

Merseyside Network for Europe



Newsletter

February 2011

Welcome!

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

Reference Group

- Do you want to know more about European funding on Merseyside?
- Do you want the opportunity to influence how MNE works?
- Do you want to have a greater influence on European strategy and policy?



If you can say yes to the above, why not come along to our Reference group? The group is currently meeting bi-monthly.

Discussion at the meetings centre on the following items:

- Up-to-date information on the EU programmes, how current programmes are making progress, future developments such as the effects of the Fifth Cohesion Report and the next EU funding programme spanning 2014-2020
- Detailed discussion about potential actions and project calls in the current programme, Voluntary Sector access and our representation in the decision-making structures
- Developing ideas for supporting the Voluntary sector on Merseyside to be more aware of EU funding, strategy and policies.

For more information on the Reference Group, please contact Sharon McCarthy at MNE on 0151 237 3972 or email:

sharon.mccarthy@merseynetwork.com

Local Employment Initiatives

The European Commission has had detailed research undertaken on Local Employment Initiatives, and how public authorities can create the conditions for local people to take action in partnership to bring about a better society. The second and final workshop took place in February, attended by all four DGs involved directly in Structural Funds, representatives of the Managing Agents, and practitioners from 25 countries. MNE was involved in supporting the proceedings. The final report gives messages about what works, including a wealth of examples from across Europe, and will be useful in the preparation of the Regulations for the next Programme (2014-20). We will be arranging a meeting in April to discuss in more detail how European Funding has been used to support Local Employment Initiatives, and consider how we can work better together in the North West.

North West Network

MNE has worked closely with NWN for a long time. Unfortunately, the NWN Board have decided that NWN will have to wind up at the end of March. MNE will be doing what it can to extend our support to the Sector from Merseyside to the rest of the North West, but times are difficult. We still only have short term funding to continue our support to the Sector (although we are confident that European Funding itself will be available until at least 2022!).

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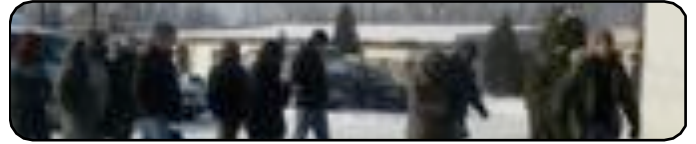
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ESF ITM - Steps To Success



The latest visit for this Innovative ESF Project, run by Social Enterprise North West, was arranged by Centrum Pisop and covered the Wielkopolska region of Poland. Ten people from Merseyside toured the area, staying in a farm, braving temperatures of minus eighteen, with visits including the Barka Foundation, Centres for Social Inclusion, a Social Enterprise Campus and a Social Co-operative responsible for work on housing estates. Long term

actions are taking place to tackle alcoholism, disadvantage and homelessness through developing the Social Economy. National Polish Radio reported on our activities, and we will be arranging a subsequent visit for some of the participants. In March, there will be another visit to Barcelona, following on from the successful one in November. Meanwhile we have now heard that the project will be extended until September, giving more time to develop this innovative aspect of Social Enterprises.



ERDF Priority 2

This is funding for the Knowledge Economy - mainly for Universities. The recent calls for proposals resulted in 40 bids, more than the EPE ERDF Secretariat can easily handle. The Merseyside Technical Group looked in detail at projects on 8th February, and on 11th there were North West discussions with the Secretariat, with an extra meeting of the Performance sub-committee on 28th. Further meetings are planned in April.

ERDF Priority 4

This is funding to support the worst off areas. 4.1 is for startups, 4.2 linking jobs to people, and 4.3 providing the facilities for SMEs. **Action Area 4.1** - Only the NWDA and Social Enterprise can currently bid under this measure. Following the November meeting, Social Enterprise North West (SENW) has been working closely with the EPE ERDF Secretariat on a bid for the whole of the North West for the remaining funds, with a parallel procurement process. Contact SENW on 0151 237 3986 for more information.

Action Area 4.2 - St Helens Chamber has a bid approved, and

Liverpool City Employment Strategy is negotiating an extension to their current project. Meanwhile there are several other proposals. The eight other organisations who submitted proposals early in December attended a workshop on 3rd February at The Mersey Partnership, and subsequently met again at MNE on 9th. They are now putting together a joint bid. Meanwhile, a group of voluntary sector organisations met at MNE on 8th, and are also considering a proposal. We understand there will be one (or two) new local authority bids, possibly some more. While MNE will support any voluntary organisation interested in putting together a bid, our preference is for either one overall proposal involving all the partners, or several proposals which fit together, covering Merseyside and fitting in with the strategies that have been developed (in a similar way to the successful Future Jobs Fund operated by Merseyside partners). **Action Area 4.3** - If all bids in the pipeline are approved, then there is no funding left, but some bids have been stationary for a long time, so additional bids are being accepted.

ERDF PMC

The Programme Monitoring Committee on 30th March is expected to be the last under the current rules. The next meeting (on 15th June) is expected to have a different chair, changes to members, and different sub-committees.

ERDF Phasing-In Sub Committee

The Merseyside Phasing In sub-committee met on 15th February in St Helens. There was an update on the changes underway with the programme, especially around governance and management. Spend is high, but outputs and results are still lower than hoped, although some of this is the result of reporting problems. There was information on recent calls, in particular the very large number of bids under Priority 2 (Knowledge) and on the old and new calls under Priority 4 (worst off areas). The Voluntary Sector had been omitted from representation on the subgroups to look at changes to the Investment Frameworks, but this has now been corrected. The next meeting will be on 13th April.

ERDF Tech Group



The Merseyside Technical Group met on 22nd February. It was agreed that REECH should make a presentation on the ERDF Housing project to a future Phasing in sub-committee. NGA (next generation broadband) may get funded through ERDF, but this seems more important for rural areas, and may not be so relevant on Merseyside (except possibly Wirral?). The 4.2 process was discussed, including the workshop on 3rd at TMP, and the follow up on 9th at MNE, as well as the extension to the City Employment Strategy project. There was an update on the European Transition Board, JESSICA is not quite ready, but may start in April, and it was agreed for a presentation from Epicentre at the next meeting, which is on 29th March.

PMsc

The Performance sub-committee held an extra meeting on 28th February. It considered NGA (Broadband) and the revisions to the Investment Frameworks, but was primarily to discuss the forty bids that had been received under Priority Two. There had been considerable concern that information had not gone to the Sub Regional Partnerships to ensure that proposals fitted with the wider local strategies, but that has now been resolved. There was a good discussion about the various bids, including issues around regional ones that needed Merseyside involvement. The Merseyside Partners (through the Technical Group and Phasing In sub-committee) have a clear understanding of the strategic

Merseyside priorities. A scoring process was agreed, with a third of the marks allocated to fit with local strategy, and it was hoped some of the proposals would shortly move to approval. The next meeting will be on 16th March.

Representation



Are you interested in representing the Sector in European matters? We are looking for representatives for the two Investment Framework Working Groups. One is for Business Support and Innovation (P1 and P2), the other for Community and Property (P3 and P4). The groups will meet with a consultant over the next three months before sending out recommendations to the PMC in June. MNE will provide a detailed briefing before the meetings - we are looking for people with a good strategic overview of North West issues. Please contact Andy Churchill at 237 3972 if you would like further information. In addition, the proposed ERDF Governance changes (PMC plus three sub-committees) may give an opportunity to extend involvement to more people from the Sector (again, MNE will provide briefings and support). Please do get in touch if you are interested.

REECH

The Merseyside bid for ERDF for energy efficiency and energy regeneration for Social Housing is on the point of being approved, and the steering group held its first meeting on 18th February. MNE represents the Sector, and there are representatives from the Energy Saving Trust, Envirolink, Fusion

21 and the Local Authorities. Nearly £8m ERDF is available through a dozen projects, to kick start the green economy on Merseyside, while at the same time delivering better housing. This project can show how ERDF will be used in the future, and gives an opportunity to link to ESF training in green skills, and to links to local schools to explain how we can care for the environment and save money.

VCLF

The ERDF Venture Capital Loan Fund was finally launched on 11th February. While starting later than other funds in the UK, this is very large. It is split into several smaller funds, and is to support the growth of small and medium sized enterprises (with JESSICA, this uses a quarter of all the ERDF for the North West).

EYPUK



The European Youth Parliament UK (EYPUK) are currently running their annual Regional Forum programme. 14 Regional Forums will be taking place across the UK, each involving over 150 school pupils in a day of speeches and debates on key European issues. Two schools from each forum will be selected to participate in the forthcoming National Sessions.

In other news, Andy Burnham MP has become a patron of EYPUK. He applauded the good work of the organisation, with particular reference to the the community outreach scheme, entitled EurVoice. For more information on EYPUK please email: kevin.garvey@merseynetwork.com or visit www.eypuk.co.uk

Work Programme

In its second evidence session on the Work Programme, the Work and Pensions Select Committee (WPSC) learned there would be a new, eighth, payment group on the Work Programme. DWP have informed providers that the new group would consist of a voluntary cohort of claimants including those who are on Incapacity Benefit.

To see the evidence session from Parliament in full, visit:

<http://tinyurl.com/6dpd66v>

Existing Programmes

There is still concern about the transition from existing programmes to the Work Programme. Clarity is still needed on what will happen to claimants and providers delivering existing programmes, particularly those on or delivering Pathways to Work and NDDP.

The Merlin Standard is supposed to govern the working relationship between primes and sub contractors however there are concerns that the Standard is not

enforceable, and that it lacks teeth. MNE has raised these points about the Work Programme and particularly the Merlin Standard. For further information on the Work Programme visit the Indus Delta website at:

<http://indusdelta.co.uk/>

Or contact Merseyside Network for Europe on 0151 237 3972.

2011 Economic Review

The Mersey Partnership's Economic Review was launched on 7th February. The review includes a chapter on the City Region's "dependency" on the Public Sector and a claim that 128,000 new jobs could be created here over ten years.

ACTOR Briefing Note

The Skills Funding Agency has published a briefing note which provides an overview of Approved College and Training Organisation Register (ACTOR). The note summarises ACTOR's purpose,

functionality and how it will be used by the Skills Funding Agency to procure publicly funded education and training provision. For a copy of the full briefing note visit:

www.vcsmerseyside.eu/x/5936

European Transition

The European Transition Project Board met on 2nd February (and a small working group on 7th), but further meetings were cancelled or postponed. It is hoped to have a further meeting later in March.

Vacancies

MNE has two short term vacancies, subject to funding. We are looking for a Senior European Officer, and a European Officer - people with experience of ESF and ERDF funding, and a knowledge of the Sector, able to hit the ground running. The posts are subject to funding from ESF and ERDF Technical Assistance. For information and an application form, please email:

jobs@merseynetwork.com.

Coming up...

17th March, North West Network event: **Future of EU funds in the North West...** 28th March, **ERDF 4.2 Workshop** to bring together those organisations bidding under 4.2 of ERDF, to encourage a strategic bid or bids for Merseyside... 30th March, **Europe and the Work Programme: Third Sector European Network Annual Conference** (<http://www.ths.co.uk/inclusion/tsen/index.html>)... 14th April, **LEI Seminar** to look at how Local Employment Initiatives have been developed in the North West in the current programme and compare them to good practice across Europe. We hope to have more information from the recent research on the subject, and will welcome a discussion on the best ways of creating local employment.

Contact Us

If you would like further information about any of the subjects covered in this newsletter, if you have any feedback, comments or suggestions please contact Paul Avis on 237 3972 or email paul.avis@merseynetwork.com



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