

REGIONAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION (Irish Branch)

E-NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 6, December 2008

Welcome to the sixth issue of the Regional Studies Association (RSA) e-newsletter. This e-newsletter serves as a way for the Irish Branch of the Association to highlight conferences, events, publications and other developments of interest in the broad regional policy area. Contact details are included below.

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1. About the Association

The Regional Studies Association is a learned society interested in regional development, policy and research. The Association carries out a range of activities including:

- publishing a journal, newsletter and books;
- organising conferences and other meetings; and
- establishing and maintaining a branch and international section network.

It has an international membership of individuals, corporate organisations and students.

The Irish Branch was formed to provide a forum to discuss regional issues in Ireland.

2. RSA News

WEBSITE UPDATE

The website of the Irish Branch of the RSA can be accessed at: www.regionalstudies.ie
Suggestions on the site's continued development is welcomed – as is relevant text! The Association's general website can be accessed at: www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk

SECOND JOINT IRISH-SCOTTISH CONFERENCE ON REGIONAL ISSUES

Arrangements for the second Irish-Scottish Conference are progressing. Scheduled to take place in the Shannon Region over the next few months (with exact location and date to be confirmed shortly), it is currently proposed that the theme for this event will be *Economic Development, Labour Markets and Regional Connectivity*. Sponsorship for this 1-day event is currently being sourced to supplement the grant made available by the RSA HQ. A call for papers will be issued in early 2009. For further details, contact the branch secretary Patrick Collins at secretary@regionalstudies.ie

RSA DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2008-2013

The RSA has recently launched its new Development Plan 2008-2013. The Plan aims to deliver on the organisation's core objectives of serving its members and developing the field of regional studies. Core areas covered by the Plan include:

- Developing the field of regional studies through an effective international network
- Maximising membership and community building
- Research
- Publishing
- Conferences and events
- Influencing policy debate and practice.

For further information about the RSA Development Plan 2008-2013, see: www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk/news/devplan2008-2013.pdf

RSA RESEARCH NETWORK: THE ROLE OF OLD INDUSTRIAL KNOWLEDGES IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF POST-INDUSTRIAL REGIONS

This research network aims to explore similarities in experiences of industrial restructuring in western and central Europe. The Network is focusing on how 'industrial knowledge' has become a factor driving stability, regeneration and growth in these areas. There is an increasing awareness of the importance of image to regional economic development – with regional development agencies investing millions of euros to change the way that people think if their regions. Enduring image problems reflect a reality that building up new industries from

the wastelands of decline is a difficult process. This has implications for external investment. The next meeting of this Research Network takes place from 15-17 February 2009 in Monchengladbach, Germany; the theme of this event being "The regeneration of image in old industrial regions: agents of change and changing agents". For further details contact Dr. Paul Benneworth, Newcastle University at paul.benneworth@newcastle.ac.uk

RSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2009

The RSA Annual Conference 2009, on the theme of "Understanding and Shaping Regions: Spatial, social and Economic futures" takes place from 6-8 April 2009 in Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium. The conference will have a vibrant mix of plenary sessions interspaced with roundtables, special sessions and workshops. Topics to be addressed as part of this three-day event include:

- Regional policy and evaluation
- Labour markets, employability, worklessness and migration
- City regions, governance and democracy
- Tourism, innovation and local development
- Economic restructuring
- Social inequality, health and well-being – regional perspectives
- Mobilities and connectivities – drivers for change.

For further details on this event, contact the Regional Studies Association at events@rsa-ls.ac.uk or telephone +44 (0)1323 899 698

3. Upcoming Events

• PRESENTATIONS/WORKSHOPS/PAPERS

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Seminar title: "Analysis of Spatial Disparities by a Structural Equation Model"

Date: 18 December 2008

Venue: ESRI, Whitaker Square, Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin 2

Time: 16.00

A presentation by Professor Peter Nijkamp, Free University Amsterdam.

For further details see www.esri.ie

THE STATISTICAL AND SOCIAL INQUIRY SOCIETY OF IRELAND

Seminar title: "Exploring the economic geography of Ireland"

Date: 11th December 2008

Venue: The Royal Irish Academy, 19 Dawson Street, Dublin 2.

Time: 6.00p.m.

A presentation by Dr. Edgar Morgenroth, The Economic and Social Research Institute.

For further details see <http://www.ssis.ie/meeting.php>

COMBAT POVERTY AGENCY

Seminar title: "Where Next? Mapping and Understanding the Post First Degree Destinations of Mature disadvantaged Students in Three Higher Degree Institutions"

Date: 5th December 2008

Venue: Combat Poverty Agency, Conyngham Road, Islandbridge, Dublin 8

A Presentation by Dr. Ted Fleming, NUI Galway; Dr. Andrew Loxley, Trinity College Dublin; Aidan Kenny, DIT; and Fergal Finnegan, NUI Maynooth

Seminar title: "Living around the Poverty Line"

Date: 9th December 2008

Venue: Combat Poverty Agency, Conyngham Road, Islandbridge, Dublin 8

A presentation by Dr. Micheál Collins, Trinity College Dublin

Seminar title: "Evolving Local Government and Social Partnership – Enhancing Social Inclusion"

Date: 12th December 2008

Venue: Combat Poverty Agency, Conyngham Road, Islandbridge, Dublin 8

A presentation by Chris McInerney, University of Limerick.

All Combat Poverty Agency presentations take place in the Board and commence at 12.30p.m. Tea/coffee and sandwiches are provided.

For further details contact: email research@combatpoverty.ie

• UPCOMING CONFERENCES

THE FUTURE OF IRELAND'S ENVIRONMENT

Date: 3 December 2008

Venue: The ESRI, Whitaker Square, Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin 2

The ESRI and Teagasc, funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, have been working to extend the well-known ESRI forecasts of the economy to include emissions and resource use. This project, for national level, is now completed; with projections of waste generation, energy use and emissions to air from 20 sectors for the period 2009-2025 now in place. This event presents the methods used, the results and policy implications. Attendance at this conference is free of charge with registration a necessity for planning purposes.

For further details see: www.esri.ie

ACHIEVING BALANCED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: DYNAMIC REGIONS, SPATIAL STRATEGIES AND COLLABORATION

Date: 22-23 January 2009

Venue: Radisson SAS Hotel, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal

The fourth annual conference of the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) will consider the impact of spatial strategies and designated growth centres – such as Gateways – in the promotion and achievement of balanced regional and local development. As well as focusing on the island of Ireland, the conference will also consider recent development in regional development policy and practice in England, Scotland and Wales. Confirmed speakers include Grant Duncan, Wales Spatial Plan Unit; Jim McKinnon, Planning Division, The Scottish Government; Eike Ndiweni-Muller, Department for Communities and Local

Government, England; Brian Callanan, Shannon Development; and Gerrit Knapp, University of Maryland.

For further details contact: Patricia McAllister at p.mcallister@qub.ac.uk or log on to www.iclrd.org

IRELANDS WATER: WHAT IS THE REAL COST?

Date: 19-20 February 2009

Venue: Woodlands Hotel, Adare, Co. Limerick

The Mid-West Regional Authority will hold its 15th Annual Conference on 19-20 February 2009 in the Woodlands House Hotel, Adare, Co. Limerick. The theme of the conference is *Ireland's Water - what is the real cost?*

For further details see: www.mwra.ie

ICEIRD 2009 – INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP, INNOVATION AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Date: 24-25 April 2009

Venue: Thessaloniki, Greece

The objective of ICEIRD 2009 is to establish an effective channel of communication between policy makers, government agencies, academic and research institutions and persons concerned with the latest research, scientific development and practice in innovation and regional development. Topics that are of currency, relevance and significance for national competitiveness as well as sustainable, robust, and equitable regional development will be discussed. ICEIRD 2009 is being organised in conjunction with the 2009 Annual Technology Innovation International (TII) Conference, hosted by SEERC, the South-East European Research Centre.

For further details contact: ICEIRD2009@seerc.org

• CALL FOR PAPERS

UNEQUAL PLACES: PLANNING AND TERRITORIAL COHESION

Date: 1-3 April 2009

Venue: School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape, Newcastle University

Submission Date for Abstracts: 15th December 2008

The theme of the annual Planning Research conference is Unequal Places; with key debates focusing on in whose favour the planning system operates. This includes considering the inter-relationships between policy interventions in the fields of planning, environmental policy, education, health, design and infrastructure management. Track themes for this event include:

- Equality, Inclusion and social cohesion
- European Planning and Territorial cohesion
- Urban and Rural Regeneration
- Planning and Governance
- Mobility and Accessibility
- Planning Education
- Cities and International Development

Anyone interested in submitting an abstract should send it by email to conference.apl@ncl.ac.uk; with abstracts being no more than 300 words. For an informal discussion about this event, email Geoff Vigar at G.I.Vigar@ncl.ac.uk

For further details see: www.apl.ncl.ac.uk/aboutus/unequalplaces.html

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2009: FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

Date: 13-15 May 2009

Venue: Cyprus

Submission Date for Abstracts: As soon as possible (no fixed date)

Organised by the Wessex Institute of Technology UK and the University of Thessaly, Greece, the fourth International conference on Sustainable Development and Planning will address the need for integrated regional development that is based on the principles of sustainability. Problems in planning are often connected with uneven development, deterioration of the quality of the urban life and destruction of the environment. This conference will be of interest to planners, environmentalists, economists, policy-makers, governmental officials and academics. Conference topics include:

- Regional Planning
- Environmental Impact Assessment
- Social and Cultural Issues
- Transportation
- Waste Management
- Politics and Sustainability
- Indicators of Sustainability

Abstracts, of no more than 300 words, should be sent by email to Jenna Solanki at jsolanki@wessex.ac.uk or by webmail at www.wessex.ac.uk/sustain09 as soon as possible.

For further details see: www.wessex.ac.uk

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A CHALLENGE FOR EUROPEAN RESEARCH

Date: 26-28 May 2009

Venue: Brussels

Submission Date for Papers: 15th January 2009

Being organised by the European commission DG Research, this conference recognises that one of the rationales for, and the purpose of funding R&D, using EU monies is to serve EU policy needs while also strengthening the scientific base of EU industry and reinforcing its competitiveness. With increasing emphasis being placed on climate change and clean energy, European research is contributing to sustainable development. Coming close to the mid-term of the FP7 programme, this conference will take stock of the progress made so far and identify ways and means for putting the European research system at the service of sustainable development going forward. Papers can be of three kinds:

- Presentation of highly specialised discoveries/outstanding inventions relevant to sustainable development
- Reflection on the challenges of sustainable development
- Proposals on how to strengthen European Research in the perspective of sustainable development.

Papers of approximately 4000 words should be submitted electronically as pdf files to rtd-sd-conference@ec.europa.eu

For further details see: http://ec.europa.eu/research/sd/conference_en.html

If you have a submission or suggestion on any upcoming events, seminars, presentations or conferences and would like them to be included in a future edition, please email newsletter@regionalstudies.ie

4. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME: REGIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

The Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development is now seeking funding applications for transnational collaborative projects between regional research-driven clusters on the theme of 'Regions of Knowledge'. Projects should support economic competitiveness through enhancing the sustainable use of natural resources and the man-made environment. This strand of FP7 has a budget of €16.15 million. Deadline for receipt of applications is 27 January 2009. **For further details see**

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.CapacitiesDetailsCallPage&call_id=167

If you are aware of, or your organisation is responsible for the administration of, funding opportunities and you would like them to be included in a future edition, please email newsletter@regionalstudies.ie

5. Publications of Interest

• BOOKS (incl. CHAPTERS)

Title: Turning Territorial Diversity into Strength: Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion

Author(s): European Commission

Date Published: October 2008

Publisher details: European Commission

Published in October, the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion argues that the territorial diversity of the EU is a vital asset that can contribute to the sustainable development of the EU as a whole. For this diversity to become a strength, the issue of cohesion must be addressed through focusing on new themes, new relationships, new forms of cooperation and new partnerships. Territorial cohesion is, the report states, "about ensuring the harmonious development of these places and about making sure their citizens are able to make the most of inherent feature of these territories". The unique settlement pattern of the EU has implications for future growth and balanced development. Competitiveness, for example, is dependent on making best use of territorial assets but also on establishing linkages with other territories so that common assets are used in a coordinated and sustainable manner. The document poses a number of questions for our consideration:

- What is the most appropriate definition for territorial cohesion?
- Is there a need for new forms of territorial cohesion?
- Is there a role for the EU in promoting territorial cohesion?
- Should areas with specific geographical features receive special policy measures?
- How can coordination between territorial and sectoral policies be improved?
- How can the desired level of participation be achieved?

Comments are invited by the European Commission on this Green Paper; all comments should be submitted by 28 February 2009. A copy of this Paper can be downloaded, free of charge, as a pdf document. **For further details see:**

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/terco/paper_terco_en.pdf

Title: Environmental Goods and Services Sector on the Island of Ireland

Author(s): InterTradelreland & Forfás

Date Published: October 2008

Publisher details: InterTradelreland & Forfás

“The island of Ireland, in common with the rest of the international community, faces significant environmental challenges as it seeks to reduce its carbon footprint”. So argues the latest report by InterTradelreland, published jointly with Forfás. It goes on to state that where we have challenges, we have business opportunities. The report estimates the environmental goods and services sector as having a market value of €3.6billion on the island of Ireland. Through compliance with environmental regulations, rising energy costs, increased awareness and green public procurement, this sector has experienced double-digit growth in recent years. And despite the current economic climate, it is argued that this growth trend will continue. This research report considers the market drivers, together with the strengths and weaknesses of a number of sub-sectors, within the environmental goods and services sector and identifies the most promising areas of growth; for example, renewable energies; waste management, recovery and recycling; and environmental consultancy. **For further details see:**

<http://www.intertradeireland.com/module.cfm/opt/29/area/Publications/page/Publications/down/yes/id/423>

• WORKING PAPERS/DOCUMENTS

Title: The regional dimension of taxes and public expenditure in Ireland

Author(s): E. Morgenroth (ESRI, Dublin)

Date Published: October 2008

In Ireland as in many other countries there has been an ongoing debate on the nature, degree and trends of regional imbalance, which has led to substantial research output. While much is now known about these trends, the degree to which they are ameliorated by existing public policies has not been systematically examined. This paper considers two aspects of public policy namely the fiscal system and public expenditure. In particular regional government accounts are constructed, which identify the level of taxation, subsidisation and public expenditure at the regional level. These are then used to identify the degree of regional re-distribution. That analysis confirms that the fiscal system does reduce relative income differences in Ireland. **For further details see:**

http://www.esri.ie/publications/latest_publications/view/index.xml?id=2660

If you wish to have a recently published book/paper listed in this section of future newsletters, please e-mail details formatted as above to newsletter@regionalstudies.ie

6. An Introduction to the Mid-West Regional Authority

In each edition of the RSA e-newsletter we plan to briefly profile a body working in the area of regional policy in Ireland. Thanks to Liam Conneally and Marie Collins, Mid-West Regional Authority (MWRA) for their assistance in preparing this profile.

Established in January 1994, the Mid-West Regional Authority is one of eight Regional Authorities set up under the Local Government Act 1991 (Regional Authorities) (Establishment) Order 1993. The key functions of the Mid-West Regional Authority include:

1. Promotion of co-operation, joint action etc. between local authorities, public authorities and/or others.
2. Reviewing the overall development needs of the region and the making of statements on them as appropriate, and keeping under review the provision of public services in the region.
3. Preparing Regional Planning Guidelines to which all Planning Authorities in the region must have regard.

4. Reviewing the County Development Plans of local authorities within the region and adjoining regions.
5. Provision of proposals, advice, recommendations or information to Government in relation to applications for E.U. assistance.
6. Provision of Secretariat to Government appointed Shannon Airport Marketing Consultative Committee.

MEMBERSHIP: The MWRA membership comprises 27 elected representatives from the constituent local authorities of Clare, Limerick & North Tipperary County Councils and Limerick City Council. Twenty-six members are nominated by the four constituent local authorities and one member is represented by the Committee of the Regions (CoR). The Regional Authority is assisted by two committees, namely an Operational Committee and an EU Operational Committee on matters relating to its functions.

MID-WEST REGION: As one of Ireland's eight statutory regions, the Mid-West Region covers approximately 10% of the national land area and population of the country. The Region faces the Atlantic Sea Board with considerable maritime influences; the Shannon passes through the Mid-West forming a distinctive corridor and unifying force in the character of the area. Much of the rural areas are grown in pasturelands with uplands particularly around the fringes of the Region. The Mid-West Region is a relatively diverse entity, encompassing areas of strong urban growth particularly the Limerick/Shannon Gateway, including the regional capital of Limerick City, Shannon Airport, Ennis Hub Town and third-level education institutions in Limerick and Thurles.

In 2006 the region had a population of 360,651, which is expected to grow to 451,764 by 2020, as per National population projections. Limerick is a vibrant, modern city and, combined with the rural hinterland, the region offers an excellent quality of life. The attractiveness of the Mid-West as a location for industry is demonstrated by the large number of foreign-owned plants that have been established in the region. Indeed, employment resulting from foreign direct investment now accounts for more than half the regions total manufacturing base. Industry in the region is centred on the gateway of Limerick/Shannon and hub town of Ennis, where the industrial base is predominately light industry such as electronics, instruments, metals and engineering. The region is also particularly strong in the ICT and Life Sciences sectors and it also has a number of niche players in Financial Services. Food processing is particularly important in North Tipperary, where pharmaceuticals and healthcare also have a presence. The existing base of companies is performing well and has evolved to meet the challenges of globalisation and of Ireland's transition from a low cost economy.

The region has a number of locations that are attractive to industry, including the Shannon Industrial Estate (the largest location of industrial activity outside of Dublin), Limerick University, and the National Technological Park located at Plassey, beside the University. Shannon Airport is a major gateway for the western seaboard with terminal traffic of over 3.5 million passengers annually. The deep water of the Shannon Estuary rivals Dublin and Cork with over 8 million tonnes of cargo annually.

REGIONAL VISION: In 2004, the Mid-West Regional Authority published the *Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines/Regional Economic Strategy*. The Strategy sets out a 12year regional development strategy and regional planning guidelines (RPGs) for the Mid-West Region within the framework of the government's *National Spatial Strategy* and other national, regional and local strategies. Over the next twenty years, the people, organisations and communities of the Mid-West wish to create a region of worldclass excellence for working, learning, leisure and living. The key mechanisms that need to be activated to achieve this are the creation of a vision, the provision of connectivity, of world class places and products and of support for enterprise enablers, all within the context of balance and sustainability.

In accordance with the Planning & Development Act 2000, the Regional Authority will undertake a review of the RPGs in 2008/2009 with revised guidelines available in 2010. The revised Regional Planning Guidelines will take into account:

- the latest population and economic trends;

- an updated settlement strategy with specific and national/regionally consistent city/county level forecasts for future development plan reviews,
- the latest infrastructure priorities taking account of the short to medium term outlook under the NDP; and
- relevant legislative and policy initiative requirements such as Strategic Environmental Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment, the Water Framework Directive through River Basin Management Plans and Climate Change Strategies.

REGIONAL ISSUES: There are many issues are facing the Mid-West Region today and the Regional Authority is very active in its coordination role working closely with key regional & local agencies in delivering coordinated action and solutions:

Shannon International Airport: The MWRA provides the Secretariat to the Shannon Airport Marketing Consultative Committee. This committee supervises the marketing of Shannon Airport but more importantly looks at the contributing factors to a successful airport such as transport, tourism product, industry etc. and as such makes a valuable contribution to the preparation of the various tourism, industrial and transportation policies in the Mid-West Region and the West of Ireland generally. In 2006 the Mid-West Regional Authority adopted the Tourism and Economic Development Plan for Shannon Airport in light of Open Skies. The purpose of the plan was to consider the issues impacting on Shannon Airport and to present a focused Action Plan to assist the airport and the wider Mid-West region to adapt to the new circumstances. In November 2008 the Minister of Transport announced the implementation of full US Pre-Clearance facilities at Shannon Airport, the first such facility in Europe, which will bring substantial business and job creation to the airport and surrounding region.

Land-Use Planning & Transportation: Limerick City Council is the lead authority in preparing the Mid-West Area Strategy Plan (MWASP) 2010-2040. The objective of MWASP is to provide and integrated transport and land use plan and set of guidelines for the promotion of sustainable development in existing urban and rural centres within the region. MWASP will inform NDP reviews, future RPG, NSS reviews and local development plans by identifying the region's strategic transportation and land-use requirements for the next 30 years.

Regional Retail Strategy: The Mid-West Region has experienced a significant increase in retail and allied development throughout the region, but more particularly in the Limerick/Shannon Gateway. Significant increases in consumer activity, population growth, investment opportunities in retail development, improved transport and infrastructural links have had a significant effect on retail development throughout the region. This strategy will comprise a review of the existing retail strategy to take into account the future potential for the sustainable development of retail offer in the region, in accordance with changing demographics, spatial development and consumer and investor demands.

Limerick Regeneration: The Regional Authority is working closely with the Limerick Regeneration Agencies to bring about a new vision and change to the socially and economically disadvantaged areas of Limerick City. Draft Masterplans have been prepared and are currently under consultation.

Regional Housing Strategy In accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 each Local Authority must prepare a Housing Strategy for inclusion in their Development Plan. In light of Limerick Regeneration, the three local authorities in the Mid-West Region will prepare a joint Regional Housing Strategy which will take into account the housing needs for the region including social and affordable housing.

Lough Derg: The Regional Authority currently coordinates and provides the secretariat to the Lough Derg Marketing Group which was re-established in 2005 to develop and implement a coherent marketing and development plan for the Lough Derg area. Central to the marketing strategy was the development of the Discover Lough Derg Website, www.discoverloughderg.ie.

The River Shannon: On direction from the Department of Environment and in compliance with the EU Water Framework Directive, Limerick County Council is lead partner on the Shannon River Basin

District Project (ShRBDP). The key objectives of this project is to maintain "high status" of waters where it exists; prevent any deterioration in the existing status of waters and; achieving at least "good status" in relation to all waters in the Shannon River Basin District by 2015. The Regional Authority is a member of the ShRBDP Working Group and a Master Plan is currently being drafted.

EUROPEAN ISSUES: The Mid-West Regional Authority is represented on the EU Committee of the Regions (CoR) in order to provide the EU with comments and opinions on EU policy from the perspective of the Mid-West Region. Where relevant, the MWRA makes submissions to the EU on emerging policy and directives.

The Authority is also involved in a number of EU research and development projects, including the CitizenFirst Project for which the MWRA were lead partner. The CitizenFirst Project, co-funded by the INTERREG IIIB North West Europe Programme, involved five European regions working together to improve citizen interaction with the public sector through ICT. Central to the project was the implementation of a number of eInclusion pilot projects across the regions, reaching out to groups that are currently being excluded from society by a lack of awareness, relevance and/or access in technology. In November 2008, the Mid-West Regional Authority and the CitizenFirst Project received further recognition for its valuable work by the European Commission, with the CitizenFirst Project receiving an eInclusion Award for its contribution to Inclusive Public Services. For more information on CitizenFirst visit www.citizen-first.net.

The Regional Authority has also been successful in an INTERREG IVB Atlantic Area proposal on the area of Water Sports, promotion and development. The Project will begin implementation in early 2009; with the region working closely with other European Regions, the Irish Sailing Association and the Irish Canoe Union.

NATIONAL ISSUES: The Authority addresses national issues of relevance to the social, economic, cultural and environmental development of the Mid-West Region. The Authority also prepares position papers on issues of concern for the attention of Government departments. For example, the Mid-West Regional Authority prepared its response to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government's *Green Paper on Local Government Reform – Stronger Local Democracy, Options for Change* April 2008. Other recent submissions by the MWRA include the Department of Transport's *2020 Vision – Sustainable Travel and Transport*; Department of Communications Consultation on Next Generation Broadband; and the DoEHLG's draft Flood Risk Assessment Guidelines. The MWRA also has a role in monitoring the implementation of the *National Development Plan 2007-2013*. It is currently represented on the Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme and the NDP Human Capital Investment Operational Committee.

FUTURE WORK: The Regional Authority will continue to follow-up on existing and ongoing activities already mentioned in this synopsis. The Authority furthermore hopes and expects to participate in INTERREG IV and Framework Programmes.

FURTHER DETAILS: on the Mid-West Regional Authority and its work, the RPGs or Shannon Airport Marketing Consultative Committee are available through contacting the office on +353 67 33197; via email info@mwra.ie; or online at www.mwra.ie.

7. Regional Policy: What's New?

BORDER REGION TO BENEFIT FROM TELECOMS STATE AID

The European Commission has approved up to €30million of joint UK and Irish State Aid to provide direct international underwater telecommunications connections to/from Northern Ireland and the Irish Border region. This will entail linking Letterkenny and Monaghan to Derry/Londonderry where the submarine cable will terminate. The objective of this investment is to being the cost of international 'backhaul connectivity' services – that is linkages between

the backbone and 'edge' of the telecommunications network – in border counties into line with that of major urban areas. This financial assistance will help to offset the impediment of the border to doing business. For further details see:

<http://www.publictechnology.net/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=17485> (Source: Irish Regions Office, 2008).

EUROPEAN COMMISSION CALLS FOR GREATER EFFORTS TO FACILITATE INDUSTRIAL CLUSTERS

A communication published by the European Commission in October 2008 has called for greater efforts to facilitate the emergence of industrial clusters; the argument being that these have the potential to be world-class entities to drive economic development. Currently, there are an estimated 2000 industrial clusters in Europe comprising groups of firms, related economic actors and research institutions that are located in close proximity to each other. These clusters have over the years developed specialised expertise, services, resources, suppliers and skills. However, these can often be fragmented and without the necessary critical mass and innovation to sustain them. Improved synergies are needed going forward which will strengthen these clusters and address the growing challenges of poor cluster management, lack of knowledge transfer, inconsistent cluster policies at a national and EU level and low levels of transnational cooperation. To redress these deficits, the Commission proposes the establishment of training programmes on a pilot basis which will act as a platform for cooperation between cluster managers. For further details see:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/innovation/doc/com_2008_652_en.pdf (Source: Irish Regions Office, 2008).

NEW LOCAL AUTHORITIES NETWORK

The Confederation of Intermediate Local Authorities (CEPLI) has been established over the summer of this year as a European Network to develop a direct dialogue and collaboration between EU institutions and the local and regional levels; the emphasis being on influencing future policy direction. Founding members include local and regional government institutions from Belgium, France, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Greece. The establishment of the CEPLI coincided with a European seminar on "the role of local authorities in the strategies of the European Union and the regional cohesion policy". The CEPLI aims to use both formal and informal channels to promote the exchange of good practices – it sees itself as a model of cooperation and exchange by building on the principles of subsidiarity and territorial cohesion. For a copy of the Charter of the CEPLI, see:

http://www.partenalia.eu/documents/projet_de_charte_CEPLI_EN.pdf

74% OF EU'S POPULATION NOW LIVING IN CITIES

The Urban Audit for 2006-2007, including data from 321 cities across the EU and a further 36 in turkey, Norway and Switzerland has just been published. This is a rich source of comparable statistics – with over 300 indicators used to consider issues such as demography, environment, transport and civic engagement. With 74% of the EU's population now living in cities, it is recognized that understanding what is happening environmentally, socially and economically in urban areas is vital to policy makers at all levels. The Audit, which has been carried out since 1999, provides policy makers, private businesses and anyone interested in quality of life issues with the opportunity to access a vast amount of quantitative data; the current audit contains over 400,000 individual statistics. Results, for examples, highlight that a number of towns and cities in Central and Eastern Europe are facing a population decline while new environmental data indicate that while a number of EU cities are recycling a large proportion of their waste (up to 80% in Dresden and Frankfurt am Main), others are still incinerating up to 90% of theirs. For further details see: www.urbanaudit.org

8. Contacting the RSA Newsletter

This is the sixth e-newsletter of the Irish Branch of the Regional Studies Association. There will be a further three e-Newsletters produced during 2009 and these will be circulated as follows:

April 2009
August 2009
November 2009.

If you have any queries regarding the newsletter, or any comments, suggestions or submissions for future editions (incl. details on upcoming events, publications of interest, job vacancies), please email newsletter@regionalstudies.ie

PLEASE NOTE: the closing date for receipt of submissions is the first day of the month of the next issue.

9. Membership of the RSA

Membership of the Association is open to all individuals and organisations with an interest in the analysis and development of regional policy.

The benefits of membership include nine issues of the international journal *Regional Studies*, four issues of *Regions: The Newsletter of the Regional Studies Association* (overall body), three issues of *Spatial Economic Analysis*, discount on other Routledge publications, access to Association events, and ability to participate in any local branch or section activities.

Membership is based on the calendar year. For the year 2008, membership costs are: Individual £74 (€113); Student £35 (€54); Associate Membership £56 (€85); Corporate £152 (€213). Further details and application forms can be found on the RSA international website: www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk

10. Current Irish Committee Members

The current RSA committee for 2008 are: Micheál Collins, TCD (Chairman); Chris Van Egeraat, NUI Maynooth (Vice-Chairman); Patrick Collins, NUI Galway (Hon. Secretary); Edgar Morgenroth, ESRI (Hon. Treasurer); John McDonagh, NUI Galway; Des McCafferty, Mary Immaculate College, UL; Stephen Walsh, DIT; Mark Boyle, NUI Maynooth; David Hogan, Shannon Development; Gillian Slattery, Enterprise Ireland; David Meredith, Teagasc; Ronnie O'Toole, Northern Ireland Bank; Caroline Creamer, ICLRD/NIRSA, NUI Maynooth; Sean O'Riordain, NUI Maynooth; Philip O'Connor, Dublin Employment Pact; Louis Wildenboer, John Spain Associates, and Fergal Gough, Cork County Council.

The following are the contact details of the Association. We strongly encourage communication by e-mail.

RSA Chairman Micheál Collins: chairman@regionalstudies.ie

RSA Secretary Patrick Collins: secretary@regionalstudies.ie

Newsletter: newsletter@regionalstudies.ie

11. Joining/Leaving the RSA (Irish Branch) Mailing List

If you wish to have your details added to the RSA mailing list please e-mail the following address with the word "ADD" in the subject line: mailinglist@regionalstudies.ie

To have your details removed from the RSA mailing list please e-mail the following address with the word "REMOVE" in the subject line: mailinglist@regionalstudies.ie

The RSA updates its mailing list approximately once every six weeks.

A pdf copy of this newsletter is available on the RSA website at www.regionalstudies.ie