

ANGUS COUNCIL

EUROPEAN E-ZINE

This e-newsletter is intended to give local businesses and Angus Council staff information about European Union actions that may have direct relevance to their current and future work.

Entries are brief, but hopefully sufficient to allow you to decide whether an item is of relevance. Links to more detailed information and suggested action points are given however we will be happy to provide more detailed briefings on request.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	EMPLOYMENT	ENVIRONMENT	GOVERNANCE
HEALTH	MARITIME	REGIONAL POLICY	RURAL POLICY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SERVICES DIRECTIVE

Summary - The Government has published its consultation document on the implementation of the EU Services Directive in the UK.

Action – the document can be found at <http://www.berr.gov.uk/consultations/page42211.html> and consultation closes on 11 February 2008.

Handbook issued

Summary - The European Commission has published a Handbook to help Member States (and by extension local authorities) to implement the Services Directive, which opens up most services to open EU-wide competition. This Directive has clear implications for local authorities. Local authority licensing and permit regimes, as well as registration procedures, will be affected. Once the directive enters fully into force by 28 December 2009 at the latest, the technical barriers that previously would have prevented companies based in one country but operating in another will effectively be removed.

Action - the handbook is available at http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/docs/services-dir/guides/handbook_en.pdf

PUBLIC SERVICE PROPOSALS

Summary- The European Commission has produced a package of proposals that aim to better define the conditions for provision of public services. Since the EU has vast regulatory powers over the EU Single Market, this set of proposals are of high significance for Local Authorities.

The new proposals include:

- Definition of what a SGI, SGEI, SSGI and a service of non-economic interest is (i.e. when the EU competition and procurement rules apply to local services)
- Impact of EU law in health service provision

- Local provision of social services versus public procurement rules
- Outsourcing of local services
- Limits to request potential bidders "local knowledge" requirements
- Shared Services vs. public procurement
- PPPs and public procurement

Action - The proposals will be used as guidelines on how to regulate public services in the future or eventually to bring Local Authorities to justice for infringement of EU procurement rules.

EMPLOYMENT

Summary - The European Commission has produced its Strategic Report, available at <http://communicate.navyblue.com/forward/Ca-4-2259-1112-1-1698-3561> on the renewed Lisbon growth and jobs strategy. The report indicates that the Lisbon Strategy is contributing to the recent much improved performance of the EU economy. Structural reforms are also starting to raise potential future growth, improving the long-term prospects for prosperity.

United Kingdom

The UK has made significant progress in implementing its National Reform Programme over 2005-2007, and good progress in fulfilling the commitments agreed by the 2006 Spring European Council in the four priority action areas.

Among the strengths shown by the 2007 UK Implementation Report are: the plans to provide an integrated approach to employment and skills, moves towards the creation of a business-friendly regulatory environment, and the forward-looking plans on energy policy.

The policy areas in the UK National Reform Programme where challenges need to be tackled with the highest priority are improving skills levels to increase productivity and reduce disadvantage in the labour market. Against this background it is recommended that the UK implement recent plans to substantially improve skill-levels and establish an integrated approach to employment and skills in order to improve productivity and increase opportunities for the disadvantaged. In addition, it will be important for the UK to focus on the following challenges for the future: progressively increase housing supply in order to meet medium term demand pressures; ensure progress towards the UK's R&D intensity target through full implementation of the recent review of R&D and innovation policy, particularly taking fuller account of the specific needs of the services sector.

ENVIRONMENT

The European Commission is launching a series of initiatives to implement the new consensus reached at EU level in last March summit of EU leaders to give priority to the fight against climate change namely via boosting renewables, biofuels, energy efficiency, green public procurement and emissions. Most of the proposals have been delayed by a month to 23 January to allow more time to sort the finer details of these landmark proposals including:

Green Public Procurement

The European Commission is preparing a set of initiatives to make procurement of public bodies, including Local Authorities "greener". The three key initiatives at the moment are the National Action Plans on Green Public Procurement, a new Communication from the Commission to be issued at the end of January and a related proposal on Public Procurement on Green Vehicles. The Commission is preparing a new proposal to encourage local authorities to spend part of their annual purchase of vehicles on "green" ones. This follows the defeat in the European Parliament last year of an earlier proposal that proposed explicit targets for Local Authorities to be met. The Commission approach now is more cautious

and it will only propose a set of minimum standards on award criteria that Local Authorities can then use when assessing the ecologic standards of their prospective fleet.

Revision of the WEEE Directive to be launched

The existing Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive is of great importance for Local Authorities, as it sets the standards on how Councils must deal with this sort of waste. This Directive will be reviewed in September 2008 but prior to this **a technical consultation is** taking place until 13 March. The Commission will be asking for views about the need of setting up EU wide collection targets, the need of a single EU WEEE register of producers, or minimum standards for waste collection system. Whatever the eventual proposals are, they will have an impact in Scotland as comparative research that has just been carried out put the UK among the EU Member States with a less than optimal and consistent implementation of the Directive.

Energy Efficiency

The Directive on Energy Efficiency on Buildings will be reviewed in November 2008 but a consultation is expected in early next year. The Commission is also aiming at tabling a set of proposals for energy savings in offices, street lighting (in 2008), compulsory incandescent lamps at homes (2009) binding requirements on heating and cooling in buildings and a proposal for an international energy efficiency agreement.

AIR QUALITY

Councils may soon be sharing the burden of improving air quality with key polluting sectors such as industry, agriculture and transport after MEPs voted in the European Parliament for each sector to be involved in controlling pollution more tightly.

Action <http://tinyurl.com/2932tw> gives more details

GOVERNANCE

The Lisbon Treaty

Summary - The Lisbon Treaty that amends and reviews the existing EU Treaties was officially signed on December 13 but remains to be ratified by Member States in 2008. If ratified, the long process of institutional EU reform that started back in 2001 will come to an end.

Amongst the implications for local authorities are the following -

- Subsidiarity Principle is reinforced: This means that decisions should be taken at the level of government closest to the citizen as much as possible.
- The EU Commission shall consult widely before tabling legislation. It shall also take into account the regional and local dimension of the draft legislation and justify the need for EU action.
- More scrutiny powers to national parliaments: There are Protocols to allow scrutiny of whether the EU is fully respecting the powers of national and Local Authorities.

PRESIDENCY

Slovenia will take over the European presidency for six months from January 2008. Priorities of the Slovenian presidency will be the Lisbon strategy, energy and climate change, the EU Reform Treaty and intercultural dialogue.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2008

Summary - The most noteworthy proposals with a local government impact will be proposals on public services and procurement, a set of energy efficiency and renewables proposals, the WEEE directive stakeholder consultation, and the controversial merging of all EU air emissions Directives into the IPPC (Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control) Directive.

Other issues of potential interest for local government include the VAT Reduced Rates review, a biodiversity package, maritime transport package, directive on seasonal workers, a Communication on Social Inclusion and Labeling on energy consumption in household appliances.

Action – full details are available at

http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/clwp2008_roadmap_strategic_initiatives.pdf

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT EU PRIORITIES

The Scottish Government’s intended EU priorities were identified by Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture, Linda Fabiani. She identified six political objectives and 21 key priorities divided under five strategic headings.

The six political objectives, to be revised every six months, are:

Fisheries and aquaculture; EU treaty reform; EU budget review; Justice and Home Affairs; EU energy policy; Agriculture

The 21 key priorities were also identified. Divided into five strategic headings, they do not diverge significantly from the priorities of the previous administration but given the protracted nature of EU policy making this is to be expected.

WEALTHIER AND FAIRER SCOTLAND	GREENER SCOTLAND	SAFER AND STRONGER SCOTLAND	HEALTHIER SCOTLAND	SMARTER SCOTLAND
Internal and External Fisheries Negotiations	Strategic Energy Review	EU Family Law Proposals	White Paper on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity	European Qualifications Framework
EU Trade Defence: Anti Dumping Measures against Norwegian Farmed Salmon	Climate Change	Exchange of Information from Criminal Records	Community Framework for Safe and Efficient Health Services	European Institute for Technology
Better Regulation Agenda	Marine Strategy and draft Marine Strategy Directive	EU Institutional Reform (EU Reform Treaty)		
Financial Services	Maritime Green Paper			
Structural Funds	Soil Thematic Strategy			
Scotland Rural Development Programme	Habitats Directive			
Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Reform	Review of the Cod Recovery Plan			

HEALTH

White Paper on Health

Summary - The European Commission has published a White Paper “Together for Health A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013.” It includes proposals for Communications on healthy ageing and on the health of the workforce and work to strengthen the integration of health concerns into all policies at Community, Member State and regional levels.

Whilst health issues are primarily a concern for Member States the EU has the responsibility for health related topics in relation to cross border health threats, patient mobility, and reducing health inequalities.

The Strategy focuses on four principles and three strategic themes for improving health in the EU. The principles include taking a value-driven approach, recognising the links between health and economic prosperity, integrating health in all policies, and strengthening the EU's voice in global health. The strategic themes include Fostering Good Health in an Ageing Europe, Protecting Citizens from Health Threats, and Dynamic Health Systems and New Technologies.

Action - http://www.ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/strategy/health_strategy_en.htm for more details

MARITIME

New EU Integrated Maritime Policy proposals

Summary

In October the European Commission launched proposals towards an Integrated Maritime Policy in the EU. As with similar EU proposals the Integrated Maritime Policy must be able to meet the challenges of globalisation and competitiveness, climate change, degradation of the marine environment, maritime safety and security, and energy security and sustainability. In terms of economic development it shall encourage marine research, technology and innovation, and shall be anchored in the Lisbon agenda for jobs and growth, and the Gothenburg agenda for sustainability.

Implications for Local Government -

- some of the proposals will affect Councils' own powers (such as coastal planning).

In terms of actions on Maritime Governance, the Paper:

- Invites Member States to draw up national integrated maritime policies, working closely with stakeholders, in particular the coastal regions.
- To this end, in 2008 the Commission will table a set of EU guidelines for these national integrated maritime policies and report annually on EU and Member States' actions in this regard from 2009 and,
- It will also organise a stakeholder consultation structure, feeding into further development of the maritime policy and allowing exchange of best practices.
- Integrated Coastal Zone Management: The Commission will make an assessment of options needed to make the uses of different maritime activities more compatible (in 2008).

Maritime Planning issues:

The Commission will try to set up a European Marine Observation and Data Network in 2008, and promote the multi-dimensional mapping of Member States' waters, in order to improve access to high quality data.

- Also in 2008 it will table a Road map on development of maritime spatial planning by Member States and will establish a system for exchange of best practice the following year.
- A European Atlas of the Seas will be presented in 2009.

Economic development:

Local Authorities have a central role to play in the economic development of coastal communities. Therefore any proposal in this area will have a direct or indirect effect in Councils. It is worth pointing out that no new sources of EU funding are proposed at this stage (that is not possible until 2013 when the current EU budget ends) so the Commission aims to make a better co-ordinated use of the resources already in place.

For Local Authorities specifically the Commission will propose:

The formation of multi-sectoral maritime clusters and regional centres of maritime excellence.

The Commission will also promote maritime tourism within the new EU Tourism initiative (again, the role of Local Authorities is prevalent in this area). Specifically for Local Authorities, the Commission will prepare an EU funding database for maritime projects and coastal regions and in 2009 it will develop a database of socio-economic data for these areas.

REGIONAL POLICY

Summary The European Commission consultation on the future of the EU Cohesion Policy to discuss the Cohesion Policy after 2013 is open until 31 January 2008.

Action It is available at

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/4thcohesionforum/consultation_en.cfm?nmenu=6

RURAL POLICY

CAP 'Health Check'

Summary - The European Commission published its CAP "Health Check" paper in November 2007 following the Common Agricultural Policy reforms which took place in 2003/04. This new Communication provides for options for the 'Health Check', which will follow as legal proposals in 2008, with the objective to ensure that the CAP is working as it should, and simplifying it where possible. The Communication asks three preliminary questions:

- How to make the direct aid system more effective and simpler;
- How to make market support instruments, originally conceived for a Community of Six, relevant in the world we live in now; and
- How to confront new challenges, from climate change, to biofuels, water management and the protection of biodiversity.

Following the publication of the 'Healthcheck' on 20 November, a 6 month period of consultation opens under the Slovenian EU Presidency in the first semester of 2008 which will be followed by legislative proposals under the French Presidency in the second half of 2008.

Action - The consultation is available at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/healthcheck/index_en.htm