

EU News Bulletin

The latest monthly EU opportunities, news & policy, publications and events of relevance to Ireland's local and regional level.

Number 80, March 2011

Produced by the Irish Regions Brussels Office
in association with the Institute of Public Administration.



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FUNDING, NETWORKING & PROJECTS

Local sustainable energy fund – further details

A long-awaited investment and technical assistance fund for local sustainable energy projects will finally be launched on 13 April. The newly-named European Energy Efficiency Facility (EEE-F) is being established to invest in energy saving, energy efficiency and clean energy projects, particularly in urban areas, and is being aimed at local and regional authorities.

85% of the approximately €220 million available in funding will provide risk capital finance in the form of loans, guarantees and equity participation for investment projects. The other 15% will take the form of targeted grants for project development services - both financial and technical assistance (this latter element is planned to deploy the model of the existing ELENA technical assistance fund for local authorities preparing sustainable energy investment programmes in excess of €50 million). Support for awareness-raising activities in the field of sustainable energy for Structural Funds Managing Authorities may also be supported.

The following topics are to be the key focuses of EEE-F:

- Energy saving measures in public and private buildings;
- Combined heat and power and district heating/cooling networks;
- Decentralised renewable energy sources (e.g. micro-generation);
- Clean urban transport;
-

- Modernisation of infrastructure (e.g. street lighting and smart grids);
- Sustainable energies with potential for innovation and growth.

The Council of Ministers and the European Parliament agreed last December to allocate approximately €146 million in unallocated funds for 2009 from the European Energy Programme for Recovery (EEPR) – the major EU funding instrument for projects contributing to the '20-20-20' EU Climate and Energy Package – towards the EEE-F. Now, in addition, the EIB is to provide €75 million to the fund. Other Member State level financial organisations have also been invited to contribute. EU funds will have to be allocated by March 2014 although the manner of application has yet to be announced.

[Further details](#)

Call: Lifelong Learning Strategies

On 25 March a Call for Proposals was published under the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) with the aim of supporting the establishment and implementation of coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies and policies at national, regional and local level. These are intended to cover and interlink formal, non-formal and informal learning at pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary, adult, initial and continuing vocational education and training levels. Links to other relevant policy sectors (e.g. employment and social inclusion) are encouraged.

Eligible actions to be supported are:

- Awareness-raising and institutional commitment, coordination and partnership with stakeholders to contribute to national implementation of the four strategic priorities of the 'Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)';
- Transnational cooperation and exchange on the development and implementation of strategies and policies at both national and regional level;
- Identification of the main critical factors and testing and transferring innovation in relation to successful implementation actions.

Deadline: 30 June

[Further details](#)

Call: Public Health – Joint Actions

A present Call for Proposals under the Public Health Programme aims to fund Joint (i.e. transnational) Actions based on the priority areas specified in the 2011 Work Plan:

- 1) Support to the implementation of national plans/strategies on rare diseases and related EU measures;
- 2) Cross-border eHealth instruments as supporting tools for medical information and research;
- 3) Pilot Health Technology Assessments;
- 4) Patient safety and quality of healthcare;
- 5) Assisting Member States in reaching the full potential of deceased and living donation.

€17.04 million at a grant rate of 60/70% is being made available.

Deadline: 27 May

[Further details](#)

Separate Calls for health conferences and operating grants have also been launched along with a Call to provide €4.65 million (60% intervention rate) for projects on themes including:

- Crisis communication in the area of risk management;
- Preparation of action plans and Structural Funds projects on reducing health inequalities;
- Interventions to address alcohol use disorders in primary health care, workplace health services, emergency care and social services.

Deadline: 27 May

[Further details](#)

Call: Environmental, social and governance aspects of enterprises

DG Enterprise has published a Call as part of the Entrepreneurship & Innovation (EIP) programme to enhance the market reward for enterprises taking account of sustainability and corporate social responsibility in their strategies and operations.

A single project will be part-financed to build the capacity of mainstream investment actors to better integrate environmental, social and governance (ESG) information into their valuations of enterprises. Possible financed activities may include the development of teaching or training modules on the valuation of ESG performance or establishment of a network to support the better integration of ESG information into market valuations of companies.

The maximum amount awarded is €250,000 euro, representing up to 50% of eligible costs.

Deadline: 20 May

[Further details](#)

Call: Mobile & Mobility Industries and Creative Industries

In order to better assist regions and Member States that support a broad concept of innovation (including services and non-technological forms) this EIP Call for Proposals will support the creation of two European Alliances that address

specific and cross-sectoral aspects of service innovation in two separate areas with a high potential impact.

- 1) The European Mobile and Mobility Industries Alliance (EMMIA) aims to strengthen the role of innovative services in mobile (building upon key enabling technologies) and mobility (to better address urgent societal challenges) industries.
- 2) The European Creative Industries Alliance (ECIA) aims to strengthen the role of this sector as a catalyst of innovation and structural change by promoting the more effective use of different forms of knowledge and creativity for innovation throughout the economy and to support the emergence of new industries that combine knowledge and creativity with modern technologies, in particular ICT.

Each Alliance will set up a Policy Learning Platform with the role of establishing a dialogue on designing better industrial and innovation strategies that build upon service innovation in these areas. In addition, they will launch concrete actions on access to finance and to mobilise more and better support for the further exploitation of service innovations.

Up to 95% of total eligible costs may be EU-financed. An information day for the Call for Proposals will be organised in Brussels on 4 May.

Deadline: 24 June

[Further details](#)

Call: Commercialisation of Research

On 28 March the European Research Council (ERC) launched a new 'Proof of Concept' funding initiative to help researchers with a current involvement in FP7 'frontier research' to successfully establish the feasibility of their knowledge by attracting venture capital investment necessary towards bringing potential products, processes and services to the market. Grants of up to €150,000 will be available for a range of

pre-commercialisation activities, such as market research, technical validation, and commercial and business opportunity analysis.

Deadlines: 15 June and 8 November.

[Further Details](#)

Call: ICT for older people's mobility

The Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) research and development funding programme's Call for 2011 was published on 31 March with the theme of 'ICT based solutions for Advancement of Older Persons' Mobility'. The intention is to assist transnational collaboration to deliver innovative products, systems or services addressing the needs of the elderly: quality of life, autonomy, participation in social life, skills, and employability. Improving service delivery and reducing the costs of care are secondary targets.

A total of €800,000 at variable rates of intervention is available to Irish Higher Education Institutions and companies that are eligible to receive funding from Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland or Shannon Development. Participants will need to demonstrate economic benefits arising which are proportionate to the funding being sought.

Deadline: 30 June

[Further details](#)

Call: Youth external co-operation

The Youth in Action programme has launched a Call for Proposals to fund projects promoting youth cooperation between EU countries and the wider world. The Call is addressed to any not-for-profit youth organisation, such as NGOs, public bodies operating at regional or local level, or national youth councils. The maximum grant issued will be €100,000 at up to 80% co-financing.

Deadline: 6 May

[Further details](#)

Call: Safer Internet

The actions outlined in the 2011 Call of the Safer Internet Programme, aimed at protecting children in the use of Internet and other information technology, and covered by the current Call are:

- Ensuring public awareness;
- Fighting against illegal content and tackling harmful conduct online;
- Promoting a safer online environment (NGO network for child protection on the Internet);
- Establishing a knowledge base (testing training programmes for professionals working with children at risk).

A budget of €14.13 million is available (75% grant rate).

Deadline: 4 May

[Further details](#)

Catch up on other recent Calls for Proposals through previous issues of this Bulletin: [February](#), [January](#), and [December](#).

Project: Mid-West freight & logistics

Among the five most recent projects with Irish involvement to have been given the green light to begin their implementation phase by the INTERREG IVB North West Europe (NWE) programme is WEASTFLOWS which includes the Mid-West Regional Authority (MWRA) as partner.

The initiative aims to contribute to improving sustainable freight and logistics connectivity with and within the major NWE transport corridors and regional/city distribution systems through work on the development of improved water, air, road and rail connectivity systems. MWRA is currently seeking input and involvement from relevant public and private stakeholders in Ireland to contribute to the planned implementation which offers, inter alia, opportunities to test out the latest in ICT

solutions and innovative approaches to freight management and transportation. The results of the project will feed into regional planning processes with particular reference in the Mid-West's case to the Shannon Estuary and Shannon International Airport.

The other newly approved NWE projects of immediate interest to Ireland are:

- OPTIMIR - New tools for a more sustainable dairy sector (Teagasc and Irish Cattle Breeders Federation)
- KARIM - Knowledge Acceleration and Responsible Innovation Meta-network (UCD)
- ARBOR - Accelerating Renewable Energies through valorisation of Biogenic Organic Raw Material (UCD)
- EnALGAE - Energetic Algae (UCD and NUIG).

[Further details on WEASTFLOWS](#)

Contact: Deirdre Byrne,

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Project: Dublin energy savings campaign wins Commission plaudits

An energy saving initiative delivered by CODEMA – the City of Dublin Energy Management Agency – has been shortlisted among three 'Awareness and information projects' finalists in the European Commission's 2011 ManagEnergy Local Energy Action Awards (winners to be announced on 13 April during EU Sustainable Energy Week).

The 'Switch Off' campaign focused on user-behaviour to encourage Dublin City Council employees to turn off lights and office appliances when not needed in order to reduce energy consumption and costs. The campaign has been carried out through a series of themed days, promotional material and online activities and has been a key element of CODEMA's MINUS 3% project (funded by the Intelligent Energy Europe programme). This initiative is devoted to identifying "shining examples" in its partner cities of practical actions supporting the efficient implementation

of the Energy End-use Efficiency & Energy Services Directive. It aims to demonstrate straightforward solutions to curb urban authorities' energy consumption by 3% year-on-year with a view to instituting targeted energy savings of one third by 2020 in Dublin's case.

[Further details](#)
www.managenergy.net

Networking: Positive environments and health linkages

A new policy paper from the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) government agency has been brought to the attention of this office. The idea behind the initiative is to demonstrate the evidence behind the theory that a positive approach to the environment can bring about significant benefits to well-being and health. The paper promotes the systemic integration of considerations relating to these two sectors in order to deliver 'win-win' results in accordance with both European environment and health strategy objectives.

The promoters are keen to hear feedback and suggestions based on the experiences of other European regions working actively with this issue with a view to assessing the prospects for mutual learning, possible joint projects or joint promotional activities of this agenda at EU level.

To receive the policy paper, contact this office.

[EU Environment & Health Action Plan \(2004-2010\)](#)

Partner search requests received:

- To study the energy costs of the food industry and establish model agreements for the implementation of energy savings measures. (Intelligent energy Europe)
- Enhancing capacity building of key stakeholders to achieve nearly zero-energy buildings (new and renovated) (IEE)
- Supporting youth through sports activities, and training young

- people for employment opportunities in the field of sport (Lifelong Learning/ Youth in Action)
- Human trafficking: victim identification tools and good practice guidance transfer (DAPHNE III)
- Researching and implementing appropriate models of change for Adolescent to Parent Violence or Abuse Interventions (DAPHNE III)
- To improve the quality of the support systems for activities related to non-formal education including through ICT and open or distance learning (Lifelong Learning – Multilateral)
- Identifying, testing and deploying training and awareness-raising tools for professionals working with children at risk (Safer Internet - Knowledge enhancement project)
- Social Entrepreneurship in secondary schools as a means of integrating immigrants

Contact the office for further details.

We can also circulate your own draft project ideas to regions across Europe as required.

NEWS & POLICY

Biowaste landfill phase-out proposal

A senior Commission DG Environment representative has announced his body's intention to propose the total phasing-out of biodegradable waste being sent to landfill sites by between 2020 and 2025. Currently, the 1999 Landfill Directive stipulates that, by 2016, levels of municipal biowaste dealt with in this manner should be reduced to no more than 35% of the total amount (by weight) produced in 1995. In recognition of its heavy historical dependence on landfill, Ireland is benefitting from an additional derogation of up to four-years before having to comply.

Speaking at a European Federation of Waste Management and Environmental Services (FEAD) workshop on the

implementation of the Landfill Directive on 18 March, Jose Jorge Diaz del Castillo indicated that the precise scope of the proposed measure has yet to be determined, although it is expected to entail modification of an annex to the 1999 Directive in order to introduce a phase-out timetable.

The European Parliament's Environment (ENVI) Committee has been calling for an entirely separate directive on biowaste with mandatory separate collection targets but the Commission has rejected such a prospect, saying that existing instruments are sufficient. An amended directive would still leave the issue of collection and recycling of biowaste unresolved. The Commission recently carried out a public consultation on a proposed 36.5% biowaste recycling target – although concerns have been expressed from some local government associations that a high figure may conflict with local renewable energy schemes.

Mr. Diaz del Castillo also revealed that revisions to the Directive are being examined on the subject of detailed specifications on the recovery of landfill gas, and the production of non-binding technical guidelines which could be applied to curb landfill gas emissions ahead of the phase-out.

[Further Information](#)

Low-Carbon Economy Roadmap

On 8 March the Commission published 'A Roadmap for moving to a competitive low carbon economy in 2050' – a Communication setting out a proposed course towards slashing the extent of European greenhouse gas emissions by 80-95% (based on 1990 levels) over the next four decades. This reflects the target agreed by Heads of State and Government at the 4 February Energy Summit.

The ultimate target is predicated on achieving a baseline emissions reduction in Europe of 25% by 2020 – representing a further 5% improvement on the targets agreed in 2009 as part of the EU climate

and energy package – followed by interim targets of 40% by 2030 and 60% by 2040. As of now, EU Leaders have only committed to raise the 2020 target (to 30%) in the event of comparable pledges from other global players. The paper states that achieving emissions cuts of this scale should primarily be achieved through European actions and without over-reliance on the acquisition of international offset credits.

In order to realise these ambitions, the Commission estimates that additional investment of 1.5% of EU GDP by the private sector and consumers will be required. This spending would be targeted at the decarbonisation of power generation (identified as the area of greatest potential through much wider use of renewable sources, nuclear power and plants fitted with Carbon Capture and Storage), transport, the built environment and industry using proven technologies already in existence. In mitigation, the annual cost of European oil and gas imports would be expected to fall by €330 billion as a consequence of reduced demand for fossil fuels.

A public consultation (see February's *Bulletin*) on encouraging a switch to less wasteful use of natural resources in the European economy – including policy options for the Roadmap to identify and detail objectives and priority directions for the recently-announced Resource-Efficient Europe flagship initiative (see January's *Bulletin*) – remains open until 22 April.

The Roadmap will now be examined by the Council and the European Parliament, which are expected to endorse conclusions on the Communication in the course of this year. A second Roadmap focusing on the 2050 low carbon energy system is expected to be published in the autumn.

[Roadmap](#)

[Consultation](#)

Energy Efficiency Plan promotes public housing renovation

The Commission published its 'Energy Efficiency Plan 2011' on 8 March – setting out a number of actions by which poor progress to date in meeting an indicative EU target of 20% less energy use by 2020 can be addressed. The Plan does not propose to make this overall target legally binding (unlike the other '20-20-20' objectives), or to set binding national targets – following the line of the February EU Energy Summit. Instead, legal measures have been outlined for certain high potential areas or sectors.

As well as energy management measures directed at the construction sector, energy companies and wider industry, this would mean that the public sector will be required to refurbish at least 3% of its building stock each year according to energy efficiency criteria as well as taking definite steps to ensure that energy savings are included as a determining factor in all aspects of the public procurement of goods, services and works. The plan also highlights the importance of the contribution of new technologies, in particular smart metering and smart grids.

The Communication will be examined by the Council and the European Parliament over the course of the coming months with the Commission due to follow up with a concrete legislative proposal on energy savings in September. An assessment of progress against targets will be made in 2013, at which point binding energy efficiency targets may be reconsidered – something strongly favoured by the European Parliament's Environment Committee.

[Further Information](#)

Transport roadmap proposes long-term changes for cities

The European Commission published its White Paper on the Future of Transport on 28 March. 'Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area - Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system' outlines proposals for the transformation, greening and better

integration of the entire European transport sector by 2050 by means of significant progress on cleaner technology, alternative fuels, and infrastructural changes. Synergies with both the Low-Carbon Economy Roadmap and the Energy Efficiency Plan – see above – are clear.

Major long-term goals to be achieved include:

- Halving the use of 'conventionally-fuelled' cars in urban transport by 2030 (essentially CO2-free city logistics in major urban centres) and phasing them out in cities by 2050 in favour of greener solutions. To facilitate this, the Commission proposes offering financial assistance for urban mobility audits and urban mobility plans (and to examine the possibilities of future Structural Funding being linked to cities and regions which have submitted such plans) and to bring forward proposals for an EU framework on urban road user charging and access restriction schemes for Member States with congestion charge systems.
- Shifting 30% of long-distance road freight to rail or waterborne transport by 2030, and more than 50% by 2050, facilitated by efficient and green freight corridors.
- All main airports to be connected to the (preferably high-speed) rail network by 2050 with all main seaports sufficiently connected to the rail freight system.
- Moving towards full application of the "user pays" and "polluter pays" principles and private sector engagement to ensure financing for future transport investments.

More immediately, over the 2011-2014 period, initiatives are foreseen in 40 different areas including:

- An EU Strategic Transport Technology Plan (2011) to concentrate research efforts and investment on the most promising technologies including those relating to alternative fuels and traffic management tools and to assist with the deployment of new technologies.

- New proposals for a core European "multi-modal" network (2011) with publication of trans-European transport network (TEN-T) guidelines, maps and financing proposals.
- Restructuring transport charges through guidelines on a framework for Member States to opt to apply the costs of infrastructure as well as the social costs of congestion, local CO2 pollution, noise and accidents to road vehicles (2012).
- A clean transport systems strategy (2012) with details on specific measures to incentivise and facilitate the introduction of clean vehicles.

[Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area](#)

Smart Cities Initiative – energy efficiency through technology

On 18 March the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy launched a consultation seeking stakeholder input into the preparation of a 'Smart Cities & Communities Initiative' on accelerating the deployment of innovative low-carbon technology for energy efficiency in Europe's cities. The initiative is to form part of the EU's Strategic Energy Technology (SET) Plan – the technology arm of European climate change and energy policy and was identified as a project of significant importance in the 'Energy 2020' Strategy for competitive, sustainable and secure energy (see November's *Bulletin*).

This consultation exercise follows upon the Commission having received the go-ahead from the European Council (4 February) to table new proposals on smart grids, including those linked to the development of energy-saving urban solutions (others relate to clean vehicles, energy storage, and sustainable bio fuels). As a subsequent step, the Commission plans to create a forum gathering the various relevant stakeholders in order to better structure dialogue. The initiative may further

evolve at a later stage into a European Innovation Partnership) as a means of bringing together public and private actors at EU, national and regional level to tackle major societal challenges while driving investment in new opportunities for business (see "Active & Healthy Ageing" article below).

On 7 April, the Smart Cities Summit in Dublin will examine how innovative ICT and infrastructure planning can support the sustainable transformation of energy, network communications, water, transport, buildings and public services in Irish cities. This will include looking at the experiences of the EU Green Capital scheme.

[Smart Cities and Communities Initiative consultation](#)

Deadline for submissions: 13 May



Brand set to put Midlands on map

Newly appointed Minister of State with special responsibility for Housing and Planning Mr. Willie Penrose T.D. used his first official engagement on 23 March to urge local authorities to accept the importance of joining together at regional level to maximise opportunities on the national and international stages.

As he launched the MidlandsIreland.ie brand – part of a major campaign by the Midland Regional Authority (MRA) and the Midlands Gateway Chamber to reposition the region as a destination for enterprise, tourism, learning and living – the Minister described this sort of initiative as "evidence that local authorities in Ireland now understand and accept the importance of representing their localities, but also of thinking and acting strategically".

MRA Director Mr. Martin Daly, spoke of the brand's strategic goal to create and promote awareness of the Midlands in

order to stimulate economic activity throughout the region that will strengthen and sustain both rural communities and urban centres. He went on to emphasise that a collaborative approach among counties Longford, Westmeath, Laois and Offaly will create a stronger competitive advantage in attracting new business, investors, visitors, students, residents and families. Chairman of the Authority, Cllr. Johnny Penrose welcomed the opportunity for the campaign to properly showcase the Midlands as a "dynamic, progressive and centrally located" region.

www.midlandsireland.ie

Covenant of Mayors: Cork County Council joins Dublin City

In mid-March, Cork County Council became only the second Irish signatory to join over 2,350 European cities, towns and regions in committing to the terms of the Covenant of Mayors – the pledge to devise and implement local energy efficiency and renewable energy actions whose effects go beyond formal EU objectives of achieving a 20% reduction in CO2 emissions by 2020.

The Council now has a year in which to prepare a Baseline Emission Inventory identifying the principal sources and quantifying the total amount of CO2 emitted due to energy consumption across the local authority area as well as the potential for reduction. This will be followed by the development and submission of a detailed Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) outlining practical actions to be taken in the future. Submitted SEAPs are subject to reports stating the degree of implementation of the actions and the interim results achieved every two years. Signatory organisations also commit to actively promote their energy activities and to gain 'buy-in' from citizens and stakeholders.

Until now, Dublin City Council had been Ireland's sole signatory to the Covenant. Last December it submitted its finalised

SEAP for 2010-2020 which details how the capital can reduce its energy footprint across residential and commercial buildings (including by renovation and retrofitting), services, industry and a low-carbon transport system. This includes an assessment of the contribution of modern and efficient energy infrastructure and improvements in information technology including smart metering.

The longer-term goal is to stay ahead of the curve by halving the amount of emissions by 2030 in order to become an "energy-smart city". This will entail reducing not only greenhouse gases but also dependence on imported fuel and expenditure on energy in order to make Dublin a more competitive and attractive destination for business and job creation.

[Covenant of Mayors](#)

[Dublin City SEAP](#)

CoR backs local sustainable water management

At the EU Environment Ministers informal two-day council meeting in Hungary on 24-26 March, Committee of the Regions (CoR) President Mercedes Bresso drew attention to local and regional authorities' ambitions to be properly engaged in shaping and delivering sustainable development solutions which are "coordinated at the European level, inclusive at the national level and above all effective at the local level".

In this vein, particular emphasis was placed on the benefits of Ministers acknowledging that many regions and cities already have their own long-term carbon strategies which could be used to enrich the European Commission's final proposals for new roadmap for a competitive low carbon Europe by 2050. Last autumn, the CoR had appealed to regions and local authorities to sign local climate action pacts setting out concrete measures to contribute to the fight against climate change. At December's UN Climate Summit in Cancun, the role of these levels as key partners in global

efforts to reduce greenhouse gases was explicitly mentioned for the first time.

Bresso also called for strong consideration to be given to the Covenant of Mayors being expanded beyond energy concerns to encompass the wider 'Resource-efficient Europe' agenda – particularly in regard to sustainable water management policy approaches. The CoR is currently preparing its own position on the future of water management at the request of the Hungarian Presidency. The agreed text is due to be presented to June's Environment Council.

[Further details.](#)

Cultural and creative industries potential: consultation findings

On 24 March, the European Commission published a synopsis of the 350 responses to last year's Green Paper intended to determine the type of environment required for cultural and creative industries (CCIs) to thrive. According to this analysis, the consultation of diverse cultural actors and organisations across Europe confirmed that CCIs are a powerful motor for jobs, growth, export earnings, cultural diversity and social inclusion, and that they have a vital contribution to make to the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Among the main issues that emerged, some of the most relevant included the need to make access to funding easier for cultural businesses, especially SMEs, as well as wide support for a broad concept of innovation, encompassing culture-based creativity. Many respondents called for local and regional development authorities to increase their support to culture and its associated industries as part of their efforts to develop 'smart specialisation' strategies.

The report underlines that CCIs must be encouraged to undertake experimentation, and to fully embrace technology in this respect, particularly in the field of ICT. Furthermore, more opportunities need to be provided for

multi-disciplinary and cross-border creative partnerships among CCIs and with other businesses and knowledge providers.

[Further details](#)

Irish perspectives on Year of Volunteering

The current issue of the 'Regional Review' magazine includes an article by Irish Committee of the Regions (CoR) member Declan McDonnell on volunteering as an element in creating inter-generational solidarity as well as in achieving the effective delivery of services at local and regional level. Cllr McDonnell (Galway City Council and West Regional Authority) was Rapporteur on the official 2010 CoR Opinion which fed into preparations for the current European Year of Volunteering by highlighting the major role of local authorities and regional governments in this sector.

The same issue contains a separate article on measuring the true value of volunteering to society by Marian Harkin MEP – previously the Rapporteur behind a European Parliament report on 'the Role of Volunteering In Contributing to Economic and Social cohesion'.

[Further details \(pages 34- 35\)](#)

[January Committee of the Regions Forum on Regional and Local Authorities in action during the European Year of Volunteering 2011](#)

Active & Healthy Ageing

On 9 March, EU ministers in charge of competitiveness endorsed Commission proposals to launch a European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing in recognition of the challenges of demographic change. Innovation Partnerships – an element of the Innovation Union flagship initiative of the Europe 2020 growth strategy – are planned as a new way of mobilising the

resources and expertise of public and private actors at EU, national and regional level in a coherent manner to improve the performance of European research by delivering innovations with a societal benefit.

Crucially, the issues to be addressed are seen as representing significant potential for the development of new products, processes and services – business opportunities which should be exploited by European companies through improvements to the innovation chain and quicker progress to the market.

This first such partnership will range across three policy areas – prevention and health promotion; integrated care; and independent living of elderly people – with a goal of enabling EU citizens to lead longer, healthy, more active and independent lives while they age, as well as of improving the sustainability and efficiency of social welfare and healthcare systems.

The pilot plans to achieve these goals by bringing together key stakeholders from the demand and supply side of the innovation cycle including deployers and end-users (older people and care providers) to work on research, innovation and standardisation issues relating to ageing. In an effort to improve uptake of innovation, the resulting forum is intended to try to collectively identify potential barriers. It will also seek to leverage financing and investments prospects and to improve coordination and coherence between funding for research and innovation at European, national and regional level.

The Commission is expected to draw up full recommendations for a strategic implementation plan this summer. This will form the basis for different initiatives to be developed to implement the partnership. A key issue will be whether the partnership should extend beyond the purely medical dimension of ageing to also seek to support innovative solutions for the active participation of the over fifties in society – possibly even a network of age-friendly cities/regions.

[European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing](#)

Council backs integrated fight against poverty & exclusion

Ministers meeting in Brussels on 7 March for the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council, gave their support to the Commission's proposal for a 'European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion' (see January's *Bulletin*). The Platform has proposed an integrated approach across the policy spectrum coordinating mutually reinforcing actions at EU, national, regional and local levels in order to alleviate the risk of poverty and social exclusion which affects at least 1 in 6 Europeans.

Policies mentioned include more effective use of Structural Funds, use and promotion of evidence-based approaches and social innovation, encouragement of the social economy, and the fullest application of active inclusion principles. In accordance with the thrust of the Europe 2020 Strategy, Ministers consider that social and territorial cohesion can only be achieved if the most vulnerable can avail of access to jobs and economic growth.

The Committee of the Regions Opinion on the Platform, adopted on 1 April, makes the point that this ambitious goal can only succeed if the design of the National Reform Programmes of measures by which to deliver Europe 2020 pays more than mere lip service to the role of local and regional authorities and if the EU is prepared to back the efforts of competent authorities in social affairs at all levels, including by earmarking sufficient European Social Fund support for poverty and social inclusion measures. A CoR survey which fed into this position paper identified the view among a large majority of respondents that addressing poverty and exclusion should be an obligatory element of future regional programmes under the Structural Funds.

The CoR has welcomed the specific references in the Platform to tackling the exclusion of Roma and to reducing homelessness but expressed concern that the proposals on child poverty are inadequate.

[Council conclusions](#)

EVENTS

'Energy Days'

Across Ireland, 11-15 April

As part of EU Sustainable Energy week a number of Irish local authorities are organising events to promote awareness and public engagement in the issue.

Cork Chamber of Commerce, Cork City Council and Cork County Council are jointly organising an [Energy Cluster Workshop](#) on 13 April to build a unique identity and coordinate actions to strengthen business and employment prospects for the energy sector in Cork ('Energy@Cork') by increasing awareness and networking among its suppliers, customers, researchers and businesses. Sessions will take place on Demand side management; - Building Standards and Construction; Technology/Cleantech; Energy Supply Initiatives; Transport; and Research.

Meanwhile Galway County Council will host the Inaugural meeting to launch the [Tuam Sustainable Energy Community](#) proposal to encourage collective energy efficiency, use of renewable energy and development of decentralised energy supplies (14 April). Additionally, [informal information sessions](#) with local suppliers on specific energy topics will be available in Tuam each lunchtime: GREEN Network (Mon.), insulation (Tues.), wind turbines (Weds.), lighting (Thurs.), and solar panels (Fri.).

www.eusew.eu

URBACT Projects final conferences

Various dates and locations

Over the next two months the final conferences of over a dozen URBACT exchange and learning projects which have enabled cities to work together, and to develop effective and sustainable solutions to key urban challenges, are set to take place.

[Further details](#)

Regional Innovation

Brussels, 4 May

The OECD and European Commission DG for Regional Policy will present a new joint report which has set out to evaluate comparative regional success in promoting innovation. This event will present the findings, explore underlying reasons behind variable performances, and provide guidance on how to design and manage innovation strategies which are tailored to the regional context and optimise the role of EU assistance in supporting regional innovation from 2014 onwards.

[Further details](#)

Social Innovation

Brussels, 10 May

The Committee of the Regions Forum on 'Social Innovation: European vision, local action' sets out to give regional and local authorities insights into how to create and implement innovation in their policy areas such as unemployment, poverty or ageing whose effects are often most keenly felt locally. The Forum will pay special attention to experimentation and new strategies for starting and financing regional and local initiatives and to influencing two main Flagship Initiatives of the Europe 2020 strategy – an Innovation Union and the Platform against Poverty.

[Further details](#)

Parking and planning

Stuttgart, 17 May

'The role of parking in Sustainable Urban Transport Plans' is a workshop organised by the European Parking Association (EPA) and Polis, the network of European cities and regions to promote, support and advocate innovation in local transport. The event will look at the role of parking strategies in spatial development and accessibility, their interaction with environmental policies, making urban transport viable as a consequence, and innovative management schemes.

[Further details](#)

European Maritime Day

Gdansk, 19-20 May

Registration for the fourth European Maritime Day has opened. This annual event is intended to showcase the significance of the seas and ocean for everyday life across Europe as well as highlighting major opportunities and challenges facing maritime regions and sectors. Sessions on making maritime careers attractive (education, training and working conditions); an ecosystem-based approach to managing activities related to the sea; promoting economically sustainable maritime transport in the context of climate change; and sea-basins as economic drivers are included in the programme. In tandem, events to celebrate European maritime identity and sea-related activities are being organised across Europe.

[Further details](#)

LIFE+

Brussels, 25-26 May

The 'LIFE for Our Environment: Success Stories and Future Challenges' conference during EU Green Week aims to take stock of the LIFE+ programme's achievements to date in supporting the implementation of environmental policy and the development of new solutions to environmental challenges.

In addition, the event will allow those involved in LIFE+ projects or EU environmental policymaking to take part in sessions on transferability of solutions, complementarity with other funding programmes at national and EU levels, the relationship with other policy instruments, and the future shape of the programme.

Note: For participants whose application to attend is accepted, the European Commission will make arrangements and cover travel expenses.

Programme (to register use Login: LIFE. Password: EUROPE)

[Further details](#)

Upon request, IRO staff may be available to attend events in Brussels on behalf of local and regional authorities.



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