

**Minutes of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and  
Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020  
1<sup>st</sup> Monitoring Committee Meeting  
24<sup>th</sup> April 2015  
Landmark Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim.**

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**CHAIRMAN: Mr. Vincent Landers, Dept. of Education and Skills**

Attendance: See Appendix 1 – Attendance List

## **1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOMING COMMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed the members of the Committee to the Inaugural meeting of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020, in particular Ms. Cornelia Grosser Deputy Head of Unit, DG EMPL and Mr. Marc Vermyle, DG EMPL, new Desk Officer. Mr Vermyle replaces Ms. Renate Schopf. The Chairman, on behalf of the PMC, wished to have recorded the Committee's appreciation to Ms. Schopf for her work in relation to the HCI OP and the finalisation of the new OP.

### Launch of PEIL 2014-2020.

The Chairman informed the Committee about the successful launch of the PEIL 2014-2020 on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April in Dublin. The feedback on the launch was very positive from the attendees.

Ms. Cornelia Grosser, DG EMPL, thanked the ESF Managing Authority for its cooperation on the completion of both the Partnership Agreement and PEIL 2014-2020 during the intensive preparation period. She thanked the ESF MA for preparing the launch, which was informative and encouraging to hear of the impact from the beneficiaries; the Deputy Director General, Mr Zoltan Kazatsay had been impressed by the good feedback. She related Ms. Renate Schopf's best wishes and her regret at being unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Marc Vermyle introduced himself and said that he looked forward to working with the Committee in the implementation of the new programme.

## **2. Adoption of Agenda**

The Chairman presented the agenda for adoption. No additional items for inclusion were proposed. The Agenda was adopted.

### **3. Rules of Procedure for the Monitoring Committee**

The Chairman introduced the draft Rules of Procedure for the PEIL Monitoring Committee. As the draft document was only circulated a few days previously, he proposed to allow 2 weeks for comments to be forwarded to the Managing Authority. The Managing Authority would then re-circulate the draft document in two weeks' time for the Committee's approval by means of written procedure. If there were substantial amendments to the Rules, he would re-schedule the item for the next meeting of the Monitoring Committee.

### **4. OP Selection Procedures**

The Chairman introduced the draft PEIL Selection Procedures which had been circulated to the Committee members a few days previously; a further draft, incorporating any comments received, would be would be re-circulated in two weeks' time to the Monitoring Committee.

### **5. Overview of the PEIL 2014-2020.**

The Chairman outlined the economic environment that influenced the design and contents of the new Operational Programme, including

- Emergence from deep recession;
- labour market uncertainty;
- Employment prospects.

#### **Economic environment**

The Chairman stated that the economy was emerging from the deepest recession in the country's history. In terms of the labour market, there was uncertainty about what would happen next and whether sustainable growth could be maintained. Employment at the end of 2014 stood at 1.94m people in work; this represented a growth in employment of 1.5% in one year and all the growth resulted from full-time employment. There had been a fall in part-time employment at the same time. The rate of employment for 2014 was 67.4%. The aim agreed with the Commission was to reach 69-71% by 2020. Unemployment at the end of 2014 stood at 213,600, 40,000 less than at the same time a year earlier. The unemployment rate was 9.9% at the end of 2014, compared to 11.7% at the end of 2013.

There were 350,600 persons on the Live Register (seasonally adjusted) in March 2015, 40,000 less than the figure for March 2014. The numbers on the Live Register continued to decline at a rate between 4,000 and 5,000 a month. There was also an ongoing element of emigration in the overall picture. In relation to youth unemployment, the rate for the end of 2014 was 20.3% (down from 24.2% in 2013). The number of under 25's on the Live Register (seasonally adjusted) was approx. 51,100 at the end of 2014. By March 2015, the figure was 48,300.

The forecasts for growth in the economy for 2015 were about 4% and for 2016 approx. 3.5%. The employment rate for the end of 2014 was 62.6% (61.4% at the same point in 2013). It was difficult to predict the future trends for 2016 and 2017. The economic statistics underpinning the new ESF Programme were already changing and it was likely that the allocations for the PEIL would also change over the next few years.

## **PEIL 2014-2020**

The Chairman described the Priorities and Activities agreed for the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020. The Priorities were in line with the thematic objectives set out in Article 9 the CPR Regulation (1303/2013) for the ESI funds. The chosen thematic objectives for the ESF were:

- (8) promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility;*
- (9) promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination;*
- (10) investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning;*

The five **Priorities** contained within the PEIL Programme were as follows:

1. Promoting the attainment of sustainable and quality employment through relevant upskilling measures and supporting labour mobility
2. Promoting Social Inclusion and combating discrimination in the labour market
3. Investing in Education, Training and Life Long Learning with a view to upskilling and re-skilling the labour force
4. Youth Employment Initiative
5. Technical Assistance

A full list of the Priorities, the thematic objectives, the investment priorities and the Activities contained within each of these headings can be found at **Appendix II** below.

## **Presentation on the YEI**

Ms. Cornelia Grosser, DG EMPL, outlined the Commission's views on the Youth Employment Initiative

- To support in particular some aspects of the Youth Guarantee schemes (actions for individuals)
- The full YEI budget will be committed already in 2014-15
- YEI will be fully integrated in ESF programming
- Direct and speedy results expected

In order to achieve speedy results, a new proposal for an additional pre-financing of 30% of the YEI specific allocation had been proposed. The pre-financing allocation for Ireland was €19,762,171.51. However, half of this amount would have to be included in a payment

application to the Commission within 12 months of entry into force; certain other conditions (designation, assessment by AA and opinion, etc.) needed to be fulfilled to be able to submit a claim. In the event that these pre-conditions were not met the pre-financed amount would have to be returned to the Commission.

Achieving results was now the main focus of the Commission, the Member States and the European Parliament. Evaluation and reporting of results were major issues, with special focus on quantitative data (indicators). The first report on YEI was due at end of April 2015. The first evaluation on YEI is due by the end of 2015. See presentation on the ESF website at: <http://www.esf.ie/en/Programmes/ESF-Programme-for-Employability-Inclusion-and-Learning-PEIL-2014-2020/Monitoring-Committee/PEIL-2014-2020-Monitoring-Committee-1st-Meeting-2015/>

## **6. Draft Activity Implementation Plans**

The Chairman referred to the latest draft Activity Implementation Plans (AIPs) circulated on the previous day to the Committee, giving an overview of the planned activities comprising the new Operational Programme. He asked the Intermediate Bodies to complete and return the remaining AIPs as soon as possible. The Managing Authority would circulate all the AIPs in two weeks to the Committee. However, if there were problems with finalising the draft documents, he would defer their approval of them to the next Monitoring Committee meeting.

## **7. National Financial Management and Control**

Mr. Rory O’Rua, D/PER, summarised the progress with the Partnership Agreement and the related Operational Programmes. The Partnership Agreement had been approved by the Commission on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2014. The Border Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 was approved on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2014 and the Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 was approved on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

The Implementation Group comprises all OP Managing Authorities. Monitoring Committee meetings had been held for all the OPs approved by the Commission.

He noted that the ESF Certifying Authority had already issued its Eligibility Circular. The National Circular for Management and Control Procedures would be issued by D/PER. An interim circular would be issued by the end of June, but D/PER would not be in a position to issue the finalised version until the *ecohesion* project was further advanced. An *ecohesion* sub-group had been set up to oversee the design and introduction of the IT system. A draft specification document had been prepared by the sub-group. Mr. Tom Whelan, ESF Certifying Authority, advised he had informed via email all the Intermediate Bodies in relation to the *ecohesion* system and what was required to link up all the IT systems for the Beneficiary Bodies, the IBs and the ESF system (CA and MA).

## **8. National ESF Eligibility Rules**

Mr. Whelan, Head of the ESF Certifying Authority, introduced his presentation in relation to the new Circular on the ESF Eligibility Rules Circular No.1 2015. The presentation covered the following areas:

- Consequences of errors in the ESF claims
- Causes of errors in the ESF claims
- 2014-2020 changes to ESF claims/errors
- 2014-2020 ESF Eligibility Rules Circular 1/2015

A Qualified Audit Authority Opinion would mean probable suspension and potential permanent loss of EU/ESF receipts for Ireland. If the error rate was less than 2%, then an unqualified Audit Authority opinion was likely. If the error rate was greater than 2%, this would result in a qualified Audit Authority unless timely corrective action was taken and independently tested.

Among the causes of errors in ESF claims were ineligible expenditure costs or participants; over complex rules being included; inadequate management verifications; insufficient documents to support costs; non-compliance with Public Procurement; non-compliance with EU/ESF Publicity and treatment of income generated by co-funded activities.

The main changes to the ESF claims for the period 2014-2020 were outlined. The AIPs should clearly outline who the targets were, i.e. eligible participants, for the Activities and related criteria for participation. The data captured for those participants must demonstrate that the participant complies with the criteria set to partake on the co-financed activity. There is also a separate requirement to capture additional data/indicator fields of participants to allow the individual to be counted towards the performance reserve targets. But, importantly, this additional data is not considered a criteria to determine the eligibility of expenditure relating to that individual. In relation to the Simplified Cost Options, once they were set out in the AIPs, they could not be changed. All documents and the presentation will be available on the ESF website.

*See presentation on ESF website at: <http://www.esf.ie/en/Programmes/ESF-Programme-for-Employability-Inclusion-and-Learning-PEIL-2014-2020/Monitoring-Committee/PEIL-2014-2020-Monitoring-Committee-1st-Meeting-2015/>*

## **9. Update on the following:**

### **a. Horizontal Principles**

Ms. Carole Sullivan, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), introduced her presentation on the Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination Horizontal Principle. She summarised the establishment of IHREC and the introduction of the IHREC Act 2014. She noted the new aspects of the legislation, primarily the new positive duty on public bodies to

take due note of equality and human rights (Section 42), and the new promotion of intercultural understanding. Article 5 of the CPR (1303/2013) required that bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination should be involved in preparation and implementation of programmes and monitoring committees. The Partnership Agreement 2014-2020 required that IHREC would be requested to participate in the monitoring structures. The ESF Regulation (1304/2013) underlined its commitment to eliminating gender inequality and combating discrimination through ex-ante conditionalities. She further noted that the PEIL OP's annual implementation reports submitted in 2017 and 2019 may set out information and assess the specific action to promote equality between men and woman and to prevent discrimination, in particular accessibility for persons with disabilities. IHREC has submitted its observation to the Managing Authority on the draft AIPs and made a number of proposals in this regard. It was IHREC's role to monitor and support compliance. With regard to the draft AIPs, she noted the following:

- Equality does not feature prominently in contextual statements
- Quality of commitments varies and lacks detail – tendency towards passive approach “open to all”
- Lack of awareness that equality considerations should feature in selection criteria
- Danger that equality only considered an issue for targeted activities

See full presentation at: <http://www.esf.ie/en/Programmes/ESF-Programme-for-Employability-Inclusion-and-Learning-PEIL-2014-2020/Monitoring-Committee/PEIL-2014-2020-Monitoring-Committee-1st-Meeting-2015/>

Mr. Damien Clarke, D/Agriculture inquired if training would be available or provided in relation to this horizontal principle. Ms. Sullivan stated that IHREC didn't have a full staff complement as yet, but it was their intention to discuss the issue of training with the Managing Authorities.

The Chairman confirmed that the Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination Horizontal Principle would be included on future Monitoring Committee Agendas. He thanked Ms Sullivan for her presentation.

## **b. Communication Strategy**

Ms. Catherine Ryan, ESF Managing Authority, outlined the requirement in the CPR Regulation (Article 116) in relation to the communication strategy, which must be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for approval no later than six months after the adoption (24<sup>th</sup> February 2015) of the Operational Programme. PEIL 2014-2020 was approved by the Commission on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2015. The deadline for approval of the Communications Strategy by the Monitoring Committee is 24<sup>th</sup> August. The draft communication strategy document would be circulated for written approval in advance of that date.

### **c. Evaluation Strategy**

Mr. William McIntosh, Head of the ESF Managing Authority, outlined the background to the introduction of an Evaluation Strategy for PEIL. Article 114 of the CPR (1303/2013) required strengthened monitoring and evaluation of the expenditure under the OP. The Evaluation Plan had to be in place one year after adoption of OP i.e., before the end of February, 2016 (Article 56, 114). Evaluation could be carried out internally or externally but must be functionally independent of the authorities responsible for programme implementation. The ESF Managing Authority proposed to prepare an RfT to procure the necessary expertise to undertake the required evaluations. The EU Commission had produced a number of Guidance documents, which were available. At least twice during the OP an evaluation shall assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of ESF support including YEI and implementation of YG. However, under ESF Regulation (Article 19) first evaluation (of the YEI) must be completed by the end of 2015, the second by the end of 2018. See presentation on ESF website: <http://www.esf.ie/en/Programmes/ESF-Programme-for-Employability-Inclusion-and-Learning-PEIL-2014-2020/Monitoring-Committee/PEIL-2014-2020-Monitoring-Committee-1st-Meeting-2015/>

## **10. A.O.B.**

### Next meeting:

The Chairman said that the progress on the items discussed above would influence the date for the next meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman thanked those present for their attendance and contributions, the hotel for its service, the sound engineer for his work and the Managing Authority and Certifying Authority staff for completing the documentation and other logistical arrangements for the meeting.

## Appendix I – Attendance

| NAME              | ORGANISATION                 |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Vincent Landers   | ESF – DES                    |
| William McIntosh  | ESF – DES                    |
| Catherine Ryan    | ESF – DES                    |
| Conor Shiels      | ESF – DES                    |
| Noel Martin       | ESF – DES                    |
| Fiona Reilly      | ESF – DES                    |
| Tom Whelan        | ESF – DES                    |
| Andrew Diggins    | DES                          |
| Cornelia Grosser  | DG EMPL, European Commission |
| Marc Vermyle      | DG EMPL, European Commission |
| Brid O'Brien      | INOUE                        |
| Gerard Gasparro   | SOLAS                        |
| David Dunne       | SOLAS                        |
| Berny Daly        | SOLAS                        |
| Gerry Roughneen   | D/Justice & Equality         |
| Aoife Glennon     | DSP                          |
| Rory O'Rua        | D/PER                        |
| Vincent Dunphy    | Southern Regional Assembly   |
| Barry Guckian     | NWRA                         |
| Damien Clarke     | DAFM                         |
| Carole Sullivan   | IHREC                        |
| Ruth Pritchard    | POBAL                        |
| David Salter      | AA, DES                      |
| Jason McLoughlin  | D/Justice & Equality         |
| Joe Gavin         | D/Justice & Equality         |
| Clodagh McDonnell | DECLG                        |
| Labhaoise McKenna | EMRA                         |
| Paddy Smith       | NWRA                         |
| Patrick O'Leary   | Dept. of Justice             |
| Brian Liggett     | SEUPB                        |
| Fintan O'Brien    | DAFM                         |
| Paul McDonnell    | Probation Service            |

## Appendix II – Priorities, Investment Priorities and Activities 2014-2020

|                            | PEIL 2014-2020   | IB                        |
|----------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| <b>Axis Priority</b>       | Priority 1: Promoting the attainment of sustainable and quality employment through relevant upskilling measures and supporting labour mobility.  |                           |
| <b>Investment priority</b> | Access to employment for job-seekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility;   |                           |
|                            | ETB Training for the Unemployed  | D/Education & Skills      |
|                            | Springboard  | D/Education & Skills      |
|                            | ICT Skills Conversion Course   | D/Education & Skills      |
|                            | Momentum   | D/Education & Skills      |
|                            | Intra EU Mobility  | D/Social Protection       |
|                            | Transnational  | D/Education & Skills      |
| <b>Axis Priority</b>       | Priority 2: Promoting Social Inclusion and combating discrimination in the labour market   |                           |
| <b>Investment priority</b> | Active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability;  |                           |
|                            | Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)  | D/Comm Environ Local Govt |
|                            | Youthreach   | D/Education & Skills      |
|                            | Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs)   | D/Justice & Equality      |
|                            | Young Persons Probation (YPP) projects   | D/Justice & Equality      |
|                            | Social inclusion of Prisoners/Ex-offenders through employability guidance and placement  | D/Justice & Equality      |
|                            | Disability Project   | D/Social Protection       |
|                            | Transnational  | D/Education & Skills      |
| <b>Investment priority</b> | Combating all forms of discrimination and promoting equal opportunities;   |                           |
|                            | Integration and employment of Migrants   | D/Justice & Equality      |
|                            | Tús Nua project  | D/Justice & Equality      |
|                            | Gender Equality  | D/Justice & Equality      |
|                            | Equality mainstreaming   | IHREC                     |
| <b>Axis Priority</b>       | Priority 3: Investing in Education, Training and Life Long Learning with a view to upskilling and re-skilling the labour force   |                           |
| <b>Investment priority</b> | Improving the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged groups;  |                           |
|                            | Third Level Access   | D/Education & Skills      |
| <b>Investment priority</b> | Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences; |                           |
|                            | BTE  | D/Education & Skills      |
|                            | Adult Literacy   | D/Education & Skills      |
|                            | Transnational  | D/Education & Skills      |
| <b>Axis Priority</b>       | Priority 4: Youth Employment Initiative  |                           |
| <b>Investment priority</b> | Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee;    |                           |
|                            | Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) Scheme   | D/Social Protection       |
|                            | JobsPlus Incentive Scheme  | D/Social Protection       |
|                            | Tús  | D/Social Protection       |
|                            | Job Bridge, the National Internship Scheme   | D/Social Protection       |
|                            | Youthreach   | D/Education & Skills      |
|                            | Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)  | D/Comm Environ Local Govt |
|                            | Momentum   | D/Education & Skills      |
| <b>Axis Priority</b>       | Technical Assistance   |                           |
|                            | OP Technical Assistance  | D/Education & Skills      |