

## **EU RDI Workplan**

### **1. Introduction**

The West Midlands European Strategy (WMES) was published in Spring 2008 and focuses on the region's engagement with Europe, what our priorities should be and how we intend to make a success of them.

Over the past two decades most of the day-to-day European activity undertaken within the West Midlands has focussed on the use of EU Structural Funds, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). Many parts of the region have benefited greatly from resources made available under ERDF while all parts of the West Midlands have been eligible for ESF resources. The retention of these Funds for 2007-2013, albeit on a reduced scale, means that continued attention will need to be given to the most effective use of these monies in the forthcoming period.

However, the strategy looks beyond Structural Funds and makes the case for a more comprehensive approach to European working. It has been drafted at a key moment in the EU's development, as Europe strives to fulfil the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs and to adopt to the challenges posed by climate change and wider impact of globalisation. During 2008-2009 the EU will conduct a root-and-branch review of its budget to suggest how it can be best aligned with the Union's policy priorities. These are among the matters that form the background and context to this strategy.

The West Midlands European Strategy focuses on the following four priorities:

- maximising the opportunities of the Single Market
- becoming a more successful player within the innovation, research and development arena
- responding to the challenges of climate change and environmental protection
- engaging with the social cohesion dimension

### **2. Engaging with Europe's Research and Innovation Agenda**

This workplan deals with the second priority – engaging with Europe's research and innovation agenda. The Strategy seeks to highlight the linkages between key developments at the European level with regional priorities in the West Midlands.

## 2.1 European Context

### Policy

Much policy development in this area is handled by Member State governments or national scientific and technical agencies. Nevertheless, there are research issues where there is an important regional dimension or where this dimension has been insufficiently developed while the promotion of Science Cities is attracting interest across Europe. The European Commission has put innovation and research on top of its agenda and for the first time the EU budget for R&D and innovation is larger than the CAP (Common Agriculture Policy) budget, traditionally the biggest EU spend.

One of the new major initiatives of the EC is the **Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)** designed to lift the innovative capacity of Europe. It is intended to develop links and partnerships between higher education, research institutes and companies, 'pooling' and 'integrating' resources, partners, disciplines within an EU dimension. EIT has a two-level structure:

- Governance framework: An independent 18 member Board will give strategic guidance to EIT. Operational base: Excellence driven partnerships known as Knowledge and Innovation Communities will be EIT's operational powerhouses, taking new ideas to the market.

### Programmes

The absolutely key EU funding stream for this activity is the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme (FP7). Its budget is huge: at more than €50 billion between 2007-2013 it represents the third largest element of EU expenditure. Its resources are bid for competitively, so a higher success rate for the region will be a signal that the West Midlands is becoming more competitive. Many of the core priorities of FP7 fit with the focus of the region's Innovation and Technology Council and the Birmingham Science City initiative. This reinforces the case for concentrating the major regional effort onto this Programme.

Alongside the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme, the EU is also running a number of smaller initiatives, which have an innovative focus and are particularly valuable for SMEs. The most significant of these is the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme which incorporates funding opportunities on the deployment of existing technologies around energy and ICT. Funds will also be available through the ERDF programme under the priority "Promoting Innovation and Research and Development".

One of the most significant elements of FP7 is its labour mobility strand – known as Marie Curie. This is designed to promote the mobility of researchers and young career professionals. With funding approaching €5 billion, Marie Curie represents a real opportunity to attract top quality research talent to the West Midlands.

## 2.2 West Midlands context

### Policies:

- **West Midlands Economic Strategy** – there is a particular focus on promoting and stimulating research and innovation in the strategy through a number of initiatives including the **Birmingham Science City initiative**.
- West Midlands **Innovation & Technology Council** has specified in the West Midlands **Regional Innovation Strategy** five priority areas on which the EU RDI activity focuses:
  - Energy (including Environment)
  - Digital Media and ICT
  - Advanced Materials
  - Health
  - Transport
- **Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)**- Professor Julia King, the Vice Chancellor at Aston University is the sole person from the UK on the Board. This is an added incentive for the West Midlands region for engaging with the EIT and its initiatives, particularly the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), the main vehicle by which the EIT is developing.

### Programmes:

- **FP7 - 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme (FP7)**, with a particular focus on:
  - Cooperation Programme – collaborative projects in the five ITC priority areas
  - People Programme – also called Marie Curie Actions
- **JTIs – Joint Technology Initiatives**
- **CIP – Competitiveness and Innovation Programme**
- **AAL – Ambient Assisted Living**
- **Interreg** – innovative strands of the programme, particularly Interreg IVB

### 3. Membership

EU RDI Group is chaired by Head of European Policy, AWM. The Group operates an open-tent membership bringing together all the key regional organisations involved in the European research agenda, all major regional HEI organisations, research companies like Qinetiq, Mira, Rapra or Ceram, and some local authorities. The Group is aimed at European research & funding officers as well as practitioners involved in research. The Group is facilitated by AWM's European Funding & Policy Officer.

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**West Midlands in Europe** – Richard Tufts is a key source of information on the latest policy and funding developments in Brussels.

**FP7 Advisor** – Xavier Rodde from the University of Birmingham is seconded to AWM to advise on the European Research & Development Awards (ERDA) and wider FP7 and R&D issues for EU RDI.

**EU Connects** - will provide advice and support to organisations in the West Midlands seeking to apply for EU trans-national funding. This is not focused on FP7, however, there will be a new officer providing support on the FP7 Marie Curie research mobility strand.

Monthly EU RDI meetings are held usually on a second or third Tuesday at AWM. Attendance varies from 15-25; on the distribution list there are over 70 contacts.

#### Meetings Schedule for January – June 2009

Date (Tuesdays)	Time	Venue
13 <sup>th</sup> January 2008	10.30am – 1pm	Rooms A & B Faraday Wharf
10 <sup>th</sup> February 2008	10.30am – 1pm	Room 1 &2, AWM
10 <sup>th</sup> March 2008	10.30am – 1pm	Boardroom, AWM
12 <sup>th</sup> May 2008	10.30am – 1pm	Boardroom, AWM
16 <sup>th</sup> June 2008	10.30am – 1pm	Boardroom, AWM

#### 4. Workplan

Based on the actions identified in the European strategy, past activity and the discussions in the EU RDI Group, the following workplan has been outlined in February 2008. Please see Report on EU RDI Activity :

Action	Expected activity	Lead Partner(s)	Funding Sources / Resources	Timescale
1.1.1	<b>Policy Area</b> – The Group will discuss and comment only on those EU policy issues that are important to the region (e.g. green transport). The region should decide which topics need a collective comment. This may be done through a temporary working group.	AWM		February 2008 - March 2009
1.1.2	<b>Strategic Area</b> – In the changing context where FP7 is now operational and its awareness in the region has been raised, there is an increased need for the Group to provide strategic guidance for regional organisations. The focus should be on connecting FP7 with other funding schemes and regional initiatives such as the Science City initiative, the clusters, high-tech corridors, etc. In a phrase, <b>the EU RDI Group will seek to mainstream the FP7 agenda in the key economic and innovation initiatives being undertaken in the region.</b>	AWM		February 2008 - March 2009
1.1.3	<b>Operational Area</b> - Providing information and financial support to FP7 and CIP applicants will still form the bulk of the Group's activity. The implementation of these objectives will be linked to the relevant European Strategy Actions under the Priority 2 (to promote submissions to the FP7 Cooperation Programme and Marie Curie Actions, and to support applications to CIP). In particular the Group will:	AWM	AWM	February 2008 - March 2009

<b>1. Inform and promote</b>	<u>Workshops/Seminars</u> - continue to organise FP7 events and focused seminars. Consider arranging series of FP7 master classes (on bid writing, budgeting, etc).			February 2008 - March 2009
	<u>Materials</u> – continue to request specific material on FP7, especially on new calls, and circulate these factsheets widely. Partners will look to WMiE supported by ERRIN to prepare this material.			February 2008 - March 2009
	<u>FP7 Website/Web portal</u> – establish a central point of information for FP7 and CIP, where regional partners can access all the documents prepared by WMiE, ERRIN and AWM.			February 2008 - March 2009
	<u>Working with WMiE</u> – continue to improve collaboration on FP7 and CIP with WMiE ensuring it becomes more focused and efficient. There will be a new emphasis on linking Birmingham Science City with other European science cities and raising its profile in Brussels.			February 2008 - March 2009
	<u>Working with ERRIN</u> – improve communication channels between ERRIN and the regional practitioners. Build up the clusters' involvement in the ERRIN Working Groups. Develop the ERRIN Officer's role in providing direct support to the clusters and other practitioners. Try to redirect the main focus of ERRIN from CIP more towards FP7.			February 2008 - March 2009
	<u>Measuring Success</u> - establish a baseline for measuring FP7 take up (e.g. number of bids and successful projects) as a measuring tool for the European Strategy.			February 2008 - March 2009

	<u>Other Funding</u> – explore opportunities offered by smaller EU programmes that can support research and development such as the Leonardo programme under Life Long Learning and the new ERDF Inter-regional Priority 4.			February 2008 - March 2009
	<u>Marie Curie Actions</u> – continue promotion of Marie Curie, particularly its industry-academia strand and the Initial Training Networks. Set up an additional resource at <u>EU Connects</u> to help Marie Curie applicants.			February 2008 - March 2009
<b>2. Provide support to applicants</b>	<u>Small Travel Grants</u> – continue running the grants and increase their promotion.			February 2008 - March 2009
	<u>ERDA</u> – extend the duration until 31 March 2009 and widen the scope of the grants to include all FP7 collaborative projects (large, medium & small) under the Cooperation Programme and some under the Marie Curie Actions (Industry-Academia and Initial Training Networks projects). Look into continuation of the award scheme beyond March 2009.			February 2008 - March 2009

#### UPCOMING ACTIVITY PLAN (Nov 08 – March 09)

- **EU RDI & ICT Cluster Conference, 20 November 08** (link with the ICT cluster conference. ICT NCP Peter Waters to present on 3 workshops. Case study on successful SME winning FP7 (Forensic Pathways). Sponsored by ICT Cluster.

- **3 December, FP7 NMP Info Day** (The Birmingham REP) – hosting a national event on the next Call on nanotechnology, materials & new production organised by UK NCP and sponsored by AWM.
- **9-10 December, Birmingham Science City event in Brussels** – organised by WMiE
- **EU RDI, 16 December 08 – New FP7 Calls** – consider inviting UKRO for brief overview on each topic (calls, brief contents, deadlines) to give a full spectrum.
- **EU RDI, 13 January 09 – Energy** – (FP7 & CIP IEE and JTI FCH First Call. Invite the NCP for Energy and possibly a speaker from the JTI Secretariat (via Professor Kendall). Science City's European dimension in Energy. Applying for energy collaborative projects - invite a researcher who has successfully done it. ERRIN Energy WG.
- **22 January – FP7 Training on How To Write a Competitive Proposal for FP7** – second all day training with Hyperion in Austin Courts for 150 people. Sponsored by AWM and EEN (Europe Enterprise network), CUE.
- **10 February 09** – Transport theme
- **10 March 09** – ERDA and Small Travel Grants results so far