

Network for Europe



Newsletter

July 2011

Welcome!

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

Next Programme 2014-20

While the European Commission's proposals for funding for the next seven years came out at the end of June, the Regulations are now not due until the end of September or beginning of October. Nevertheless, much work is still underway. It now seems probable that Merseyside and Cumbria will have special status in the next programme, as their GDP will be between 75% and 90% of the EU average (a kind of Objective 1.5). Social Innovation is expected to be important for the Sector, and in November we are expecting the paper on Social Investment. So far, the ERDF's JESSICA and Venture Capital have been difficult to access for the sector, but the new programme could have better financial processes for the Voluntary Sector (ERDF funding to draw down other loans - support for Credit Unions, Asset based development, revolving funds to support expansion etc). There are discussions with Social Banks and the Commission for what could be effective proposals.

Three Month Block Lifted

The European Commission has now started paying the North West again. Payments were stopped from March for the North West and a few other areas in England because of the number of irregularities being detected in projects (higher than the 2% expected). It is to be hoped that this figure can be reduced through better guidance and support for individual projects.

Good Practice



Network for Europe staff visited colleagues in Wales on 12th July to look at their experience of ESF and ERDF funding and compare good practice. There were visits to ILM (Intermediate Labour Market) projects and a comparison of the different programmes (volunteer time is eligible in Wales). A follow up visit is planned at the end of August.

Liverpool City Region - Employment & Skills

The Steering Group (previously Programme Board) met on 4th July. One of the aspirations of the Strategy was to halve the number of City Region's super output areas included in the worst 10% in England. There was discussion on this challenging aspiration and an update on the toolkit and the Total Place project. There was discussion on the review that had taken place as part of the national process and there was a detailed update on progress with the various ESF and ERDF projects (totaling £23m) run through the City Region. There were updates on the Hanlon database (being implemented) and an update on the Work Programme. The next meeting will be on 12th October.

Supported by:



ERDF Call for Projects - AAI.2

The North West ERDF Programme is inviting project applications under Action Area 1.2 for project proposals that provide support and advice to SMEs in the area of *access to finance*.

The objective for activity funded under this call is to improve SMEs' access to the finance that will enable them to grow their business, leading to increased employment and GVA in the Region. Projects submitted under the call should offer impartial financial advice and support to SMEs, enabling them to understand and access a comprehensive range of sources of finance in the public and private sectors.

Please note the deadlines for this call are as follows:

- Stage 1 Deadline for Project Outline: 31st August
- Stage 2 Deadline for Full Application: 30th Sept
- Earliest Expected Start Date: October 2011

(Completed applications should be submitted to NW.ERDFenquires@communities.gsi.gov.uk no later than 5:00pm on 31st August 2011)

For further information, please contact Paul Avis at Network for Europe on 0151 237 3972 or email paul.avis@networkforeurope.eu



£10million to kick start Big Society

A £10 million fund is being made available to charities and social enterprises to help them develop the skills and infrastructure to win more capital investment and public service contracts, Nick Hurd, Minister for Civil Society, has announced.

The Investment and Contract Readiness Fund is one of the latest in a number of actions paving the way for charities, social enterprises and other civil society organisations to play a bigger role in public service delivery. The Minister outlined plans in an open letter to the sector. As well as new opportunities to earn income from public service contracts, civil society organisations will soon have more access to capital investment when the Big Society Bank opens for business.

Civil Society organisations have been invited to take part in a listening exercise for all sectors over the summer to help identify where further changes are needed. The open letter follows publication of the Open Public Services White Paper on 11 July, which sets out how the Government will improve public services by putting choice and

control in the hands of individuals and neighbourhoods.

To view the letter in full, please visit:

<http://www.networkforeurope.eu/£10million-kick-start-big-society-public-services>

ERDF PMSC

The ERDF Performance Monitoring sub-committee met in Manchester on 19th July. This was the first meeting since the changes and was chaired by Sir Howard Bernstein. Two projects were endorsed; £3.75m for the redevelopment of Manchester's former Eye Hospital to support facilities for bio-medical enterprises and £1.5m for Peel Holdings for remediation of the contaminated and derelict West Float, Birkenhead. It was confirmed that now Business Link was winding down regionally, there would be a call for proposals under Action Area 1.2 for support to help SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises) to access funding. An update to the process for agreeing changes to approved projects was agreed. There were the usual updates on performance and on outputs and results, as well as the latest on the transition. It was agreed that the re-

quantification (reduction) in outputs and results for the programme should be completed rapidly, so that it could be discussed with the European Commission, and there should be a focus on moving projects forward and delivering outputs and results. With the move away from the Development Agency, the PMSC would have a stronger role in endorsing projects. The next meetings are on 1st and 14th September.

ERDF Technical Group

Merseyside's ERDF Technical Group met on 26th July, with a presentation on the Technical Assistance Evaluation. There was discussion on the call for proposals for Action Area 1.2, an update on the P2 (Knowledge Economy) proposals, as well as discussion on what was happening with the Merseyside projects for P4 (worst-off areas). It was noted that JESSICA for Merseyside should soon be launched (September) and that the REECH housing project had finally received their offer letter at the end of May. The next meeting is on 23rd August.

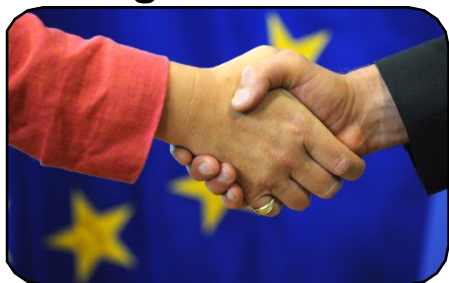
ESF ITM Thematic Networks Report

The ITM strand of the European Social Fund supports a small number of strategic, regional projects looking to develop and deliver new ways of extending employment opportunities and raising workforce skills.

In doing so, it contributes to the challenges of promoting social inclusion, raising productivity, fostering competitive businesses, and living within environmental and demographic limits.

The report is from the second round of the European Social Fund's, Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming (ESF ITM) Thematic Network Meetings. The second round of ESF ITM thematic networks took place during June and July 2010. To download the report please visit: <http://www.esf-works.com/>

Strategic Partners



We have been working with NCVO and ACEVO/Euclid around European issues as part of the Office for Civil Society's (OCS) Strategic Partnership. While these two national organisations have a strategic reach, we have been able to discuss the practical issues of ESF and ERDF as it affects local organisations. We have been able to provide information about the funding remaining and the opportunities for the Voluntary Sector and are pleased that the OCS is keen to support this work and is looking to increase European Funding to the Sector.

ESF ACTOR Seminars



Network for Europe, in partnership with Greater Merseyside's Learning Consortium for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VOLA), recently held a seminar on the Skills Funding Agency e-procurement Portal (ACTOR).

For further information, contact Network for Europe on 0151 237 3972 or email:

info@networkforeurope.eu

ESF Publicity Works Toolkit Launched



A new 2011-2013 ESF Publicity Works toolkit for providers and their sub-contractors has been launched. The toolkit is essential reading for any organisation in receipt of ESF funds. It:

- provides clear guidance, practical examples and supporting resources that can enhance a wide range of ESF publicity efforts
- helps providers and sub-contractors take the necessary actions to ensure European Union regulatory and Co-Financing Organisations (CFO) contractual publicity requirements are met.

An important focus is on helping organisations to use the ESF logo correctly, display ESF project plaques and inform participants of support from ESF and the EU.

There is evidence from an independent evaluation of ESF publicity activity and from monitoring activity by CFOs and the ESF Managing Authority that a small number of ESF and match

funding recipients are not fully complying with these core requirements which potentially places their funding at risk of being withdrawn.

Broader measures are also covered that focus on promoting the ESF project to wider audiences. These include guidance, materials and practical examples on:

- engaging the media, including the use of some core ESF messages
- producing news stories, press releases and case studies
- using consent forms and social media such as Facebook and Twitter

Other resources are available to help publicise projects.

For further information please visit: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/esf/resources/publicity/>

Work Programme - New publication

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has published a new document on The Work Programme - a major new payment-for-results welfare-to-work initiative that launched throughout Great Britain in June 2011. Along with the Universal Credit benefit reforms, it is central to the Coalition Government's ambitious programme of welfare reform.

The Programme aims to ensure good value for money for the taxpayer by basing payments largely on results and paying providers from the benefits saved from getting people into work. It is a partnership between government and providers from across the public, private and third sectors, including social enterprises. To view the publication please visit:

<http://www.networkforeurope.eu/files/files/the-work-programme-august-11.pdf>

Steps to Success

This month there was a visit to Sweden, with visits to Poland and Barcelona scheduled for September as part of Social Enterprise North West's ESF ITM (Innovation, Transnational and Mainstreaming) project.

Community Grants Programme Delayed

Community Grants form an integral part of the European Structural Funds and are funded through the European Social Fund (ESF). Community Grants in the North West are small grants up to a maximum of £12,000 available to community groups to help develop their skills and capacity to help people in deprived communities into the labour market.

As many of you will know the VCS regional bid to secure the contract to deliver the next round of the ESF Community Grants programme was unsuccessful and we were informed in May this year that the national company Tribal were awarded the contract.

We have now been informed by Tribal that they have withdrawn from the contract after months of contract negotiation. This has been confirmed by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) who have informed Network for Europe that they are in discussions with a reserve applicant about the contract. We do not yet have details of that organisation but once this information is released we will make contact to find out more details of how to access this funding.

Christine Baker, Chief Executive of Learning Together Cheshire and Warrington, (previous managers of the ESF Community Grants programme in Cheshire) said:

"Clearly this is very frustrating for the sector and there will be further delays in getting information on this grant scheme out to those organisations who work directly with marginalised clients and communities. One can't help but speculate that a local delivery model would have been a better option in terms of turn around and local knowledge, rather than a

move to regional provision which flies in the face of the Localism agenda!"

Network for Europe will publicise information as and when it becomes available and will encourage a more local approach to the delivery of this important source of funds.

ERDF Cheshire & Warrington Event



A seminar was held in July arranged by Learning Together Cheshire & Warrington and with presentations from Network for Europe and the Local Authority. Attendees were brought up to date with ESF and ERDF programmes and in particular the opportunities under the ERDF's Priority 4.

Coming up...

25th Anniversary Celebration Event, 30th September... Join us for a Celebration after our AGM on 30th September. It's twenty five years since Network for Europe began and there have been many changes since those six organisations who received European Funding came together to find out more.

Come along, remember the past and help us invent the future. To book, visit: <http://25th.eventbrite.com>

Contact Us

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



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