

MBO Annual Report 2010-11

This report outlines the main activities and achievements of the Merseyside Brussels Office (MBO) for the twelve months from April 2010 to March 2011.

The MBO represents Merseyside at the heart of the European Union. It is based in the EU quarter in Brussels and has partner organisations from the public and voluntary sectors in Merseyside. It provides a vital link between these partners and the EU institutions and other European regions. The office helps Merseyside to:

1. Influence policy
2. Access funds
3. Build European partnerships

Brussels is where the major EU institutions are located and where most European regions and sectors are represented, so it is the ideal place for Merseyside to be making its voice heard. Much of the legislation that affects the local level is formed in Brussels. There is also considerable EU funding available from Brussels that local organisations can compete for. The MBO has a good relationship with North West MEPs, the European Commission and the UK government's representation to the EU. It is also active in various European regions networks, which lobby jointly, bid for funding together and share best practice.

The MBO's focus is on areas of joint EU-Merseyside interest. The annual report groups the MBO's activities and achievements under relevant strategic priorities and enabling measures from the Liverpool City Region Strategic Framework, as this was the framework previously used for the MBO work programme for 2010-11, which was set in March 2010. Keeping the same themes for both documents allows for easier comparison between the objectives set for the office at the beginning of the year and the achievements reported at the end.

These themes focus on:

- more and better jobs
- reducing worklessness and improving skills
- healthier, safer communities
- transport
- environment and waste.

The MBO keeps partners informed in a variety of ways including organising visits to Brussels, setting up meetings and seminars in Merseyside and sending out regular thematic bulletins. It works with partners bilaterally and through Merseyside-wide networks. There is also an MBO web site (www.merseyside-europe.org), which promotes Merseyside and MBO partners in Brussels and beyond. This has been extensively updated and overhauled in 2010-11.

The annual report focuses on major actions only. Some regular MBO activities are not detailed in the report, such as:

- Attendance at and feedback from Brussels conferences and meetings;
- Production of reports and bulletins (over the past year the MBO has produced 26 *ad hoc* reports and 47 thematic bulletins);
- Regular meetings with partners in Merseyside (over the past year the MBO has had 21 bilateral partner meetings and convened or supported thirteen network meetings).

Finally, it is worth noting that several important operational changes within the MBO have taken place in the last year, in particular:

- Relocation of the MBO, along with the other NW Brussels offices, to new, modern, accessible premises at 4 Rue du Trône, which is in the heart of the EU quarter in Brussels;
- Transfer of the MBO responsible body from Sefton MBC to Merseytravel.

LCRSF Strategic Priority: MORE AND BETTER JOBS

Work programme activity – Continuing engagement with the EU policy agenda on cohesion policy and economic development policy

Actions completed:

- Close monitoring of the ongoing debate on the future of cohesion policy. This will determine the amount and type of funds the EU delegates to Merseyside and the North West of England after the current programmes end in 2013. MBO support included attending the Fifth Cohesion Forum (the major consultation event organised on this issue by the European Commission) and regular meetings with the UK Permanent Representation, which is preparing the UK government's position.
- Facilitation of Merseyside and wider UK involvement in an emerging EU regional network to lobby for the creation of a new category of regions in the post-2013 cohesion policy. This category would be for regions whose GDP per head is 75-90% of the EU average, which would include Merseyside; the new category would allow such regions to enjoy greater levels of funding under future programmes.
- Support to North West and Merseyside responses to the Fifth Cohesion Report, the major European Commission consultation on the future of cohesion policy. Production of a response for *pteg* to the Fifth Cohesion Report, focusing on the potential for regional funding to support transport projects.
- Written reports for TMP on: EIB loans and other EIB financial instruments; the new ELENA technical assistance facility, which promotes cities' uptake of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures.
- A report for Mersey Maritime outlining all current EU strategies and developments with an impact on maritime clusters.

Work programme activity – Supporting engagement with trans-national funding opportunities under FP7, CIP and Interreg

Actions completed:

- Two presentations on EU trans-national funding (funding for which regions can bid in co-operation with other European regions) to the Greater Merseyside Funding Advisors Group and Knowsley MBC respectively.

Work programme activity – Promoting Merseyside good practice on economic development

Actions completed:

- Organisation of Liverpool's involvement in a consortium of European regions as part of the 2010 European Week of Regions and Cities (Open Days), which took place in October. The consortium, led by the German region of Saxony-Anhalt, organised a seminar on the theme of innovative support for entrepreneurship. It included a presentation from Merseyside Network for Europe on Liverpool's new Women's International Centre for Economic Development (WICED).
- Facilitation of Liverpool's involvement in a second seminar under Open Days, this time organised by the Committee of the Regions. The seminar focused on female entrepreneurship. WICED was again showcased; the speaker was Cllr Flo Clucas.
- Facilitation of Merseyside involvement in a regional conglomerate in the next annual European Week of Regions, scheduled for October 2011. This is led by Lisbon and entitled *Maritime Knowledge Network: How Maritime Territories Can Take Advantage of their Potential*; here the Merseyside speaker will be provided by TMP. Merseyside good practice on maritime transport and accessibility, innovation in maritime industries and marine services and training will be presented.

Work programme activity – Brussels promotion of Liverpool 08 legacy

Actions completed:

- Supporting Culture Liverpool with Liverpool's representation at a European Commission-organised celebration of the 25th anniversary of Capital of Culture. In particular, the MBO presented Liverpool 08 at an exhibition that formed part of the event.
- Co-ordination of a final dissemination event in Brussels in July for the European Capitals of Culture Policy Group. The Policy Group is a network led by Liverpool and funded by the EU's Culture Programme for one year to look specifically into the impacts of Capital of Culture across a range of cities. The final event presented a series of case studies examining the key components of the programmes for a range of past and future Cultural Capitals together with recommendations and a model for assessing impact.
- Facilitation of Merseyside involvement in a regional conglomerate in the next annual European Week of Regions, scheduled for October 2011. This is led by Barcelona and entitled *Creative Cities: Promoting Social and Economic Development for an Innovative Europe*; here the Merseyside speaker will be from Culture Liverpool.

LCRSF Strategic Priority: REDUCING WORKLESSNESS AND IMPROVING SKILLS

Work programme activity – Tracking and potential lobbying on ongoing and upcoming EU social legislation

Actions completed:

- The MBO produced briefings from a number of events it attended in Brussels on issues such as: female entrepreneurship and the Small Business Act review; how the EU2020 strategy could best be used to reconcile the needs of workers, employers and families; tackling homelessness; the regional perspective on gender equality and social inclusion.
- The MBO held several meetings of its Social Inclusion Forum, where the latest Brussels developments on social inclusion were discussed with a range of Merseyside partners.

Work programme activity – Continued participation in the ENSA social policy network and ERLAI asylum and immigration network

Actions completed:

- Production of several editions of the ERLAI European asylum and immigration network quarterly newsletter.

LCRSF Strategic Priority: HEALTHIER, SAFER COMMUNITIES

Work programme activity – Supporting engagement with trans-national funding opportunities on JHA and community safety

Actions completed:

- Support for a number of partners (Merseyside Police, Knowsley, MNE and Liverpool) in relation to potential bids under the EU Programme for the Prevention of and Fight against Crime. The MBO also facilitated other partners' (MNE's and Liverpool's) attendance of a meeting with the UK Home Office and the European Commission in relation to EU crime funding.
- Close support to Liverpool City Council, working in partnership with, among others, Merseyside Police, for a bid submitted in October to the EU Crime Prevention Programme; the bid was for a project to support crime victims and witnesses.
- Close support to Liverpool City Council, working in partnership with, among others, Merseyside Police, for a potential bid to be submitted to the EU Crime Prevention Programme later in 2011; this would be for a project tackling urban, juvenile and environmental crime. MBO support has included identifying the necessary trans-national partners for the bid in other European cities and regions.

LCRSF Enabling Measure: TRANSPORT

Work programme activity – Merseyside and PTEG engagement with EU urban transport policy

Actions completed:

- Close monitoring of the development of new EU rules on bus passenger rights for Merseytravel and pteg. The rules will dictate issues such as: compensation local bus operators will have to provide in case of passenger death or injury, and loss or damage to luggage. They also require vehicles and certain infrastructure and services to be adapted to disabled passengers' needs.
- Production of two consultation responses, one to the European Commission and the other to the UK Department for Transport, on upcoming changes to the rules for the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). The TEN-T are a selection of European routes and nodes, across different transport modes, that can attract special European funding. Several Merseyside routes and nodes are on the TEN-T.
- Facilitation of Merseyside responses to the TEN-T consultations.
- Close monitoring for *pteg* and Merseytravel of the development of new EU rules on how the EU rail industry is organised. In particular, the rules could require that infrastructure providers and train operators must be separate companies.
- Organising a delegation to Brussels for *pteg* in February. This included meetings with the European Commission on trans-European transport network development, bus passenger rights and urban mobility, as well as other meetings with Brian Simpson MEP, the UK Permanent Representation to the EU, the European Investment Bank, UITP (international transport network) and the Local Government Association.
- With Merseytravel and Eurocities, organisation of a reception in the European Parliament in November for two EU transport networks: the European Platform on Mobility Management (EPOMM) and the LINK intermodality network. Key messages from both networks were presented to Transport Committee MEPs and representatives of the regions and transport sector.
- Production of an exhaustive guide to transport policy currently being formulated at EU level.
- Production of an exhaustive guide to EU trans-national transport funding; this included intelligence such as upcoming call dates and national and EU contacts.
- A presentation on EU transport policy and funding developments for a meeting of the *pteg* European group in March.
- An overview for *pteg* and Merseyside transport partners of a consultation being conducted by the EIB on reviewing its transport lending policy.

Work programme activity – Supporting engagement with trans-national funding opportunities

Actions completed:

- Attendance of two European Commission-organised stakeholder conferences on funding available in 2010 and 2011 for TEN-T projects.
- At the request of Halton BC, discussions with Stobart Group on European funding opportunities for developing the former port of Weston. Written reports to Stobart and Halton on: EIB funding for transport; the TEN-T and the different funding streams that can be used to develop infrastructure and conduct studies on the network.

LCRSF Enabling Measure: ENVIRONMENT AND WASTE

Work programme activity – Engaging with EU legislative agenda on the environment

Actions completed:

- Close monitoring for MWDA of the debate on whether the European Commission should propose new legislation specifically on kitchen and garden waste (biowaste). Production with the Merseyside and Halton Waste Partnership of a response to a Commission consultation on potential EU biowaste recycling targets; facilitation of a meeting between MWDA and the Local Government Association on this issue.
- Regular updates to MWDA on the latest situation on general EU waste policy and current legislative proposals on specific waste streams, in particular: two pieces of EU legislation on electronic waste, which will notably affect the amount of such waste that has to be collected separately at local level; legislation on when certain wastes, such as scrap metal, cease to be considered as waste; the review of the EU “thematic strategy” (overall EU blueprint) on preventing and recycling waste.
- Attendance of and feedback from events in Brussels on waste prevention, such as the International Pre-Waste Workshop in March and the Zero Waste Europe International Symposium in October, to tie in with Merseyside’s developing waste prevention priority under the review of the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.
- Monitoring for MWDA of other emerging EU environmental legislation, notably on climate change
- Close monitoring of the growing EU resource-efficiency agenda, which ties in with the emerging resource management approach in Merseyside.

Work programme activity – Supporting engagement with trans-national funding opportunities on the environment

Actions completed:

- Production, in cooperation with the MWDA, of a comprehensive guide to all EU trans-national funding opportunities to support sustainable waste management; this included intelligence such as upcoming call dates and national and EU contacts.