

Network for Europe



Newsletter

December 2011

Welcome!

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

Big Society Capital

Social Enterprise North West co-ordinated the North West event for Big Society Capital (BSC), held on 6 December at WICED, with presentations from Nick Hurd (Minister for Civil Society) and Nick O'Donohoe (Chief Executive, BSC) to about eighty people from across the North West. Previously known as Big Society Bank, this will use £400m funding from dormant accounts and £200m from the four Merlin Banks to fund Social Investment Intermediaries who will in turn invest directly in Social Enterprises and Social Innovation. The intention is to develop a sustainable social investment market in the UK. This fits closely with other developments in Europe around Financial Instruments. The next European Programme (2014-20) will have a stronger role for such instruments for the Voluntary Sector and initial developments are taking place within the current programme (Nick O'Donohoe was present at the European wide meeting of FEBEA Social Banks in Kraków in September to discuss next steps). On 20 December BSC received State Aid approval from the European Commission (earlier than many expected) and now needs FSA approval before the formal launch in March. Meanwhile, four projects have already been approved (through the Big Society Investment Fund). After the meeting, Nick Hurd visited various Merseyside projects, and we were pleased with the discussions with him at Toxteth TV.

Changes to ESF programme in England



The European Commission has agreed to changes to the ESF Operational Programme for England and Gibraltar for 2007-2013.

The Operational Programme sets out the labour market issues that ESF will address and the employment and skills activities that it will support.

The amendments relate mainly to budgetary transfers and organisational changes.

The Operational Programme was amended in 2011 to vire €31.7 million from Priority 3 (Technical Assistance) to Priority 1 (Extending Employment Opportunities) and €11.7 million from Priority 3 to Priority 2 (Developing a Skilled and Adaptable Workforce).

At the same time, the Operational Programme was also amended to take account of the closure of the regional Government Office network and ESF committees in most regions.

The European Commission adopted the amended Operational Programme on 12 December 2011.

For further information please visit:

<http://tinyurl.com/8yogvuf>

Supported by



Local Monitoring Committee

The ERDF Local Monitoring Committee (previously Programme Monitoring Committee) met on 7 December. There was a detailed Programme Monitoring Report with a format to reflect additional information needed at this stage of the Programme. There was considerable discussion of the problems with the JEREMIE project. Branded the North West Fund, this uses about one seventh of the North West Programme's ERDF to support investment in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises. £92.4m from ERDF is matched with a similar loan from the European Investment Bank and this is split into six separate funds which are targeted in different ways. Members expressed their concern at the lack of urgency for this activity and lack of networking with banks and support organisations operating in the region. It was explained that after a year fees had been £3.5m but the amount of loans agreed to local enterprises was

much less than forecast (and for one fund was nil). It was agreed to commission an independent report and to consider what can be done to help the Fund reach its objectives.

There was a report on the other financial instrument, JESSICA. There are two of these funds to support investment in buildings. The RONW (Rest of the North West) one is called Evergreen, is lead by the Local Authorities and has a signed agreement. The Merseyside project is on the point of agreement. Once some outstanding issues are resolved it is expected that progress on the ground could be rapid. £40m ERDF has been allocated to Superfast Broadband (Central Government funding has also been announced) and it is hoped the four bids received can be processed soon. There were reports from the sub-committees and a paper on post 2013 programmes. The next meeting is arranged for 20 March 2012.

Merseyside Brussels Office

The MBO met on 7 December. There was an update on developments around the next Programme (2014-20) and a presentation on the proposed Atlantic Strategy which is being developed, as well as a discussion on new members. The next meeting is 9 March 2012.

PI Merseyside Workshop

Following on from previous successful workshops over the last few years, the Sub-Regional Partnership held a workshop on 8 December to consider the future for Priority 1 of ERDF. The Priority supports enterprises with growth potential, so the changing economic situation and the changes from central government meant it was a good time to reconsider the rest of the programme. About 40 attended, with discussion in four groups. Merseyside Business Liaison Officers Group called a meeting covering the same ground on 21 December, and the Sub-Regional

Partnership met on 4 January to review progress. There is a general consensus that the remaining money should be committed soon - probably not on capital projects, but where money can be spent quickly and have an effect on the ground. There is a desire to build on what works, linking with the LEP and local strategies, preparing for the next programme priorities such as the low carbon economy, and in particular to develop better partnership working to connect the different kinds of support into real jobs.

City Employment Strategy

The Liverpool City Region Employment and Skills Steering Group met on 12 December. There was a report on the Housing Compact on Worklessness, which local Social Landlords signed up to over a year ago, to work in partnership and use procurement to create local jobs and apprenticeships. They are involved in national discussions to develop what was learnt from Future Jobs Fund and face issues with the

Welfare Benefit Reform. A paper on increasing local employment and skills through public sector procurement was presented and a task and finish group set up to develop the ideas (for example, all 33 West Midlands Local Authorities have a framework for jobs and skills). There was concern about the slow progress on Local Area based initiatives - progress to be reported to the next meeting. There was a paper on the next ESF and ERDF Programmes (2014-20) and a small group would follow this up. Finally, there was an update on the recent government funding announcements.

Discussion meetings

Network for Europe is holding a series of small discussion meetings to look at lessons from the current ESF and ERDF programmes and thoughts for the next. Our preference is to work with other organisations so that we deliver the discussions while they arrange publicity, venue, etc. For more information, or to arrange one of your own, please contact Network for Europe on:

info@networkforeurope.eu

ERDF Phasing In Sub Committee

Merseyside Phasing In sub-committee met on 12 December. The Programme Monitoring Report (from the PMC) was discussed and there was a detailed paper on progress to date for Merseyside. Outputs and results which have been contracted were listed by Priority, with a spreadsheet giving achievements to date, as well as information on the half a dozen projects causing concern and more details about progress against forecast. There was feedback from the Priority One Workshop held on the 8 December, and a report from the Technical Group which included detailed information at Priority level of progress of bids. The LMC paper on the next Programme was also on the agenda. The next meeting is 9 February.

ERDF Strategy Group

The third meeting of the North West European Economic Strategy Group took place on 15 December with a well attended meeting. Sub regions reported on the results from examining projects in their areas and the likelihood of delivering outputs and results. The NW Business Support Transitions Group had met and prepared a paper looking at the pipeline of projects as well as another paper with a draft Regional Business Support Framework, including Regional Growth Hubs. There was a paper on a call for proposals under Priority 4, which was agreed and a further paper, which was agreed, for calls under Priority 5 (Technical Assistance). This would cover Sub-Regional (LEP) support, support for Higher Education and the Voluntary Sector and support for the Cross Cutting Themes. The next meeting has been arranged to take place on 10th January.

ERDF Technical Group

Merseyside Technical Group met on 20 December, with a presentation from The Women's Organisation and feedback from the Priority 1 Workshop on 8 December. It was reported that the JESSICA agreement was expected to be signed that day. Halton will be included as part of Greater Merseyside in future. The next meeting is on 30 January.

ERDF - new calls

New calls under Priority 4 are expected to be launched very soon. The calls will run for a limited period and the ERDF team hope to process bids rapidly.

The funds will mainly be for the Rest of the North West excluding Merseyside (up to £16.5m) with about £1m or £2m for Merseyside. The call will be for Priority 4 as a whole, but focussed on enterprise startup support, for communities of interest and geographical communities.

It is anticipated that the bids for the Rest of the North West will be sub regional.

The ERDF team has issued strong advice to work with others on this - applicants will need LEP support, and will need to link with the Sub Regional Partnership for your area. It is likely that match funding will be an issue for Local Authorities, so the voluntary sector has two strengths - possible match funding and links with and experience of working with excluded groups.

The hope is for bids to be approved by beginning of April. In reality, will need some time to work up bids in partnership (possibly well into February) and then there will be some time spent on the appraisal process. The message is clear - start talking to partners now if you want to be involved.

Merseyside is slightly different - there are already three strategic

bids in the system which are expected to be finally approved any day now. They have regular meetings so that they work well together. Any future bids will need to show that they don't duplicate the activity, but work with the Merseyside Strategy and address issues the other three are less strong on.

Writing Prize for CAB Worker

A member of staff at North Liverpool Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) has won a national writing award. Joe Lavelle, Financial Skills Development Worker at North Liverpool CAB submitted an essay about the organisation's participation in a European project to a competition run by the UK Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programmes. His essay was rated Highly Commended in the "Broadening Horizons – My Grundtvig Experience" category. Joe attended an awards ceremony at the prestigious London Head Quarters of the British Council to collect the award.



Joe Lavelle receiving his award from Althea Warner from the Department for Education.

"This award was a surprise and a great honour," Joe said. "Our European project has been really enjoyable, positive and practical, and to win this award is the icing on the cake."

Further information about the project is available at: www.emttt.eu

Information about the writing competition and Joe's winning essay is at:

<http://tinyurl.com/6np85kd>

European Contract for South Sefton

A Bootle-based organisation that provides support to would-be social entrepreneurs has landed a major European training contract. South Sefton Development Trust has secured 290,000 euros from the European Commission's Leonardo da Vinci programme to develop a social enterprise training package in five other countries.

The Development Trust will adapt the content of its successful Ignite programme for use in Germany, Sweden, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Cyprus.

Ignite's mix of customised training, advice and support has already helped many people in Sefton and Liverpool to start social enterprises.

Ignite Europe will involve the Development Trust using the expertise and experience it has acquired on Merseyside to offer advice to partner organisations in each country on the best way to deliver training in social entrepreneurship.

The contract also covers the production of resource materials for trainers, the creation of a social enterprise website and the development of case studies based on existing social enterprise success stories in each country.

For more information, visit SSDT's website at:

<http://www.ssdtrust.co.uk>

Czech Republic



The Study on the Infrastructure of the Social Economy in the Czech Republic is now complete. Headed by Petra Franková, who visited us in August, the publication looks at its history, tackles definitions, considers the key actors and then produces detailed proposals. For further information, contact Network for Europe on 0151 237 3972 or email info@networkforeurope.eu

Strategic Partners - Europe

As part of the UK Government's Strategic Partners Programme for voluntary sector support organisations, we have been working closely with NCVO and Euclid. The next seminar in London, on Volunteering and Ageing is on 27 January - You can register for the event here:

<http://tinyurl.com/75pgacp>

A further event to look at Social Innovation and Social Business and how they are at the core of Europe's future is planned for late February. Details will be available shortly. For more information, check the Euclid website: www.euclidnetwork.eu/

Free membership

We are currently offering six months of free membership for voluntary organisations in the North West.

To take advantage of this offer, contact Network for Europe on 0151 237 3972 or email info@networkforeurope.eu

Coming up...

What Can Europe Do For You? 18 January 2012, Manchester.

Network for Europe are holding an event which will provide the opportunity to learn about current European funding programmes and future opportunities for the voluntary and community sector in the North West.

Places are still available, book yours now at: <http://eufunds.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 0151 237 3972 or email paul.avis@networkforeurope.eu



Post: 151 Dale Street
Liverpool
L2 2AH

Telephone: 0151 237 3972

Fax: 0151 237 3973

E-mail: info@networkforeurope.eu

Website: www.networkforeurope.eu

Facebook: www.facebook.com/networkforeurope

Twitter: [@network4europe](https://twitter.com/network4europe)