



Border, Midland & Western
Regional Assembly
Investing in Your Future

BMW REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

PROGRAMME OF WORK

2012



Ireland's EU Structural Funds
Programmes 2007 - 2013

Co-funded by the Irish Government
and the European Union



**EUROPEAN REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT FUND**

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Article 14 (3) of the Establishment Order, the Regional Assembly shall, as early as possible in each year, adopt a programme of work for that year. Accordingly, this programme of work sets out the key areas of work for the Border, Midland and Western Regional Assembly and its sub-committees for 2012. The programme of work builds on and extends the activities that were carried out in 2011.

The activities are set out in accordance with the principal responsibilities of the Regional Assembly, i.e.

- Managing the Regional Operational Programme 2007 – 2013;
- Monitoring the impact of EU expenditure and the National Development Plan in the BMW region;
- Co-ordinating the delivery of Public Services in the BMW region; and
- Ensuring that national policies take the regional dimension into account.

In addition, a number of activities in relation to operational issues, policy and research and the promotion of INTERREG Programmes are included. This document also includes a schedule of meetings, which may be subject to change.

The Regional Assembly will continue to participate fully in the Monitoring Committee for the Rural Development Programme 2007-13 and the ESF Human Capital Investment Programme 2007-13, the PEACE Programme and INTERREG Programmes (cross-border and transnational).

The two Assembly sub-committees - NDP and Regional and Rural Affairs, will continue to provide a forum for discussion on policy issues as well as a mechanism for reviewing the implementation of the BMW Regional Operational Programme and the Rural Development Programme.

PART TWO

DETAILS OF ACTIVITIES

1. Closure of the Regional Operational Programme 2000 – 2006

- Prepare detailed responses to any queries that may be raised by the EU Commission and/or its audit services arising from the Final ‘Closure’ Report on the BMW Regional OP 2000-06 submitted in September 2010.

2. Regional Operational Programme 2007 – 2013

2.1 Financial Management and Control

- Provide training and guidance seminars where required for Intermediary Bodies and Public Beneficiary Bodies on the Structural Funds IT System and on financial management and control regulations including publicity requirements;
- Provide forecasts of ERDF drawdown in 2012 and 2013 to the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform (Certifying Authority);
- Carry out verification spot-checks and submit certified payment claims to the Certifying Authority in respect of co-financed ERDF expenditure in respect of the 2007-2013 OP, to meet in full the 2012 certification requirement;
- Facilitate the financial operation audits of the 2007-2013 OP being carried out by the Audit Authority and collate management responses to audit queries/ reports;
- Liaise with the ERDF FCU (Audit Authority) in relation to the conduct of systems audits on co-financed Intermediary Bodies; and
- Update the systems description for the BMW Regional OP, following any programme revisions or re-designations of Department/Agency functions.
- Contribute to updates of the National Eligibility Rules and Public Procurement Guidelines as they apply to EU co-financed projects.
- Undertake the First Level Control function for Interreg Programmes where required by carrying out desk-based and on-site verification checks on expenditure declared by Irish programme participants.

2.2 Other Managing Authority Functions

- Ensure the full compliance with the Information and Publicity requirements in line with the OP-level Communications Action Plan and the Structural Funds Regulations;
- Prepare an Annual Implementation Report for 2011, for adoption by the OP Monitoring Committee and submit to the European Commission by the end of June 2011;
- Publish a beneficiaries list of all recipients of EU funding in the BMW OP, by the end of June 2012 on the BMW Assembly website;
- Manage the Technical Assistance priority which relates to expenditure incurred in the appraisal and monitoring of operations, OP, publicity, evaluation and audits and certain eligible costs of the Regional Authorities;
- Participate in the Annual Review Meeting with the EU Commission to examine the progress of the BMW Regional OP 2007-13;
- Oversee the implementation of the ERDF Gateways and Hubs Grant Scheme, verification of expenditure, payments to local authorities and preparations of B1, B2 and B3 declarations

2.3 Preparations for Structural Funds Programmes 2014-2020

Following the publication of the EU Commission's draft Structural Funds Regulations for the 2014-2020 period, at the end of 2011, the following actions will be undertaken in 2012:

- Prepare responses to draft proposals and liaise with the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform on responding to the proposals
- Co-operate with the Irish Regions office and the CPMR in co-ordinating responses to the Commission's proposals
- Participate in the review of the Regional Aid Guidelines (State Ads) for Ireland 2014-2020; and
- Commence preparatory works to meet ex ante conditionalities, smart specialisation etc.

3. Monitoring the Impact of the National and EU Programmes in the BMW Region

- Prepare comprehensive reports and documentation for the meeting of the BMW Regional Operational Programme Monitoring Committee in April/May 2011 and if required a further Monitoring Committee Meeting in Oct/Nov 2011
- Prepare Summary Reports for the meeting of the NSRF Monitoring Committee;
- Provide an input into the Monitoring Committees on which the BMW Regional Assembly is represented:
 - NSRF Monitoring Committee
 - Committee for coordination of funds
 - PEACE III
 - Interreg IVA
 - Rural Development Programme 2007-13
 - Human Capital Investment Programme (ESF)

4. Co-ordination of the Delivery of Public Services in the BMW Region

- Continue to support Lónra, the Regional Higher Education network in implementing their strategic plans;
- Organise a high profile conference in the BMW Region in April/May 2012 on a theme relevant to the BMW Regional OP. This will also ensure compliance with the EU requirement of a major information activity highlighting the EU contribution to the Regional Operational Programme;
- Communicate the role of the BMW Regional Assembly and the needs of the BMW Region to Government Departments, Regional Bodies, Local Authorities and State Agencies. Prepare a brochure for wide circulation, on the role and activities of the BMW Regional Assembly
- Where possible, address relevant conferences and workshops on the role and work of the Assembly;
- Examine, in consultation with the Western Development Commission, the scope for continued co-operation and co-ordination of activities;
- Continue formal links with the Association of Irish Regions, the Committee of the Regions and develop links with other EU regional networks including CPMR (Committee of Peripheral & Maritime Regions) and
- Liaise with the region's representative in the Irish Regions Office (IRO) Brussels in co-operation with the Association of Irish Regions.

5. Policy and Research

- Prepare policy submissions on behalf of the Assembly in response to public consultations by Government Departments and Agencies;
- Seek a meeting with the Taoiseach in 2012 to review the regional impact of the current economic environment. Prepare policy submissions in advance of meetings with the Taoiseach, Ministers and senior Government officials;
- Prepare research papers on areas relevant to the BMW Region working on a wide range of research projects and employing a variety of different research methodologies;
- Produce both written and oral briefs for colleagues, based on reviews of research evidence – draft the policy and socio-economic analysis chapter of the Annual Implementation Reports of the Regional Operational Programme;
- Monitor the implementation of national policies and regional policy and their impact upon the BMW Region;
- Keep up-to-date with developments in policy and attend relevant conferences and seminars to inform the activities of the Policy and Research Section;
- Contribute to the review of implementation of the National Reform Programme 2011-2013;
- Develop and implement objectives as identified under the Policy and Research Strategy for the BMW Region 2012;
- Deliver presentations at relevant settings on the Audit of Innovation Report, published in 2011;
- Submit an academic article to the Regional Studies Journal on the findings of the Audit of Innovation in collaboration with Dr. James Cunningham, Director of the Centre for Innovation and Structural Change, National University of Ireland, Galway.
- Manage the Assembly's role in the Interreg Atlantic Area funded project AtantKIS (Knowledge Intensive Services) and attend the final project seminar in Portugal in 2012.
- Represent the Assembly on in the metricireland initiative partnership which is comprised of NUIG, UL, Athlone IT, GMIT and IT Sligo. This project seeks to highlight and leverage services available in the Medical Technology sector from these third level institutions and make them available to the medical technology firms in the region.

- Manage the delivery of a web portal for the metricireland initiative – this is funded through the AtlantKIS programme and will be completed in early Spring 2012.
- Commission and publish an update of the Gateway Development Index in 2012, to track the progress of the designated Gateways;
- Represent the Regional Assembly on relevant policy bodies and at appropriate meetings of regional stakeholders: current Membership - Atlantic Gateway Initiative Steering Committee & CSO Enterprise Statistics Group;
- Participate in the preparation of proposals under the FP7 Regions of Knowledge call January 2012;
- Draft responses to Committee of the Regions opinions of relevance to the BMW Region and provide policy support and advice to the Assembly's member on the Committee; and
- Contribute to any reviews of Local/Regional Government that may take place in 2012

6. INTERREG Project Activities

6.1 INTERREG IVB Atlantic Area Programme

For the 2007 – 2013 programming period, the BMW Regional Assembly is the National Contact point and first level control authority (responsible for expenditure verification) for the Interreg IVB Atlantic Area Programme.

The BMW Regional Assembly will, during 2012:

- Host the Atlantic Area Programme Annual Conference on The Marine Economy - a key component of the EU Integrated Strategy for the Atlantic Area – Dublin, 7 February 2012.
- Participate in meetings of the Atlantic Area Monitoring Committee and National Contact Meetings;
- Promote the Interreg IV Atlantic Area programme and provide support to Irish project partners in completing approved trans-national projects;
- Host Information Events on the programme and organise Financial Management seminars to assist Irish partners with the online claims system;
- Undertake the first level control function by carrying out desk-based and on-site verification checks on expenditure declared by Irish programme participants;
- Liaise with the Programme Managing Authority based in Oporto, Portugal;
- Participate along with the S & E Assembly in the approved ATLANTKIS project which is led by the Government of Navarra in Spain; and
- Work with SEUPB to encourage cooperation between Partners and in Ireland & Northern Ireland.

6.2 INTERREG IVB Northern Periphery Programme

The Northern Periphery Programme 2007-2013 promotes trans-national co-operation with Scottish, Nordic and Scandinavian countries. For the 2007 – 2013 programming period, the BMW Regional Assembly is the Regional Contact point and first level control authority (responsible for expenditure verification) on the Programme.

The BMW Regional Assembly will, during 2012:

- Host the Presidency of the Programme in 2012.
- Participate in Programme meetings including Monitoring and other programming committee meetings;
- Act as Regional Contact Point for the Programme in Ireland;
- Disseminate information on the programme in Ireland and provide information on programme priorities, eligible area, calls for proposals etc;
- Organise Information events on calls for proposals and other publicity events.
- Undertake the first level control function by carrying out desk-based and on-site verification checks on expenditure declared by Irish project partners based in the BMW region;
- Organise and Facilitate meetings of Irish Regional Advisory Groups (RAG) to oversee project applications;
- Work with SEUPB to encourage cooperation between Partners and in Ireland & Northern Ireland.
- Assist project partners in developing project ideas and identifying appropriate partners throughout the eligible territory; and
- Liaise closely with the Joint Technical Secretariat of the programme based in Copenhagen, Denmark.

6.3 INTERREG IVC Programme

The Interreg IVC Programme promotes public sector co-operation projects across the entire EU in order to exchange experiences and transfer of good practice.

During 2012 the BMW Assembly will:-

- Promote the Interreg IVC Programme and provide advice and assistance to beneficiaries;
- Carry out the first level of financial control (certification) for project partner expenditure in the BMW Region; and
- Participate, as appropriate, in Programme Monitoring and Steering Committee Meetings.

Across all transnational and interregional programmes, the BMW Regional Assembly will continue to work with other contact points and the SEUPB on programme management issues, project development matters and co-operate on the organisation of events.

The Assembly will also consider making applications to the Cross Border Strand of Interreg.

6.4 TESLA Project - Interreg North West Europe Programme

During 2012 the BMW Regional Assembly will act as lead partner for the TESLA project which is a major transnational Innovation support project involving eight partners from Ireland, the UK, Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands. The project which is funded by the Interreg North West Europe Programme will assist high potential start up firms in each of the partner regions to grow and internationalise through a programme of transnational innovation support pilot actions. The project has a total value of €3.8m and will build upon the positive results achieved by the ERDF Innovative Actions Programmes implemented previously by the Assembly.

The Irish Partners in the consortium are the BMW Regional Assembly, Lionra and Cork Institute of Technology. The partnership is comprised of Public, Private and Higher Education partner organisations.

6.5 MARNET – IVB Atlantic Area Programme

In 2012 The BMW Regional Assembly will also lead a Marine co-operation project entitled MARNET (Marine Atlantic Regions Network). This transnational co-operation project worth €1.3m involving Regional Authorities and Research Institutes in Spain, France, Portugal, Scotland and Ireland will, for the first time map the value of the Atlantic Marine Economy by developing a suite of comparative marine indicators. As a key component of the Economies of the Atlantic regions, the marine sector delivers substantial economic added value to these regions in terms of tourism, shipping, renewable energies and fisheries for example. MARNET will value the net worth of the sector. The project is viewed by the Atlantic Area Programme as being of strategic importance to valuing all marine activities funded in the five member states of the programme. Moreover the results of the research conducted will be used by Local Authorities and other relevant stakeholders to pilot innovative industry based initiatives. The Socio Economic Marine Research Unit at NUI Galway which is supported by the Irish Marine Institute will co-ordinate the scientific work on the project. The Project has also been endorsed by the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) who will participate in the broader partnership framework.

7. North-South Co-Operation

- Continue the activities of the North-South Committee of the Assembly in reviewing the North-South dimension of the Regional Operational Programme;
- Liaise with cross-border bodies and institutions including the Northern Ireland Assembly, North-South Ministerial Council, and other cross border bodies in relation to their activities;
- Continue the close links with the Special EU Programmes Body in relation to managing authority functions, financial management and major projects;
- Continue to participate on the PEACE III and INTERREG IVA Monitoring and Steering Committees and other joint committees and working groups;
- Compile Reports on the extent of North-South co-operation under the BMW Regional OP at the request of SEUPB.

8. ERDF Gateways and Hubs Fund

The BMW Regional Assembly is the Body responsible for the €17.15m ERDF Gateways and Hubs Fund under the Regional OP 2007-13.

These responsibilities in 2012 will include:

- Processing of local authority payment claims;
- Verification of expenditure and issuance of payments;
- Certification of expenditure on the EU SF IT System;
- Reporting to the OP Monitoring Committee; and
- Providing information and publicity for the Scheme

9. Operational Issues

- Prepare and publish an Annual Report on the activities of the Regional Assembly in 2011;
- Develop and implement the Assembly's Communications Strategy by holding regular meetings of the Communications Steering Group, identifying opportunities for coverage, drafting regular press release on relevant issues of public interest and focusing on dissemination and pick-up to national media outlets and a wider distribution of press releases.
- Continue to update the BMW Assembly's web-site to make it more attractive and user-friendly

- Implement the Official Languages Act 2003 as it relates to the Assembly;
- Update the work place Safety Statement and keep it under review;
- Provide staff specific training in relation to expenditure certification, website maintenance, Human Resource Management, Freedom of Information, IT and other areas that are necessary.
- Compile a Training Needs Analysis in January/February based on PDPs.
- Co-operate with the Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly on operational issues;
- Respond to Freedom of Information requests, as they arise, in accordance with the relevant legislation, and continue to participate in the FOI network;
- Continue to respond to requests for information on sources of funding;
- Support the joint sub-committees which were established in the light of the structure of the programmes under the NDP 2007 – 2013, Rural Development Programme 2007 - 2013 and of the Regional Operational Programme 2007 – 2013;
- Support representatives on all Monitoring Committees;
- Continue to participate in the following committees:
 - Rural Development Programme Monitoring Committee
 - Peace III Monitoring Committee
 - Interreg IV A Monitoring Committee
 - Seafood Development OP Monitoring Committee
 - Lónra Regional Higher Education Network Management and Operational Committee
 - Interreg IVB (Atlantic Area) Programme Monitoring and Steering Committees
 - Interreg IVB (Northern Periphery) Programme Monitoring Committee
 - Freedom of Information Public Service Users Network
 - Local Government Management Services Board HR Committee
 - Interreg IVC Programme Monitoring Committee as appropriate
 - Atlantic Gateway Initiative Steering Committee
 - COMREG Consumer Panel
- Facilitate delegations and study groups visiting the Assembly and the Region;
- Arrange the use of Assembly facilities by regional and other bodies;
- Prepare Financial Statements for 2011;

- Prepare Estimates for 2013;
- Provide comprehensive financial administrative support for all Assembly activities.
- Provide assistance and policy support to the BMW Committee of the Regions members as required;
- Continue to disseminate information to the Regional Authorities and their EU Operational Committees;
- Facilitate attendance at relevant conferences by Assembly members;
- Participate in the EU Commission Open Days event October 2012;
- Report on the Local Action Plan under the Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (Croke Park Agreement);

PART THREE

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

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Month	BMW Regional Assembly	North/South Co-operation Committee	Joint Sub – Committees	Monitoring Committee
January	27th January	27 th January		
February			24 th February	
March	23rd March	23rd March		
April				
May			11 th May	
June	(TBC) (Joint BMW and S&E Meeting)			
July	13 th July (AGM)			
August				
September	21st September	21st September	7 th September	
October			19th October	October
November	16 th November (Estimates)	16 th November		
December				

Meetings	BMW Regional Assembly
Meeting 1: January	Adoption of Programme of Work 2012 Overdraft Approval
Meeting 2: March	Adoption of Accounts Adoption of Annual Report 2011 Progress Report on BMW Regional OP
Meeting 3: June	BMW & S&E Joint Meeting
Meeting 4: July	AGM – Election of Cathaoirleach and Leas Cathaoirleach
Meeting 5: September	Speaker: To be confirmed Adoption of Policy Papers
Meeting 6: November	Consideration of Estimates 2013 Review of Implementation of BMW Operational Programme Review Programme of Work

Meetings	Joint Sub-Committees
Meeting 1: February	Agree Sub-Committee Programme of Work 2012 Identification of specific policy issues
Meeting 2: May	Presentation by Implementing Bodies Progress Report on Regional Sub-Programmes Feedback from Monitoring Committee Meeting
Meeting 3: September	Presentation on Regional Sub-programme by Implementing Body Policy Formulation on relevant regional issues
Meeting 4: October	Progress Report on Regional Sub-programme Presentation on Regional Sub-programme by Implementing Body Policy formulation on relevant regional issues

Meetings	North - South Committee
Meeting 1: January	Speaker from cross-border body
Meeting 2: March	Speaker from cross-border body
Meeting 3: September	Speaker from cross-border body
Meeting 4: November	Speaker from cross-border body