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Government of Ireland

Minutes of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020

7th Monitoring Committee Meeting

Thursday 22nd November 2018

Clock Tower, Marlborough Street, DES.

CHAIRPERSON: Ms. Mary McGarry, Department of Education and Skills

Attendance and Apologies: See Appendix 1 – Attendance List

Chairperson's Welcoming Comments

The Chairperson welcomed the members of the Committee the European Commission representative, Ms Joanna Gawrylczyk-Malesa, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission, to the seventh meeting of the PEIL PMC. She thanked the outgoing Members Mr. Tim Maverley, Ms Carole Sullivan, and Mr Gerry Roughneen (all DJE), Ms Aileen Nolan (DD), Mr Paul Hill (DEASP), Ms Ruth Prichard (Pobal), and Mr. David Salter (ESF Audit Authority), who retired recently, for their valued contribution to the Committee. She welcomed the new Members Mr Walter Johnson, Ms Anne Byrne, and Mr Seamus Concagh (all DJE), Mr Micheal O'Raghallaigh (DD), Ms Sharon Keane (DEASP), Ms Michelle McDonagh (Pobal) and Ms Máire O'Mahony (ESF Audit Authority) to the Committee.

1. Agenda

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

2. Minutes of 6th PMC held on 24th May 2018

The Chairperson referred to the [minutes of the sixth PMC meeting \(item no. 2\)](#) circulated to the Committee for adoption. Two further amendments were received, one in relation to page 2 and one in relation to the attendance list on page 11. One additional amendment was received at the meeting in relation to a typo on page 5. The minutes were approved, subject to the amendments being carried out.

The Chairperson reviewed the Matters arising from the last meeting and noted the following:

- The Revised Rules of Procedure on the PMC Role and Responsibilities were published on the ESF website;
- The signed Code of Conduct forms have been received for the majority of members; The Chairperson requested that the outstanding forms should be signed/submitted asap;
- An updated Communications Strategy and updated ESF Information and Communication guidelines were issued to the IBs (and Beneficiaries where there is no IB) and published on the ESF website;
- The AIR for 2017 was submitted to the Commission on the 31st May. The Commission accepted the report (27th June 2018) and raised a number of issues/areas that needed attention;
- The Delegated Act for the Article 14(1) SCOs was adopted on 28th May 2018, published in the Official Journal of the EU in August 2018, and came into force 20 days following publication ([EU Delegated Regulation 1127 of 2018](#)); and
- Data Protection Agreements between DES Managing Authority, DPER (as System Administrator for the eCohesion System) and the IBs/BBs were issued 24th/26th October and the signed Agreements were due back on 30th November.
- In relation to the Horizontal Principles working group, the Chairperson noted that the planned meeting has been rescheduled to the 3rd December due to work in the ESF MA and the unavailability of a number of people.

3. Overview of PEIL Activity status and AIP amendments

Mr Andrew Diggins, ESFMA, introduced a paper ([AIP amendments \(item no.3\)](#)) - outlining updates to two Activities namely the Ability Programme, which was launched on the 1st June 2018 and including a list of the successful projects and the Youth Employment Support Scheme under Priority 4 YEI. In addition, there were proposed amendments to a number of the AIPs, including ETB Training for the Unemployed (ESF 1.1) and Community Training Centres (ESF 4.8) following the finalisation and publication of the Delegated Regulation 1127/2018. Two other AIPs, i.e. Springboard (ESF 1.2) and ICT Skills Conversion Courses (ESF 1.3), were amended following the broadening of the eligibility criteria. The contact details for a number of other AIPs were updated.

The Chairperson sought the agreement of the Members to the revised changes to the AIPs as presented. She also sought agreement to change the contact details of AIPs without bringing these changes to the PMC. The changes were agreed.

4. Presentation on Ability Scheme

Ms Kellyann McGrory, Pobal, introduced her presentation ([Presentation No.1](#)) on the Ability Programme, which was launched in September 2017. She charted the application process from the development of an online application portal, the call for applications, the holding of information events to the closing date of 31st January 2018. Ms McGrory outlined the criteria used, with the focus on young people with disabilities aged between 15 and 29 years. The targeted applicants were community, voluntary and not-for-profit organisations that supported people with disabilities and provided training, pre-employment and/or employment supports. The duration of the projects was between two and three years with funding between €200,000 up to a maximum of €750,000 per project. She outlined the appraisal guidance provided and the appraisal process followed by Pobal. The number of applications received was 59, but there was only funding available for 27 projects. A brief outline of the type of projects funded was provided including disability organisations, national

organisations, local development companies, youth organisations and partnerships; further details was available from Pobal's website (www.pobal.ie) The type of Activities supported included project workers/job coaches with person centred planning approaches to identify pathways for progression to education, training and/or employment; tailored training and youth work promoting the development of the soft skills, confidence and independence required to participate in education, training and employment; transition programmes to progress to further/higher level education, training and/or employment; and capacity building programmes for employers, mainstream employment services and education and training providers. Ms McGrory outlined the expected outcomes to be delivered based on a target of 2,600 young people being supported. She also gave details of the evaluation to be carried out by an external evaluator (already appointed) and the aims of the evaluation.

A number of questions were raised by the Committee Members in relation to data collection and associated problems with the collection of it, GDPR, the progression of young people with disabilities to third level education, supports for different types of disabilities, physical, intellectual, social, etc., the perceived focus on the S/E Region. Information brochures were issued in all Regions and the case officers promoted the programme locally. The only difficulty encountered so far was in recruiting staff, not participants.

5. General updates on eCohesion, Designation, etc.

eCohesion

The Chairperson gave an update on the latest position on the eCohesion system. The Astron Report of May 2018 (evaluating the e-Cohesion system) found that the overall operation of the e-Cohesion system addressed the designation criteria subject to resolution of the issues in their recommendations, and once they were carried out, they issued an unqualified opinion on the 21st September 2018. [See Note \(item 5\)](#)

Designation

The ESF Managing and Certifying Authorities have now been designated for the PEIL OP, following the examination undertaken by the independent audit body (the ESF AA) under Article 124(2) of the CPR. The IAB has provided an unqualified opinion that the MA and CA being designated for the OP complied with the designation criteria relating to internal control environment, risk management, management and control activities and monitoring. The designations are effective from 13th November 2018.

Complaints Procedure

The ESF MA developed the ESF PEIL Complaints Procedure and associated Complaint Form ([Complaints Procedure](#) and [Complaint Form \(item no 5\)](#)) in line with Article 74(3) of the CPR. They are also available on the ESF website at: <https://www.esf.ie/en/About-Us/Complaints/>. The Complaints Procedure covers complaints relating to the ESF Policy and Operations Unit's performance of its functions; the Programme Monitoring Committee; and a project or activity co-funded by the ESF under the PEIL (e.g. regarding calls for proposals, functioning of internal controls). The Procedures and Form were provided to the IBs and Beneficiaries (where there is no IB) on 24th October 2018.

Anti-fraud Strategy

The ESF MA hosted a training session on promoting best practice in relation to anti-fraud measures, targeted at Intermediate Bodies and Beneficiaries on 14th September 2018. The support of Mr Stewart Roche, Management Accountant in the HEA was acknowledged for his participation in delivering the seminar. The MA circulated its “ESF Anti-Fraud Strategy” and “ESF Anti-Fraud and Conflict of Interest Policy” to the IBs and Beneficiaries (where there is no IB) on 25th October 2018 ([see both documents \(item no 5\)](#)). The MA is currently reviewing the responses received from the IBs.

6. Financial Progress Report and Interim

Mr Andrew Diggins, ESF MA, presented [the financial progress report \(item no. 6\)](#) and informed the Committee that the Managing Authority and the Certifying Authority had processed the first payment application totalling €129.1m ESF. This met the N+3 requirement (€127.7m) as per Article 136 of the CPR. A second payment application, representing €82m ESF across 3 ESF Activities, was in the process of being verified and certified by the relevant IBs with the Managing Authority and Certifying Authority at this point planning to verify and certify same in December before submitting to the Commission. Mr Diggins thanked the SOLAS team in particular, for their work on the first claim. He also thanked both of his ESF MA Compliance and Verifications teams for their work on the claim. See also the [Financial Summary \(item no 6a\)](#).

7. Performance Framework, OP amendment and non-financial Indicators update

Mr Hugh Geoghegan, update the Members [on the Performance Framework, the OP amendment and the revised non-financial Indicators \(item no 7\)](#). The MA submitted a proposed amendment to the OP to the European Commission on 29 June 2018, following consultation with the PMC and relevant IBs and beneficiaries. A number of factors led to the proposed amendment to the Performance Framework for the OP included 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 also changed since the beginning of the OP. All the Priorities were amended, except Priority 2; Priority 3 had the biggest change to the number of participants, (the number of participants in the Activity instead of the number of participants per course).

The Commission came back to the MA in August and early September with queries; and again in late September seeking further information on CTCs, DFESS and their eligibility under the YEI. The MA has been liaising with relevant colleagues in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 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 itself.

The eCohesion system went live in March 2018 and the Intermediate Bodies have been inputting data in relation to 2017 and previous years. The MA has carried out 100% desk checks on this data for consistency and completeness and sent feedback to the IBs.

The MA is currently updating the Non-Financial Guidelines to take account of changes arising from the Omnibus Regulation and data protection issues. Additional details on the process for conducting

administrative and management verifications will also be included. The MA intends to issue the revised Guidance document to all IBs and Beneficiaries once additional relevant eCohesion functionality has been rolled out on the live system.

In relation to DRCD/SICAP and Pobal, the MA will liaise with them over the coming months to ensure that the relevant Beneficiaries are well placed to report SICAP participant data through eCohesion in Q1 next year and the provision of training to approximately 70 LCDC staff who will have access to eCohesion (February 2019).

Ms Joanne Gawrylczyk-Malesa, European Commission, suggested that the MA should in future provide the PMC with detailed indicator data by activity and Priority to inform its work. The MA agreed that this would be done in future.

Mr Gerry Browne, DJE, said that they would not be able to meet the deadlines set out in the MA's paper (the Performance Framework, the OP amendment and the revised non-financial Indicators (item no 7).

Mr Aidan O'Brien, EU Funds/DJE, asked about the plans for the IT system for the next round of funding (2021-2027). The Chairperson said that the issue had been raised with DPER, who would likely be the lead department for the next IT system.

8. PEIL Mid-Term Evaluation

Ms Theresa Ryan, ESF MA, introduced the [PEIL Evaluation update \(item no 8\)](#) paper to the Members of the Committee. As set out in the Evaluation Plan, an evaluation is being carried out in 2018 to address two regulatory requirements: the requirement under Art 56 of the CPR to carry out an evaluation at least once during the programming period on how support from the ESF has contributed to the objectives of each Priority; and the requirement under Article 19(6) of the ESF Regulation to carry out at least two evaluations of effectiveness, efficiency and impact in relation to YEI. The first of the YEI evaluations was completed in December 2015. The second must be completed by the end of 2018.

An Evaluation Steering Group was set up (see Appendix 1 of the Evaluation paper) and the evaluation commenced following the appointment of Fitzpatrick Associates in June 2018. The terms of reference are set out in Appendix 2 of the paper. Fitzpatrick Associates have submitted inception, interim and draft final reports to the Evaluation Steering Group. The final evaluation report is due to be submitted to the Evaluation Steering Group on 10 December 2018. Subject to the Group's approval of the report, it is intended to submit the report to the PMC for approval by written procedure before Christmas.

Other Evaluations

- 1) SOLAS commissioned an evaluation of the **Youthreach Activity** (ESF 4.5) as delivered by the Youthreach Centres and the Community Training Centres. The evaluation commenced in September 2017 by the ESRI and the final report is expected before the end of the year.
- 2) A second evaluation commissioned by SOLAS involves the **Specific Skills Training**, which is funded under the **ETB Training for the unemployed** (ESF 1.1). The evaluation is being carried out by Indecon International Economic Consultants.

- 3) Pobal has engaged Quality Matters to carry out an external evaluation of the **Ability Programme** (ESF 2.6) over the lifetime of the Programme with the final report expected in June 2020.
- 4) The Department of Justice and Equality plans to commission an external evaluation of the **Garda Youth Diversion Projects** in 2019.

9. Information & Communications Update

Ms Nicola Finnegan, ESF Communication Officer, introduced her paper on the progress of the [Information and Communications Activities update \(item 9\)](#) in 2018. There were over 50 ESF related events held in Ireland up to November 2018, the ESF MA attended 19 of these events. The ESF MA collaborated with Leargas to host an Erasmus+ Discovery Day for ESF co-funded projects. Up to 21 training sessions and briefings were provided. The Unit distributed 48 ESF Popup banners, approx. 10,000 ESF leaflets and circulated over 5,000 ESF Newsletters. On the social media front, there were 785 twitter followers, 2,585 profile views, 232 tweets were received, about 200 retweets, 159,500 impressions. There were up to 12,800 ESF website hits.

The annual activity for 2018 was held at the National Ploughing Championships (18-20 September, Scraggan, Co. Offaly) in partnership with DPER and the two ERDF MAs. A number of the ESF co-funded programmes were also promoted separately including EURES, SICAP, Adult Literacy, Traineeships and the Back to Education Initiative.

2018 marked 30 years of Youthreach. The National Association of Youthreach Coordinators (NAYC) hosted YRFest in the National Sports Campus in Blanchardstown on 24th October, which was attended by Youthreach learners and staff from all over the country. The event included sports activities, learner relevant presentations, interactive and stage entertainment, workshops and zoned exhibitions areas. The Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh T.D. attended the event. The ESF MA provided funding to the NAYC for 110 30th Anniversary Banners. The HEA provided information on Third Level Access funds to the attendees at the event.

On the compliance front, the ESF MA completed compliance checks on 620 websites (1000's webpages). Further letters will issue once final findings are examined. Article 125 checks will include compliance checks on other relevant communication materials such as application forms/information leaflets/publicity material.

In relation to planned activities for 2019, the ESF MA are partnering with AONTAS for the STAR Awards 2019 where there will be an award for the most innovative use of ESF Funding. Further compliance checks on communication materials such as application forms/information leaflets/publicity material will be carried out over the coming months. The ESF MA will continue to support the IB's, Beneficiaries and Projects in communicating the ESF co-funding and to provide support, guidance and training to ESF bodies. The ESF MA will write to the PMC in the first quarter of 2019 to seek the opinion on its planned activities.

10. Developments for next Programming Period Post 2020 – ESF+

The Chairperson briefed the Committee on the progress of the draft Regulations and their implications. She drew the attention of the Committee to the two presentations issued by the Commission. The first presentation – [ESF+ Specific Objectives](#) – focussed on improving access to

employment and more active social inclusion. The second presentation - [Draft CPR Enabling Conditions and Performance Framework](#) – including the changes from the current CPR.

She also referred to the [Opinion of the ESF Committee of 15th November 2018](#) on the contents of the 2021-2027 ESF+. She promised to keep the Committee updated on the progress of the draft Regulations and any ESF related developments.

11. AOB

There were no additional items raised under AOB.

12. Date of next meeting

The Chair thanked the Members for their ongoing co-operation and attendance and participation.

The next Programme Monitoring Committee meeting will be held on the 16th May 2019.

APPENDIX 1 - ATTENDANCE

	NAME	ORGANISATION
1	Damien Clarke	ESFF MA
2	Lisa Keveney	DRCD
3	Michelle McDonagh	POBAL
4	Kellyann McGrory	POBAL
5	Sharon Keane	DEASP
6	David Dunne	SOLAS
7	Siobhan Joyce	Defence
8	Brian Liggett	SEUPB
9	Gerard Gasparro	SOLAS
10	Aideen Clery	IYJS
11	Kevin Stewart	IYJS
12	Fiona Davis	HEA
13	Gerry Browne	DJE
14	Clare Droney	DJE
15	Dr. Kara McGann	IBEC
16	John Collins	DES AA
17	Máire O'Mahony	DES AA
18	Dominic Greene	WWETB
19	David Waters	DEASP
20	Grace O'Malley	DEASP
21	Abed Aldakar	IHREC
22	Anne Byrne	EU Funds DJE
23	Aidan O'Brien	EU Funds DJE
24	AnnMarie Quarry	DJE
25	Stewart Roche	HEA
26	Joseph Keaney	Probation Services
27	Barry Guckian	NWRA
28	James Doorley	NYCI
29	Joanna Gawrylczyk-Malesa	European Commission
30	Mary McGarry	ESF MA

31	Hugh Geoghegan	ESF MA
32	Theresa Ryan	ESF MA
33	Andrew Diggins	ESF MA
34	Catherine Ryan	ESF MA
35	Nicola Finnegan	ESF MA
36	Cathy Dolan	ESF MA
37	Ashling Abbott	ESF MA
38	Stuart Morris	ESF MA
39	Ruth Shannon	ESF MA
40	Ian Healy	ESF MA
41	Catherine Ormsby	ESF MA
	Apologies	
	Bríd O'Brien	INOUE
	Tony Donohoe	IBEC
	Amanda Taylor	CDETBT
	Vincent Dunphy	SRA
	Rod Tierney	SOLAS
	Dawn Lambe	DJE
	Laure Antoniotti	EMRA
	Deirdre Toomey	IHREC