PMC Meeting 22 November 2018
Agenda Item 7 – Performance Framework, OP Amendment, Non-Financial Indicator Update

Performance Framework and OP Amendment

As the PMC is aware, the Managing Authority submitted a proposed amendment to the Operational Programme to the European Commission on 29 June 2018. This followed consultation with the PMC, including at the previous meeting of 22 May, and relevant IBs and beneficiaries.

The main purpose of the proposed amendment is to set out a revised Performance Framework for the OP, taking into account a number of factors, including –

- ➢ The incorrect assumptions which underpinned the setting of the original Performance Framework milestones and targets,
- ➢ The changing environment in which the OP is being implemented, and in particular the significant fall in youth unemployment, and
- ➢ The types of actions supported within Priorities have been subject to change since the outset of the Programme.

The proposed revised milestones and targets are set out in the table at Appendix 1, and can be compared with the original milestones and targets. The changes can be summarised as follows –

- ➢ Priority 1 – the 2018 milestone and 2023 target for participants have been lowered to reflect the change from number of courses delivered to number of unique participants. The 2023 financial target has also been increased to reflect the proposed re-allocation of €90 million from Priority 2 to Priority 1.
- ➢ Priority 2 – the only change to this Priority is to the 2023 financial target, to reflect the re-allocation referred to above.
- ➢ Priority 3 – While the financial milestone and target have not been amended, the milestones and targets for participants have been revised downwards to reflect the fact that persons benefitting from the relevant activities may benefit a number of times, but can only be counted once under ESF rules.
- ➢ Priority 4 – While the 2023 financial target remains unchanged, the 2018 milestone has been revised downwards to reflect the difficulties arising from the significant fall in youth unemployment since the outset of the OP. The participant milestone and target have also been revised downwards to reflect that participants should be counted only once.

Following the submission of the revised OP, the Commission wrote to the MA in late August, setting out a number of queries relating to the ETB Training for the Unemployed, Community Training Centres, and Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme (DFESS) activities. The MA responded to those queries in early September and the Commission subsequently wrote to the MA again in late September seeking further information on CTCs, DFESS and their eligibility under the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). The MA has been liaising with relevant colleagues in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, as the Department responsible for the Youth Guarantee, and will respond to this further letter very shortly.

The Commission has not provided any observations or queries in relation to the proposed revised Performance Framework. It is therefore hoped that, once the remaining outstanding queries have been dealt with, that the Commission will recommend the approval of the revised OP.

Non-Financial Indicator Data

The eCohesion IT system, which supports the submission of both financial and non-financial data to the MA by beneficiaries, went live at the end of March 2018. At that time, training on the use of the system had been provided by the ESF MA to approximately 250 individuals, from IBs, ETBs, higher education institutions, and other beneficiaries and projects under the aegis of the Departments of Justice & Equality and Employment Affairs & Social Protection. The MA also provided additional training to ETB staff in April 2018.

Over the course of April and May 2018, beneficiaries and IBs submitted participant data for the period 2014-2017 through the eCohesion system. Given the deadline of 30 May for the submission of the 2017 AIR to the Commission, the MA prioritised the submission of data relating to 2017 in the first instance, and requested that data for previous years should be uploaded as soon as possible.

The MA has conducted comprehensive validation checks of all data submitted to eCohesion to date, which analysed the data for both completeness and consistency. The MA has provided the results of those checks to the relevant IBs for follow up with the beneficiaries concerned. The main issues arising from these checks include –

➢ Certain beneficiaries providing a number of separate participant records in respect of the same participant (i.e. duplicate entries),
➢ Inconsistent Output Indicator data provided for some participants (e.g. participants recorded as being both unemployed and inactive)
➢ Inconsistent Result Indicator data provided for some participants (e.g. participants in education and training upon entry being recorded as being in education and training upon exit)
➢ Certain fields being left blank within the eCohesion templates (e.g. Unemployed = "Yes", but LTU, employed, and inactive all left blank instead of stating "No")

In August 2018, the MA wrote to each IB (other than DRCD – SICAP data is only required from 2019 onwards) and requested that each beneficiary should upload all relevant data for the period 2014-2017 to the eCohesion system by 5 October 2018, taking into account the results of the MA's validation checks as appropriate. The IBs were also requested to undertake their own checks on the revised data before submitting the declarations to the MA by mid-December 2018.

The MA has continued to liaise with IBs in respect of the re-submission of participant data, and the results arising from the validation checks. The position in relation to each relevant body is set out below –

➢ SOLAS – Given the volume of data concerned, the validation of SOLAS/ETB data was a lengthy process. It should be noted that consistency issues only arose in respect of data from legacy data systems – all data exported form the PLSS system conformed to ESF requirements, as expected. The MA is liaising with SOLAS in relation to the outcome of those checks, and the actions required to address consistency issues, including possible engagement with external IT vendors as appropriate. It is expected that ETBs will be in a position to submit revised data for the 2014-2016 period, where necessary, to eCohesion in the coming weeks.

- DJE – Revised data for all DJE activities is expected to be uploaded to eCohesion by end-November. The IB and MA will both conduct verification checks in December.
- DEASP – Revised data for all DEASP activities is expected to be uploaded by 23 November, and the IB and MA will both conduct verification checks before end-December.
- HEA – Revised data for Springboard and ICT Skills Conversion Courses to be uploaded in the coming weeks, and the MA will conduct verification checks in December. The revision of TLA data is ongoing, with the HEA liaising with the 25 HEIs concerned. Each HEI is uploading revised data as it is prepared.
- D/Defence – Revised data for 2017 provided. MA to conduct management verifications in December.
- DRCD – as above, SICAP data for 2018 does not need to be reported until Q1 2019.

Other Non-Financial Issues

- Non-Financial Guidelines – The MA has been updating the MA's Guidance on the Completion of Non-Financial Declarations to take account of changes arising from the Omnibus Regulation and data protection issues. The MA has also included additional detail on the process for conducting administrative and management verifications. The MA intends to issue the revised Guidance document to all IBs and beneficiaries once additional relevant eCohesion functionality, which is currently under development, has been rolled out on the live system, so that this functionality can also be reflected in the Guidance.
- DRCD/SICAP – Over the coming months, the MA will be liaising with DRCD and POBAL to ensure that the relevant beneficiaries are well placed to report SICAP participant data through eCohesion in Q1 next year. This will involve developing the required export functionality from POBAL's IRIS system, which supports the implementation of SICAP, and the provision of training to approximately 70 LCDC staff who will have access to eCohesion. It is likely this training will be provided in February 2019.

Appendix 1

Priority	Indicator	Current 2018 Milestone	Revised 2018 Milestone	Current 2023 Target	Revised 2023 Target
Priority 1: Promoting the attainment of sustainable and quality employment through relevant upskilling measures and supporting labour mobility.	Expenditure Certified (€)	97,033,740	*No change*	329,728,098	419,728,098
	The number of participants on training and upskilling programmes for the unemployed and jobseekers	99,148	72,716	134,511	104,316
Priority 2: Promoting Social Inclusion and combating discrimination in the labour market	Expenditure Certified (€)	14,368,000	*No change*	387,615,568	297,615,568
	The number of participants from disadvantaged groups on social inclusion employability programmes, including personal development towards employability programmes	43,494	*No change*	72,590	*No change*
Priority 3: Investing in Education, Training and Life Long Learning with a view to upskilling and re-skilling the labour force	Expenditure Certified (€)	48,368,580	*No change*	215,397,148	*No change*
	The number of participants with low education levels on further education/training programmes	358,600	163,486	526,600	200,986
	Number of disadvantaged and/or disabled persons assisted in accessing and continuing/remaining in third level education	132,354	58,200	185,296	58,200
Priority 4: Youth Employment Initiative	Expenditure Certified (€)	185,941,048	134,311,000	204,436,257	*No change*
	The number of YEI eligible participants on training/upskilling/personal development towards employability and work environment (including supports for self-employed) programmes/projects.	26,330	16,020	26,330	22,050