

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.

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*France took over the Council Presidency in July, until the end of December 2008. Their chosen priorities are **immigration, climate change, defence and agriculture.***

COHESION	ENERGY	ENVIRONMENT	HEALTH	
MIGRATION	PROCUREMENT	SOCIETY	STATE AID	SUBSIDIARITY

COHESION POLICY

Green Paper

Summary: On 1 October the European Commission presents a Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion which aims to provide a common definition of this concept and take stock of how Member States understand and already, but inconsistently, apply the concept. The Territorial Cohesion Green Paper is expected to launch a European-wide consultation in which COSLA will aim at collecting Councils views towards defining a Scottish position.

MEPs are holding hearings and preparing political positions on Territorial Cohesion and the wider issue of the future of the Structural Funds, such as a report on Urban-Rural Relations (chiefly asking for a clarification on what a “rural area” is). Another Parliamentary Report aims at better defining the partnership principle for implementing the Structural Funds.

MEPs commissioned an informative research study on Best Practices and Obstacles in Structural Funds.

Internet link:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/pe405396_pe405396_en.pdf

Rural Development

MEPs have been discussing the future of rural development and agree that “Areas with Structural Handicaps” should be among the ones to have priority access to the EU Structural Funds which could obviously be significant for many areas in Scotland.

Farming in mountainous areas: A report focusing on agriculture in mountainous areas is set for adoption by the Parliament. The resolution, adopted in the Agriculture Committee, recommends support for traditional regional products from mountain regions and for special assistance from EU funds for mountain areas.

ENERGY

Energy Performance in Buildings

Summary: This is being reviewed by the European Commission to make the Directive more enforceable and increase its scope, particularly including individual homes. As the original Directive has yet to be implemented in Scotland, there is little evidence to proceed to a full review. There was a

public consultation - Recasting of the 2002 Energy Performance of Buildings Directive - which ran until 20 June.

Internet link: http://ec.europa.eu/energy/demand/consultations/buildings_dir_en.htm

Renewable energy

Summary: In September, MEPs voted in favour of the Renewable Energy Directive (50 votes to 2) which puts in place measures to meet an overall EU binding target of 20% of energy from renewable sources by 2020 with a specific binding national target for each Member State. Member States must also achieve a 10% share of renewable energy in the transport sector by 2020.

Member States are free to develop the renewable energy sector that corresponds best to their national situation and potential, across the three sectors of electricity, heating /cooling and transport. Member States must present renewable action plans (RAPs) outlining their strategies to the Commission.

On the 10 % target for the renewable energy in transport sector, Member States must achieve a 20% energy efficiency improvement in the transport sector, to reduce demand, and a proportion of the target must be met from advanced technology - from electricity or hydrogen from renewable sources, energy from waste, residues and biomass.

ENVIRONMENT

Air Quality

The Air Quality Directive is now in force and will have to be implemented by member states by 2010. The revised directive gives member states greater flexibility in complying with certain existing air quality standards.

Internet link for details:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/571&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Batteries

Batteries and Accumulators (Placing on the Market) Regulations 2008.

Summary: New regulations came into force from 26 September 2008 relating to the disposal of batteries. This applies to those placing on the UK market batteries and accumulators, or certain electrical and electronic equipment that may contain or incorporate batteries and accumulators, Guidance is available.

Internet link: <http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file47433.pdf>

Clean vehicles

The Council and European Parliament approved a Directive on the procurement of green vehicles by local authorities in June. This now excludes second hand and first need vehicles from its scope, but does not exclude private contractors. The final agreement is expected in October.

Waste

Summary: In June, MEPs agreed to back a watered-down new waste framework directive legislation despite the lack of binding goals for member states on waste prevention, while targets for re-use and recycling are included.

The legislation will streamline existing waste laws, incorporating directives on waste oils and hazardous waste into the revised Waste Framework Directive.

The directive stipulates that governments have to recycle 50% of household waste and 70% of construction waste by 2020. If the targets are not met by EU countries by 2020, the Commission intends taking them to court for non-compliance.

Waste prevention targets for member states were removed but governments will be given five years (from the directive's entry into force) to set up national waste prevention programmes.

The order of preference for waste processing should be: prevention, re-use, recycling and recovery with environmental disposal as a last option.

A proposal added by Parliament on setting a target for recycling manufacturing and industrial waste was also rejected by the Council.

Internet link: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/watered-waste-directive-gets-meps-green-light/article-173447>

HEALTH

Demand for Long-Term Care Services Set to Rise

Summary: The demands for and costs of long-term care provision in the EU will rise significantly by 2050, according to a report presented by the European Commission. The report states that Member States are already preparing a wide variety of solutions and there is a strong commitment at European level to provide access to quality care for all. The report, 'Long-Term Care in the European Union', analyses the main challenges that the Member States face in the field of long-term care, their strategies for tackling them and presents possible solutions.

Internet link: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/news/news_en.cfm?id=388

MIGRATION

Green Paper on Education and Migration: Challenges and Opportunities for EU Education System

Summary: The European Commission published its Green Paper on 'Education and Migration' on 2 July. In the context where immigration from third countries is the main element of demographic growth in the EU, education is seen as the building block for integration.

The aim of the Paper is to open debate on how 'education policies may better address the challenges posed by immigration and internal EU mobility flows.' and explores:

- ways to adapt schools and teachers to a changing context in the education systems;
- the main challenges in relation to the provision of good education to children from migrant backgrounds;
- the prevention of the creation of segregated school settings so as to improve equity in education;
- how to accommodate the increased diversity of mother tongues and cultural background and build intercultural skills in the EU;
- how to adapt teaching skills and build bridges with migrant families and communities.

It focuses on pupils who are marked "both by the linguistic and cultural differences between homes and schools, and by the low status of parents and ethnic identities in the host society."

The Green Paper reflects the possible impacts for local authorities from migration, as the issues discussed affects LA's competences on the challenge of integrating migrants through the provision of public services, housing, and schools. This paper will be useful in helping to provide examples of good practice in how local authorities can best deal with these challenges.

The Consultation process will run until 31 December 2008 and COSLA's umbrella organisation CEMR are likely to feed into this.

There is a useful summary and breakdown of statistics in the East of Scotland European Consortium paper, available

Internet link:

http://www.esec.org.uk/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=315&Itemid=71

Report Findings

A study by The Work Foundation has noted that the UK has benefited greatly from the influx of immigrant workers from Eastern Europe. The study, entitled

"*Migration Myths, Employment, Wages and Labour Market Performance*" is available at

Internet link:

<http://www.theworkfoundation.com/research/publications/publicationdetail.aspx?oltemId=33&parentPageID=102&PubType=>

PROCUREMENT

Green procurement

Summary: In July the EU published proposals to promote green public procurement. By specifying common 'green' criteria for key products and services, the Commission hopes that Member States will achieve a new target of 50% of public procurement to be 'green' by 2010.

The Communication on Green Public Procurement is of direct relevance to Scottish Councils. The Commission is coordinating a process for establishing and agreeing common GPP criteria for the following sectors

Construction, Food and catering services, Transport and transport services; Energy, Office machinery and computers, clothing, uniforms and other textiles, Paper and printing services, Furniture, Cleaning products and services, and Equipment used in the health sector and aim to do so in five more.

Internet links: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/index_en.htm

Green Procurement toolkit http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/toolkit_en.htm

Local Government Association Blog

http://blog.lga.gov.uk/roller/dominicrowles/entry/3_a_green_light_for

For the green product and service criteria see: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/toolkit_en.htm (module 3)

For the text of the proposals (16th July 2008) see

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/pdf/com_2008_400.pdf

FAQ on the proposals:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/514&format=HTML&38:aged=0&38:language=EN&38:guiLanguage=en>

Remedies Directive

Summary: The Office of Government Commerce have published a consultation on the UK implementation of the Remedies Directive, which gives failed bidders new possibilities to challenge the award of public contracts. The Directive could result in the suspension of public contracts if they have not been awarded in a way compliant with the rules. The consultation runs until 31 October 2008.

Further information is available at

Internet link:

http://www.ogc.gov.uk/procurement_policy_and_application_of_eu_rules_european_procurement_directives.asp

SOCIETY

Social Services

The Commission has published its [biennial report on social services in the European Union](#).

It covers the scope of these services, the way in which they adapt to socio-economic challenges, and issues around SSGIs and the application of EU rules.

Internet link: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=552&langId=en>

Social Agenda

Summary: A renewed social agenda has been adopted by the EU, bringing together a range of EU policies in order to support action in seven priority areas:

- Children and youth – tomorrow's Europe
- Investing in people: more and better jobs, new skills
- Mobility
- Longer and healthier lives
- Combating poverty and social exclusion
- Fighting discrimination and promoting gender equality

- Opportunities, access and solidarity on the global scene

The renewed social agenda is made up of three key measures on anti discrimination, European Works Councils and cross-border healthcare, alongside additional measures in the areas of health, education, employment, mobility, poverty and social exclusion and discrimination.

Internet link: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=547&langId=en> There is also a new European Commission portal on social affairs which can be found at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/home.jsp?langId=en>

STATE AID

Summary: The European Commission has approved the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) for State Aids. With this new regulation local authorities are allowed to give certain types of aid without prior notification to the European Commission. The GBER will stand as an umbrella reference in which authorities wishing to grant state aid on a vast range of areas, from environment to business promotion, will be able to look first if they are covered.

Only if they exceed the general thresholds set out at the GBER will they need to check the sector.

Internet link: http://ec.europa.eu/comm/competition/state_aid/reform/gber_final_en.pdf

SUBSIDIARITY

The Commission pledges to improve systems for assessing the impact of EU laws on local and regional authorities. The European Commission is taking action to strengthen the analysis of subsidiarity and proportionality issues in its impact assessments, according to its latest report in response to opinions adopted by the Committee of the Regions (CoR).

What is subsidiarity? If a responsibility is shared between the EU and a member state, (e.g. environmental directives) action should be taken at the lower decision-making level (local, regional, national) unless it cannot act sufficiently and effectively, in which case the EU can take action.

The Committee of the Regions has a website section on subsidiarity.

Internet link: <http://subsidiarity.cor.europa.eu/>

EU NEWS...

TV Channel

The European Parliament has just launched its new, web-based TV service at www.europarl.tv/europa.eu

EuroparlTV is split into four channels, each directed to a different audience:

- Your Parliament, aimed at those with a particular interest in politics at the EU level
- Your Voice, for the general public
- Young Europe, aimed particularly at school-aged children
- Parliament Live will carry continuous coverage of live events in the European Parliament

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) was launched in September.

It is a major EU initiative which aims to foster excellence in European innovation and to provide new solutions for major challenges, such as climate change, renewable energies or the next generation of information and communication technologies. The EIT aims to become a flagship for excellence in European innovation in order to face the challenges of globalisation. It is the first European initiative to integrate fully the three sides of the "Knowledge Triangle" (Higher Education, Research, Business-Innovation) and will seek to stand out as a world-class innovation-orientated reference model, inspiring and driving change in existing education and research institutions.

Internet link: <http://ec.europa.eu/eit/>

EU Fund Training for Councillors

The European Parliament's committee on Regional Development (REGI) approved the creation of an Erasmus-style programme for locally elected representatives. This training programme would allow local project managers to share their experiences and exchange good practice, particularly concerning the use of structural funds. More specifically, this report calls on elected representatives and national, regional and local civil servants to better prepare themselves regarding operational project management and cohesion policy.

The aim is to create a common culture of governance for European funds. It has been proposed that a budget of 7 million euros be allocated to this Erasmus pilot programme.

2009 - European Year of Creativity and Innovation!

The European Commission has proposed 2009 to become the European Year of Creativity and Innovation due to the need for skills and competences that enable people to embrace change as an opportunity and to be open to new ideas. As in previous years, activities would include promotional campaigns and events at European, national, regional and local level. No extra funding is being earmarked, however, and activities will be financed out of existing funding streams.

Find out more at <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/482&format>

USEFUL LINKS

Dialogue with citizens

This internet portal provides all EU citizens with clear information on their rights in all EU Member States. It contains guides on ten areas of EU law and over 1,300 printable, multilingual fact sheets with practical tips. The "Dialogue with Citizens" portal also contains a set of useful addresses, telephone numbers and online resources in the Member States concerning employment, social security and taxation.

Internet address: <http://europa.eu.int/citizensrights/>

Interregional co-operation

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe launched a new website on interregional cooperation. The new MORE website (Matching Opportunities for Regions in Europe) contains a database which helps European regions to find potential partners for European cooperation and to exchange experiences.

Internet address: <http://www.loreg.coe.int/more/DefaultTransborder.aspx>

LGA Blog

The Local Government Association's European and International Unit has launched a blog providing an informal look at emerging Internal Market rules from the EU that will affect local authority delivery of public services. It covers topics such as public procurement, state aid, cross-border services, and services of general interest.

Internet link: <http://roller.temp.conseq.net/roller/dominicrowles/>