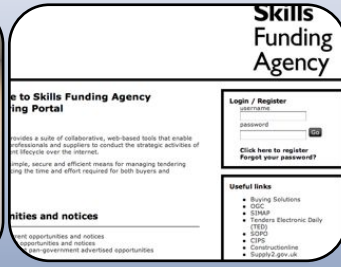


# Merseyside Network for Europe



## Newsletter

April 2011

### Welcome!

Welcome to the April edition of Merseyside Network for Europe's newsletter, reporting on European issues relating to the Voluntary Sector.

### 5th Cohesion Report Conclusions

Every few years the European Commission publishes a Cohesion Report, looking at the progress towards economic, social and territorial cohesion and how public policies have contributed to this goal. This latest report will feed into the regulations and design of the next round of EU Programmes.

The conclusions of the 5th Cohesion Report provide information on the future of Cohesion Policy for the post-2013 programming period in terms of its mission and set-up; how the policy can be made more effective and its impact improved so to achieve greater added value; how the governance of the policy and the involvement of stakeholders can be further strengthened; and how its implementation can be streamlined and simplified.

To enable all stakeholders to express their views on the conclusions of the 5th Cohesion Report, a large public consultation took place from 12th November 2010 to the 31st January 2011.

MNE's contribution was one of a total 444 received, including 26 contributions from Member States, 225 from regional and local authorities, 66 from economic and social partners, and 37 contributions from European interest organisations on territorial issues. Moreover, there were 29 contributions from civil society organisations, 21 from citizens, 15 from private companies, 8 from academic and research institutions, 1 from EU institutions and 9 from other stakeholders. There were also 5 contributions from public bodies and contributions from non-EU

countries Norway and Switzerland. All contributions received are published on the following website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/consultation/5cr/answers\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/5cr/answers_en.cfm)

#### The main results:

The role of cohesion policy in promoting the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy was overwhelmingly welcomed by respondents, although many stressed the need for flexibility and the use of a bottom-up approach to meet specific needs and challenges. Greater coordination between the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), Cohesion Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) was important to respondents. Many contributors also supported the introduction of incentives linked to the performance of cohesion policy.

Contributions show a general consensus on the need for an ambitious urban agenda, but also for better linkages between urban and rural areas and the development of macro-regional strategies. Since cohesion policy involves many different governance levels and stakeholders, many contributors supported the idea of reinforcing the partnership principle through a greater involvement of local partners.

A simpler delivery system was the basic idea endorsed by most contributions who argued for a revamped audit process as well as stronger coordination between the funds. Many respondents underlined the need for an improved monitoring and evaluation system.

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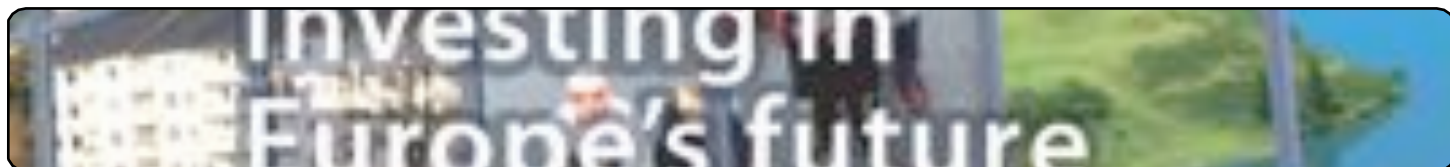
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According to most contributions, ESF should be maintained as is, but synergies and greater coordination with ERDF would be welcomed. Finally, contributors confirmed that special support is needed for those regions which have not yet completed their process of catching up. This would include a new intermediate category of transitional support which would most likely apply to Merseyside and perhaps Cumbria.

The results of the public consultation will feed into the proposals on the post 2013 legislative framework which will be adopted by the Commission later this year.

The full report can be viewed online at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/consultation/5cr/pdf/5cr\\_result\\_sec2011590.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/5cr/pdf/5cr_result_sec2011590.pdf)



## Merseyside Brussels Office



The MBO Board met on 1st April with an update on the 5th Cohesion Report including the January Cohesion Forum. There was a report on the transfer of accountable body responsibilities to Merseytravel and the January move to new premises (now shared with East of England), the expected end of staffing for NW Brussels Office, and the changes for the Greater Manchester and NW Health offices. The MBO had facilitated the involvement of two conglomerates for the coming Open Days.

## Investment Frameworks

The North West ERDF has four main priorities:

- Priority 1: Stimulating Enterprise and Supporting Growth in Target Sectors and Markets,
- Priority 2 - Exploiting Innovation and Knowledge,
- Priority 3 Sites and Tourism,
- Priority 4 Growing and Accessing Employment in the worst off areas.

These are described in the Operational Programme which was agreed in 2007 by the European Commission and the UK Government. Subsequently, more description of the priorities was drafted internally and called the Investment Frameworks (IFs). There are 11 IFs which are now being reviewed, supported by the consultants Fraser Associates. A first meeting was held on 1st April, to be followed by two workshops in May. It is expected that the three IFs under Priority 4 are going to be consolidated and merged under one so that projects can benefit from applying for activities that encompass all areas. The revised IFs are expected to be submitted for approval at the PMC which meets mid June.

## Priority Two (Knowledge)

Around 40 bids were received in recent bidding rounds, and the EPE ERDF Secretariat have been working with the Partners to examine these in more detail. Meetings were held on 5th and 12th April for the Merseyside Technical Group, with further meetings in Warrington on 8th April (for 2.1) and 15th (for 2.2),

and more meetings scheduled to take place in May.

## Steps to Success



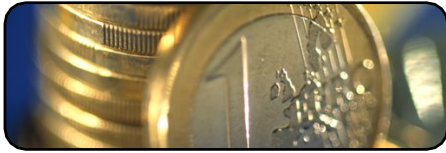
This project met again on 5th April. MNE is arranging further transnational visits in future months to colleagues in Poland and Spain.

## ERDF Technical Assistance



MNE recently attended an all-day conference in Hull, which brought together nearly forty people from around the country to discuss how ERDF is supported through Technical Assistance. MNE was the only voluntary sector representative present. There were interesting discussions and exchanges of experience, with comparison of best practice.

## Merseyside Phasing In Sub-Committee



This well attended meeting was held on 13th April. There was a presentation from REECH, the Merseyside Project (with £8m ERDF) to kick start the green economy by funding energy conservation and generation in existing social housing. It covers around a dozen projects, mainly run by social landlords, and there was intense discussion to ensure that the best ways to ensure a level playing field for local firms and to create appropriate training opportunities will be used.

There was also a general report on project performance and outputs, as well as on potential governance changes, and an update on progress with the programme around the four main priorities. The next meeting will be on 7th June.

## Merseyside ERDF Technical Group



The Merseyside ERDF Technical Group met on 28th April and discussed the latest developments around the Priority Two bids. There was a paper and discussion on projects still in the pipeline - some of which had been there for a very long time. The latest position on potential Priority Four projects was discussed and there was an update on the Investment Frameworks. The next meeting will be on 24th May.

## Fifth Freeze Date of ACTOR



If you are registered on ACTOR, you might have recently received emails from bravosolution regarding new Invitations to Tender (ITTs) and messages. These messages are to notify organisations of the Fifth freeze of ACTOR which will take place at 17:00 on 22nd June. All organisations seeking funding for the provision of education and vocational training services must be registered on ACTOR for at least one of the programmes funded by the Skills Funding Agency. To be registered on ACTOR, colleges and training organisations must have passed a due diligence pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) and must submit at least one on-line Invitation to Tender (ITT). This is done through the Skills Funding Agency's e-Tendering portal. Organisations are advised to read the newly updated ACTOR Operation Manual, available in the Buyer Attachments section, and information regarding the updated questionnaires.

Please note that in previous Guidance Notes the Skills Funding Agency has set out its intention to introduce a Minimum Contract Level which is intended to create efficiencies within the Agency and economies of scale across the sector.

The Minimum Contract Level threshold for 2011/12 has been set at £500,000. This means that organisations that are interested in applying to become providers under ACTOR need to be able to run contracts of at least the value

of the minimum level. For smaller organisations there are opportunities to sub-contract or become partners in the delivery of larger contracts.

For further information on ACTOR please visit: <http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/providers/programmes/actor/> Alternatively you can get in touch with Angeliki Stogia at Merseyside Network for Europe.

## Local Employment Initiatives



The results of a study commissioned by DG Regio is now available - it looks at how fourteen countries have developed LEIs, supported by European Funding. Peter Ramsden, who worked on the report came to Merseyside to address our seminar on 14th April and there was a good discussion. The report is timely, as discussions are underway for the next European Programmes, and fits well with our government's policies for localism and the big society, with practical examples of what works. A question underlying the study is: How do public authorities create the conditions, motivation and empowerment for people to take the initiative to help themselves?

## Third Sector European Network

A meeting was held on 20th to consider the future for TSEN, which represents the Sector on the ESF Programme Monitoring Committee.

## North Liverpool CAB Hosts EU Visitors

North Liverpool Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) is to host a visit from European workers in order to demonstrate best practice in educating and supporting training staff.

The workers come from Italy, Ireland, Germany, Portugal and the Czech Republic and will be visiting Liverpool for 5 days at the end of May. North Liverpool CAB is hosting the visit as part of a EU-funded project on community education. The visit will focus on the financial skills training that North Liverpool CAB has been delivering for over nine years.

‘Our financial skills training is innovative, practical and effective,’ said Joe Lavelle, a worker at North Liverpool CAB, responsible for the European visit. ‘Our team of volunteers and paid trainers help local residents avoid or deal with debt and better manage their finances. We were amongst the earliest practitioners in the field of financial skills training and continue to gain national recognition for our work. Other European countries do not

provide this training, which we provide free of charge to community and voluntary groups across the city. We want to show our European partners how we deliver it in Liverpool so that their citizens can potentially benefit in the same way as thousands of Liverpool and Merseyside residents.’



The Citizens Advice Bureau network is known primarily for its face-to-face advice on matters such as debt, welfare benefits and housing. Financial skills training, often referred to as ‘financial capability’ training is delivered primarily to groups and complements advice work. It is intended to be preventative, providing citizens with information, and knowledge they can use to manage finances and avoid or diminish worry over financial matters. Basic financial skills training covers subjects such as: budgeting; dealing with debt; and choosing credit. Other topics

include: how to get the best deal from utility, insurance and financial service providers; consumer issues; understanding and using financial products – for example bank accounts, savings, loans and pensions; and understanding tax. Local residents who access Children’s Centres and other local services or who are members of community and voluntary groups receive the training free of charge. Last year, North Liverpool CAB delivered over 100 financial skills training sessions to more than 2,000 local residents.

The project, entitled EMTTT (Experiences and Methodologies in the Training of Trainers) compares how organisations from six European countries educate and support trainers to work with poor, marginalised or hard-to-reach communities. The ultimate aim of the project is to improve the training received by citizens across Europe by promoting best practice.

If you would like more information, please contact: Joe Lavelle on 0151 285 1080 ext 226 or email:

[joe.l@northliverpoolcab.org.uk](mailto:joe.l@northliverpoolcab.org.uk)

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## Contact Us

Contact MNE if you want copies, or links to websites for any documents mentioned in this Newsletter, including the North West Operational Programme, Evaluation, Investment Frameworks, and the European Commission’s publications, including the Fifth Cohesion Report.

For further information, please contact Paul Avis on 237 3972 or email [paul.avis@merseynetwork.com](mailto:paul.avis@merseynetwork.com)



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