development (DEVE) and External relations (RELEX) commissions. Cllr. Fitzgerald is active in representing rural development concerns in the Committee and participated in the seminar on Rural Development and the Lisbon Strategy.

Cllr. Cathal Crowe (Clare Co. Council & Mid-West R.A.)

Youngest member of the CoR is Cllr. Cathal Crowe of Clare Co. Council, a recently qualified teacher. With a particular interest in education, young people and active citizenship, Cllr. Crowe is a member of the Education & Culture (EDUC) and Territorial Cohesion (COTER) commissions.



MEET THE MEMBERS

Introducing a feature to better get to know the members of the Irish Delegation



Cllr. Declan McDonnell

Member of Galway City Council and West Regional Authority

Member of PD & ALDE political groups and is an alternate member of the Bureau at the CoR

LIFE OUTSIDE OF POLITICS

Manager of Community Service Programme with Obair in Galway
Adviser to Galway City Business Association

POLITICAL & COMMUNITY INTERESTS

Chairman of Youth and Sport section of Galway VEC

Board member of local initiative to build creche in Mervue

Director of Galway airport

Member of Festival and Parish Committees.

Keen to ensure that the views of local business and the community and voluntary sector are heard in the Council and all political chambers including the CoR.

POLITICAL HIGHLIGHT

Mayor of Galway for the Millennium

POLITICAL PRIORITIES IN THE CoR

Member of ECOS (Economic & Social Committee) and CONST (Constitutional Affairs Committee). Priorities are for social justice, cutting red tape for businesses and efficiency in public administration as well as helping to ensure that the role and work of the EU and the CoR are communicated locally.

PERSONAL INTERESTS

Chairman and Founder member of Mervue United AFC, all Galway sports teams, Manchester United.

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Delegation

d i a r y

EUROPEAN UNION

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

IRISH DELEGATION

Newsletter of the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions

Issue no. 6 Spring 2007

Delegation discusses policy priorities with Irish Ambassador to the EU

During 2006, the Irish Delegation enhanced its linkages with the Irish Permanent Representation to the EU and in December met with Mr. Bobby McDonagh, Irish Ambassador to the EU. Ambassador McDonagh gave an overview of the latest Irish thinking on topical EU policy issues and discussed the EU institutions' work programmes for 2007.

The meeting gave members the opportunity to highlight particular issues of interest and concern and to promote the work of the CoR.

The meeting proved to be very productive and it is now planned that the Delegation will meet annually in Brussels with the Ambassador as well as continuing to receive occasional technical policy briefings from Permanent Representation personnel. Details of the 2007 Commission Work Programme are overleaf.

ISSUES DISCUSSED WITH THE AMBASSADOR INCLUDED:

- The Future of Europe debate and the revival of the Constitutional Treaty
- Connecting with citizens and how to better Communicate Europe
- Consultations by the Commission ahead of the mid-term review of the EU budget in 2008-2009 particularly in relation to the CAP and Regional Policy
- Priorities in the energy efficiency and renewable energy fields
- Monitoring implementation of the re-launched Lisbon Strategy

Irish Ambassador to the EU Mr. Bobby McDonagh meeting with the Irish CoR Delegation



COMMUNICATING THE EU – ROLE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

In November, Cllr. Seamus Murray, President of the Irish Delegation, spoke at a seminar held by the European Commission Representation in Ireland on communicating European effectively to citizens.

The seminar aimed at journalists, public relations and marketing practitioners, civil society groups and the general public was a follow up initiative to the European Commission's White Paper on Communication published earlier in 2006, to which the Delegation made a submission.

Cllr. Murray welcomed the Commission's objective to revise and develop its information and communications policies and emphasised that any strategy arising from the White Paper must develop long-term measures for informing, consulting and listening to the general public as well as provide suitable provisions for the active involvement of local and regional authorities.

Some of the points which Cllr. Murray made in his presentation included:

- There is clearly a role for local and regional authorities in communicating Europe effectively but there are considerable challenges for these authorities in doing so.
- The European Commission Representations in the Member States could develop better contacts and partnerships with local and regional authorities.
- More use could be made of CoR members as two-way relays of information to, and attitudes and concerns of, local and regional authorities.
- Ireland should review the effectiveness of its communication policy on EU affairs.
- A permanent and more systematic dialogue between local and regional authorities in Ireland, national representatives in the Houses of the Oireachtas and the European Commission on policy issues of relevance at the sub-national level should be established.



THE FULL DELEGATION SUBMISSION AND A COPY OF CLLR. MURRAY'S ADDRESS CAN BE VIEWED AT:

<http://www.iro.ie/pdf/Convention-Paper.pdf>

http://ec.europa.eu/ireland/press_office/events_ireland/european_communication_-_seamus_murray_address_-_nov_23.doc

IRISH LANGUAGE IN THE CoR

In January, Irish became the 21st official and working language of the EU. For practical purposes it means that interpretation to/from Irish will be provided on request at Ministerial meetings, at the European Parliament and at plenary sessions of the Committee of the Regions.

It also means that certain regulations (adopted jointly by the Council and EP) will be translated into Irish. The range of documents for translation will be subject to review by the end of 2010.

At the February plenary session of the CoR, the President of the Irish Delegation, Cllr. Seamus Murray

spoke in Irish of his delight at the designation adding that Europe's strength lies in its recognition of the diversity of language and culture. Other members of the Delegation took the opportunity to also address the plenary assembly in Irish. The occasion was celebrated at a reception hosted

by Cllr. Murray in the European Parliament where an Irish language version of the Delegation's information brochure was also officially launched.

For copies, please contact the Delegation secretariat.

IRISH DELEGATION SECRETARIAT

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CLLR. HANNIFFY CALLS FOR ENHANCED MONITORING OF THE LISBON STRATEGY

In 2005 the Member States re-launched the Lisbon Strategy to deliver lasting growth and better jobs across the EU with an acceptance that a greater level of ownership of the Strategy at all levels of governance was essential for its success.

In this regard the CoR undertook two studies to assess the degree of involvement of local and regional authorities in the Strategy; firstly in terms of participation in the preparation of National Reform Programmes (NRP's), the national plans developed to implement the Lisbon Strategy, and secondly, an analysis of the local and regional dimension of these NRP's.

Both studies indicated that limited consideration was given to the local and regional levels and the CoR has undertaken a number of initiatives to highlight some of the weaknesses in the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy.

In 2006, it established the Lisbon Monitoring Platform, a network of 65 local and regional authorities from across the EU (incl. the BMW Regional Assembly) to: facilitate the exchange of information between local and regional policy makers; identify obstacles encountered by regional and

local authorities in implementing the Lisbon Strategy and to voice these politically and find solutions. This year the Monitoring Platform is expected to grow to 100 authorities. In January, Cllr. Connie Hanniffy, Vice-President of ECOS (Economic and Social Affairs Commission) at the CoR chaired a workshop of experts and members of the Lisbon Monitoring Platform where she announced that the analysis so far had indicated that there were positive signs of delivery but that a large number of Member States had failed to adequately consult and involve local and regional authorities in the implementation of essential actions.

She stated that in most cases 'the process of consultation continues to be regarded as a formal obligation rather than as a good opportunity to gather opinions and experiences', and as a result the Committee considered that progress on implementing the Strategy was being impeded.

In 2007, the CoR will organise four further workshops of the Lisbon Monitoring Platform dealing with:

- Unlocking the potential of SME's
- Investing in knowledge & innovation
- Increasing employment opportunities
- Efficient and integrated EU energy policy

The aim of these workshops will be to support the preparation of a report which will be submitted to the Spring European Council in 2008.

The CoR will also hold two Territorial Dialogue events, one in 2007 and another in 2008, with key policy makers such as Commission Vice-President Gunter Verheugen and Commissioner for Regional Policy Danuta Hubner.

CoR CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TREATIES OF ROME

In March, the CoR marks the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome and the European Council's relaunch of the European integration process under the German Presidency by convening a special plenary in Rome.

The CoR will contribute to the relaunch of the European Constitutional project following the 'period of reflection' by adopting a 'Cities' and Regions' Declaration for

Europe' to pinpoint the main themes and objectives on which European regional and local authorities expect to see progress in the debate on the future of Europe.

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD IRISH IMPACT ON EU POLICY MAKING

Cllr. Maria Corrigan (Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council & Dublin Regional Authority) was the CoR rapporteur on the opinion on the Commission communication - Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, adopted at the February plenary session in Brussels.

The objective of the communication is to launch a long-term strategy to ensure that EU action promotes and safeguards children's rights in all its internal and external actions and to support the efforts of the Member States in this field. The current treaties do not make any explicit reference to the rights of the child; however the Constitutional Treaty for the first time quotes the rights of the child among its objectives.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE EU STRATEGY ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS INCLUDE:

- (1) Maximising the use of its existing policies and instruments;
- (2) Identifying priorities for future action
- (3) Mainstreaming children's rights in all EU legislative and non-legislative actions;
- (4) Establishing efficient coordination and consultation mechanisms;
- (5) Enhancing capacity and expertise on children's rights;
- (6) Communicating more effectively on children's rights;
- (7) Enhancing the EU's role in international fora to promote the rights of the child.

The opinion by Cllr. Corrigan generally welcomes the communication and the proposed strategy and the resources that will be dedicated to Children's Rights. However, it points out a number of deficiencies in the approach of the Commission; in particular the failure to identify clear targets and indicators for delivery and the failure to recognise the role that local and regional authorities can play in the development of the strategy and their role in safeguarding children's rights. The opinion also highlights a problem regarding the lack of comparable data across the Union.

The opinion makes a number of concrete suggestions that the strategy could develop, such as a register of child sex offenders and a European system for checking the criminal records of staff and volunteers working with children and a number of recommendations on the process of developing the strategy and how it could be better supported. Cllr. Corrigan encouraged the greater priority accorded to Children's Rights by the EU reflecting its significance in Ireland ahead of the proposed referendum.

Cllr. Corrigan's expert for this opinion was Ms. Maria Corbett, Deputy Director of the Children's Rights Alliance. Cllr. Corrigan also liaised with Ms. Jillian van Turnhout (Vice-President of the EU's Economic and Social Committee (EESC)), the EESC's rapporteur (and Chief Executive of the Children's Rights Alliance).

EUROPEAN COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2007

The Delegation has identified the following proposals expected from the European Commission in 2007 as key issues where it will play an active role in representing Irish interests generally and the particular interests of Irish local and regional authorities.

Members influence CoR opinions by tabling amendments, outlining positions and contributing to debates as well as taking on rapporteurships where possible.

- **Fourth Report on Economic and Social Cohesion**
- **Communication on Cohesion Policy's programmes 2007-2013**
- **Commission communication on the implementation and enforcement of EC environmental law**
- **Commission Communication on the implementation of national strategies for green public procurement based on EU-wide target-setting and regular monitoring and benchmarking**
- **Communication of the European Commission on Regions for Economic Change**
- **Review of existing legislation on industrial emissions Green Paper on Post-2012 Climate Change**
- **Action Plan on Sustainable Production and Consumption**
- **Green Paper on Urban Transport**
- **Communication and proposal for a Council regulation on stepping up the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing**
- **Communication on the way forward for a future maritime policy**
- **Communication on a European Ports Policy**
- **Legislative proposal on the cross-border enforcement of sanctions in the field of road safety**
- **Communication on the Single Market Review**
- **Communication on 'A European Strategy for Social Services of General Interest'**
- **Communication on the mid-term review of the implementation of the Social Agenda**
- **Strategic Review of the Energy Policy for Europe**
- **Strategic Energy Technology Plan**
- **White Paper on a Health Strategy**
- **Community Framework for safe and efficient health services**
- **European e-Inclusion Strategy**
- **Communication on the European Research Area – New horizons and further steps**
- **Green Paper on Universal Service in Electronic Communications**
- **White Paper on Communication: Operational proposals**
- **Follow-up to the White Paper on a European Communication Policy**
- **Strategy paper on Enlargement**

FOR FULL DETAILS ON THE COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2007, PLEASE VISIT THE COMMISSION WEBPAGES:

http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/clwp2007_en.pdf

If you wish to view, monitor the progress of or comment on any Commission proposal through the Committee of the Regions please contact the Delegation secretariat.

IRISH DELEGATION IS PARTNER IN CoR SUBSIDIARITY MONITORING NETWORK

The process of monitoring the implementation of the Principle of Subsidiarity has been given greater attention with the new provisions in the draft Constitutional Treaty and the CoR is anxious to demonstrate that it can be an active partner in this process. As part of its preparations to establish a CoR Subsidiarity Monitoring Network, the Irish Delegation participated in a second test to analyse the application of Subsidiarity in EU legislative proposals. The ultimate aim is to establish a Network and put it at the disposal of

all local and regional authorities as a tool for exchanging information on policy documents and proposals of the European Commission which, when adopted, could have an impact on local and regional authorities and the policies for which they are responsible. The Irish Delegation was one of 49 partners, representing regional parliaments, regional governments, national local government associations, cities, national delegations of the CoR, as well as the French Senate in the second test, which was based on the Subsidiarity

Protocol annexed to the Amsterdam Treaty. These partners had to prepare a subsidiarity analysis on given EC legislative documents and make recommendations on the future organisation of the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network. The second test lasted for a six week period during October and November.

The two EC legislative proposals chosen for the second test were in the field of Education and Training, two of the ten policy areas of mandatory consultation of the CoR. While the Delegation did not undertake an analysis, given the

nature of the two communications it did adopt a role to inform key interests in Ireland (Joint Oireachtas Committee on European Affairs and the Oireachtas sub-committee on EU scrutiny, the Dept. of Environment, Heritage and Local Govt., the Dept. of Education and Science). The Delegation has also indicated its willingness to participate further in the testing of the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network. Further information and copies of the report on the 2nd test is available from the CoR's website: www.core.europa.eu

OPEN DAYS IN 2007

In October, the CoR will again co-organise OPEN DAYS – the European Week of Regions and Cities. This will involve over 100 workshops and seminars focusing on the new generation of Structural Fund programmes, which will provide €500 billion of public and private funding for regional development between 2007-2013.

The title of the 2007 event is...

Making it happen: Regions deliver growth and jobs and will include five sub-themes:

- **Attracting investors:** Regions and cities show how it works
- **Proximity matters:** Clusters and regional development
- **Spending it wisely:** Public-private partnerships and financial engineering
- **Crossing borders:** Cooperation and exchange of best practice supporting growth and jobs

- **Efficient delivery:** How the new programmes are implemented

The OPEN DAYS seminars will also be accompanied by an Investor's Café, a meeting point for regional policy experts to exchange ideas and project experiences and a series of local OPEN DAYS events in participating regions and cities all over Europe from 1-7 and 12-31 October.

PARTNERSHIP OF CELTIC REGIONS PARTICIPATION '07

The Brussels-based Irish Regions Office will again participate in 2007 as part of a partnership of Celtic regions, including other partners from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, South West England, Brittany in France and Asturias in Spain.

The partnership will host seminars on the energy and maritime sectors and will explore issues on which the regions can co-operate under future EU funded programmes.

For further information on attending or participating please contact the Irish Regions Office www.iro.ie or visit the Open Days website www.opendays.europa.eu



Commission President Barroso presenting the 2007 Work programme with Cllr. Patrick McGowan and other CoR members