

**Minutes of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and  
Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020  
2<sup>nd</sup> Monitoring Committee meeting  
held on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2016  
in the Clock Tower, Marlborough Street, D/ES.**

**CHAIRPERSON: Ms. Mary McGarry, Dept. of Education and Skills**

Attendance: See Appendix 1 – Attendance List

**CHAIRMAN’S WELCOMING COMMENTS**

The Chairperson welcomed the members of the Committee to the second meeting of the PEIL PMC.

**1. AGENDA**

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

**2. MINUTES OF 1<sup>st</sup> PMC**

The Chairperson presented the minutes of the first Monitoring Committee meeting for adoption. No amendments were proposed. The minutes were adopted.

**3. MATTERS ARISING**

ITEM NO.	TOPIC	ACTION
NO. 3	Rules of Procedures	Adopted by written procedure on 23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2015. See link to <a href="http://www.esf.ie">www.esf.ie</a>
No. 4	OP Selection Procedures	As the individual AIPs set out the agreed selection procedures it was decided that no selection separate procedures document was necessary.
No. 6	Draft AIPs	The finalised AIPs were adopted by written procedure on the 21 <sup>st</sup> August 2015. See link: <a href="http://esf.ie/en/Programmes/ESF-Programme-for-Employability-Inclusion-and-Learning-PEIL-2014-2020/Activity-Implementation-Plan/">http://esf.ie/en/Programmes/ESF-Programme-for-Employability-Inclusion-and-Learning-PEIL-2014-2020/Activity-Implementation-Plan/</a>
No. 9 (b)	Communications Strategy	Having incorporated Members’ comments received, the Communications Strategy was subsequently circulated and adopted by written procedure on 20 <sup>th</sup> August 2015. See link: <a href="http://esf.ie/en/Info-Publicity/Information-and-Publicity-Guidelines-2014-2020/">http://esf.ie/en/Info-Publicity/Information-and-Publicity-Guidelines-2014-2020/</a>
No. 9 (c)	Evaluation Strategy	See item on today’s Agenda

#### **4. Economic outlook and Europe 2020**

Mr. Hugh Geoghegan, ESF Managing Authority, updated the Committee on the current economic outlook and Ireland's progress towards meeting its Europe 2020 targets.

With regard to the general economic outlook, and as set out in the Government's draft Stability Programme Update which was submitted to the European Commission on 26 April, all of the major indicators point to the development of a broad-based recovery of the Irish economy.

The economy grew by 7.8% in 2015 and is projected to grow by 4.9% in 2016. This growth was mainly attributable to domestic demand, with consumer expenditure in particular seeing an increase. Using GNP, which strips out some of the distortions caused by MNCs, economic growth was at 5.7% in 2015, and is projected to average 4.1% in 2016.

With regard to the labour market, employment is now at 2009 levels, and is approaching 2 million. Unemployment is now at its lowest since December 2008, at 8.6%.

The Government's finances are also improving. Tax receipts were at €45.6 billion in 2015, 7.8% above target, and are forecast to hit €47.2 billion in 2016. Net expenditure was €42.9 billion in 2015, with gross expenditure (i.e. including debt repayments etc) at €54.7 billion. The national debt peaked at over 120% of GDP in 2012, but had fallen to 93.8% at end-2015 (~€200 billion).

While Ireland remains vulnerable to external shocks, such as potential economic instability in the Emerging Market Economies, e.g. China, and the possibility of Brexit, the medium-term outlook is for average economic growth of 3.8% over the period 2017-2021 and employment growth of 2% per annum over the same period. Unemployment is projected to reach 6% by 2021.

With regard to Ireland's Europe 2020 targets, of the 5 headline targets set out in strategy, 3 are of direct relevance to PEIL – employment, education, and social inclusion and poverty reduction. Progress towards these targets is set out in the National Reform Programme 2016, provided to the European Commission in conjunction with the Stability Programme Update in April.

For employment, Ireland's target is to raise the employment rate of 20-64 year olds to 69-71%. In 2010 the rate was 64.7%, and this has now increased to 68.8% in 2015. The NRP notes that strategies including the Action Plan for Jobs, the National Skills Strategy and the Further Education and Training Strategy will continue to contribute to the achievement of Ireland's target.

For education, Ireland has two targets relating to (i) school leavers and (ii) tertiary attainment. With regard to school leavers, the target is to reduce the percentage of early school leavers to 8%. In 2015 the rate was 8.4%, compared with 11.4% in 2010. Again, the NRP notes the contribution that programmes like DEIS and SICAP are making to the continued progress towards the target.

For tertiary attainment, the target is to increase the share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary education to 60%. In 2010, the rate was 50% and in 2015 this had increased to 52.6%. The NRP refers to the expected impact of the Higher Education Strategy, the establishment of SUSI, the National Access Plan 2015-2019 and the recent review of Third-Level Assistance in achieving this target.

Finally, Ireland is tasked with reducing by 200,000 the number of people in combined poverty, i.e. either consistent poverty, at-risk-of poverty or basic deprivation). The NRP acknowledges that less progress has been made towards the achievement of this target, but notes that basic deprivation rates fell in 2015 for the first time since 2007. However, further progress is required.

See presentation at: <http://esf.ie/en/Programmes/ESF-Programme-for-Employability-Inclusion-and-Learning-PEIL-2014-2020/Monitoring-Committee/PEIL-Monitoring-Committee-Meetings/PEIL-2014-2020-Monitoring-Committee-Meeting-13-May-2016/>

See the draft Stability Programme Update 2016 at:

[http://www.finance.gov.ie/sites/default/files/SPU\\_FINAL\\_post\\_Oireachtas\\_0.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.ie/sites/default/files/SPU_FINAL_post_Oireachtas_0.pdf)

See the National Reform Programme Ireland 2016 at:

[http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Work\\_Of\\_The\\_Department/Economic\\_and\\_International/Economic/NRP/National\\_Reform\\_Programme\\_Ireland\\_2016.pdf](http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Work_Of_The_Department/Economic_and_International/Economic/NRP/National_Reform_Programme_Ireland_2016.pdf)

## **5. EU Commission Update**

Mr. Marc Vermyle, DG Employment, European Commission, brought a number of relevant issues to the attention of the Committee, including the following –

- The development of a European Pillar of Social Rights, with the European Commission launching a public consultation in March 2016.
- The proposal, by the European Commission, of a Long-Term Unemployed Action, in a similar vein to the Youth Employment Initiative, which would introduce specific actions to strengthen the services offered to the long-term unemployed.
- The impending publication by the Commission of Country Specific Recommendations, based on an analysis of country reports and discussions with Member States.

## **6. Progress of the Activities under PEIL**

Ms. Nicola Finnegan, ESF Managing Authority, updated the Committee on the progress of each of the activities under the four priorities. A brief description was given for each priority and activity. Key figures were outlined for each of the activities. Noteworthy updates were communicated to the Committee which included the new call for proposals for Springboard+, details of the ICT Action Plan 2014-2018 forecast, Social Inclusion of Prisoners/Ex-offenders will not be commencing under PEIL and the approval of the new assessment system for GYDP.

There were four activities which have not yet commenced under PEIL; Disability Project, Integration and Employment of Migrants, Gender Equality and Equality Mainstreaming.

See presentation at: <http://esf.ie/en/Programmes/ESF-Programme-for-Employability-Inclusion-and-Learning-PEIL-2014-2020/Monitoring-Committee/PEIL-Monitoring-Committee-Meetings/PEIL-2014-2020-Monitoring-Committee-Meeting-13-May-2016/>

*Mr. Neil Heffernan, EU Funding Compliance Unit, DSP*, indicated that the DSP Activities under the YEI were having difficulties in recruiting participants to fill the schemes such as JobBridge and JobsPlus. The unemployment figures for under 25s had been 71,000 in 2012, it had dropped to 37,000 in 2015, a 50% reduction.

*Ms. Bríd O'Brien (INOUE)* raised a question in relation to the data collected by the ETBs frontline staff on whether they were sufficiently informed on the rationale for the collection of the participant data in the first place. She considered that this was a very important step in the data collection process, as the ETB staff in turn would have to explain it to the participants.

*Mr. Gerard Gasparro, SOLAS*, agreed with the issue raised by Ms. O'Brien, (INOUE) in relation to data collection. Some of the information was proving difficult to collect; it was a challenge to collect it all.

*Mr. Heffernan, DSP*, stated that the data in relation to the DSP Activities, with the exception of Tús, was collected by post. They had simplified some of the questions to make it easier for clients to understand them; they were looking at ways to improve them.

## **7. State Aid**

Ms. Theodora Corcoran, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, State Aids Unit, introduced a presentation entitled 'State Aid Policy and Emerging Issues' to the Committee. The focus of the presentation was on the definition of State Aids and the recent changes to the policy and EU Commission requirements.

State Aid was defined as a term that referred to forms of public assistance, using taxpayer-funded resources, given to undertakings on a discretionary basis, with the potential to distort competition and affect trade between Member States of the European Union.

The State, through its industrial development agencies and other State Departments and bodies, can provide support to both Irish and foreign companies under a range of State Aid measures, including Regional or Investment Aid; Research, Development and Innovation Aid; Risk Finance Aid; and Training Aid. All enterprises can be supported under De Minimis Aid – small amounts of State Aid given to an enterprise which cannot exceed €200,000 over any three fiscal years to any company irrespective of size or location.

Ms. Corcoran agreed to accept questions via the ESF Managing Authority on State Aid issues.

See the full presentation at: <http://esf.ie/en/Programmes/ESF-Programme-for-Employability-Inclusion-and-Learning-PEIL-2014-2020/Monitoring-Committee/PEIL-Monitoring-Committee-Meetings/PEIL-2014-2020-Monitoring-Committee-Meeting-13-May-2016/>

## **8. Evaluation Plan for PEIL 2014-2020**

Mr. Hugh Geoghegan, ESF Managing Authority, updated the Committee on the preparation of an Evaluation Plan for PEIL, as required under Article 56 of the Common Provisions Regulation.

A draft Evaluation Plan was submitted to the Commission by the MA in February 2016. The Plan sets out an overall framework for the evaluation of PEIL, and addresses the following key points –

- The MA will ensure the necessary resources are made available to undertake evaluations and will utilise the Technical Assistance funding in that regard. It is envisaged that private contractors will be engaged to carry out specific evaluations.
- The availability of reliable and comprehensive datasets is critical to the preparation of high-quality evaluations.
- Four specific evaluation are provided for in the Plan, two in respect of YEI (end-2015 and end-2018), a comprehensive mid-term evaluation of PEIL by end-2017, and a further impact evaluation by end-2019.
- The Plan also refers to the required ex-ante and ex-post evaluations of PEIL and to other planned evaluations of relevant activities, including TLA, JobBridge and BTWEA.

- Relevant evaluation reports will be brought to the attention of all stakeholders, and the MA will prepare response papers outlining how any recommendations will be implemented.

It was noted that comments from the European Commission on the Plan are awaited and a revised plan, taking into account those comments, would be prepared and circulated to the PMC for approval in due course.

With regard to the required evaluation of YEI by end-2015, the PMC was informed that this evaluation was carried out by a contractor, Gauge NI, on behalf of the MA and that its report had been submitted to the Commission in December 2015.

The purpose of the review was to assess “the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of joint support from the ESF and the specific allocation for YEI including the implementation of the Youth Guarantee”. Gauge used desk research, interviews and surveys to undertake the evaluation, but their report notes that the implementation of YEI is at an early stage, so relatively limited quantitative data is available.

However, the review team reached a number of conclusions, including –

- YEI activities are making a positive contribution to the objectives of YEI.
- YEI activities are aligned to specific cohorts and are designed to meet their needs.
- The range of YEI activities encapsulate all employability supports, e.g. internships, employers incentives, qualifications etc.
- There is good collaboration between the various bodies involved in the delivery of YEI activities, and cross-referral between activities.

The review team also outlined a number of recommendations, including –

- Training on programme monitoring should be provided to relevant staff.
- Given that the implementation of YEI is to continue beyond end-2015, there should be clarity regarding targets from 2016 onwards.
- Research into the NEETS cohort in Ireland should be considered.
- “Softer” outcomes which recognise the efforts of providers engaging with hard-to-reach groups should be used.

The PMC were informed that the MA would prepare a response paper to the Report, in consultation with DSP and DECLG, and would circulate this to the PMC for approval.

## **9. Communication Strategy**

Ms. Catherine Ryan, ESF Managing Authority, updated the Committee on the Communications Strategy document.

- The comments received from the Committee Members were incorporated into the Communications Strategy, which was subsequently circulated and adopted by written procedure on 20th August 2015. The final version was available on the ESF website at: <http://esf.ie/en/Info-Publicity/Information-and-Publicity-Guidelines-2014-2020/>
- The ESF Guidelines on Publicity, finalised in July 2015, can be found on the website: <http://esf.ie/en/Info-Publicity/Information-and-Publicity-Guidelines-2014-2020/>
- The ESF and the National Logos at: <http://esf.ie/en/Info-Publicity/Download-Logos/>

- The final version of the Activity Implementation Plans at: <http://esf.ie/en/Programmes/ESF-Programme-for-Employability-Inclusion-and-Learning-PEIL-2014-2020/Activity-Implementation-Plan/>
- The new ESF website was launched in December 2015 – see [www.esf.ie](http://www.esf.ie)
- The ESF Newsletters located at: <http://esf.ie/en/Info-Publicity/Newsletter/>
- The ESF Posters were currently being revised; new versions will be circulated shortly.
- The ESF Managing Authority plans to set up a link between the ESF website and all those Activities with websites. The ESF MA also plans to set up a system to liaise with Activities on planned communications, e.g. press releases, launches, graduations, etc.
- The ESF Event for 2016 was currently being considered in relation to the Springboard/ICT Activities. The ESF MA would welcome additional suggestions from IBs/Activities.
- The ESF Newsletter for 2016 is currently being prepared. IBs and Activities were encouraged to provide articles, photos, etc. for the newsletter.

## **10. 2014-2020 ESIF-IT System**

### **(a) Ecohesion**

Ms. Margot Dunne, D/PER, gave an update to the Committee on the progress of the new ecohesion system for the 2014-2020 round of funds.

The PMC was informed that the ecohesion project is progressing and that a governance structure had been established to implement the project, including a Project Office made up of 4 full-time staff, a Project Team comprised of representatives of all of the funds, as well as experts from the OGCI and OGP, and a Project Board to oversee the delivery of the project.

### **(b) Designation of Bodies**

Mr. Tom Whelan, Head of ESF Certifying Authority, outlined the requirements under Article 124 of the CPR:

- Designation of the Audit Authority (already designated), the Certifying Authority and the Managing Authority. These had to be completed in conjunction with the introduction of the new ESIF IT system;
- Proposed internal restructuring within DES in relation to the ESF MA and the Structural Funds Unit;
- ESF MA delegation of some tasks – Administrative Agreements
- The new N+3 Rule allows three years for the completion of the first claim to the commission
- Training would be provided for all relevant bodies following the completion of the ESIF IT system.

Mr. Vermyle, EU Commission, noted the requirements set out in the CPR, including the requirement that the new ESIF IT system be implemented by 31 December 2015. He noted that failure to comply with regulatory requirements could potentially lead to infringement proceedings and the loss of funding.

## **11. Ex-ante Data Conditionalities Data Collection**

Ms Ryan, ESF Managing Authority, updated the Committee on the progress of the Data Collection Summary Action Plan, which was agreed with the Commission as part of the approval of PEIL 2014-2020, in relation to those Activities which were not in a position to commence the collection of all the required data from the start of the Programme.

- (a) ETB Training for the Unemployed, Youthreach, Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), Adult Literacy and Youthreach (delivered by SOLAS)

A Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS) was being implemented for all 16 ETBs to comply with the 2014-2020 ESF data collection requirements. Testing of the PLSS was due to commence in May 2016. A demonstration of the PLSS was scheduled on the Agenda (see following point).

- (b) Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) Scheme, JobsPlus Incentive Scheme, Tús, JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme (delivered by Department of Social Protection)

'Participant Detail Forms' have issued to all ESF eligible clients in order to collect the indicator data set out in the ESF Regulation (i.e. indicators on entry to the activity) which was not previously collected by Department of Social Protection (DSP) systems. DSP have developed a longitudinal database for clients in order to determine their status post completion. This would use data from DSP, the Education and Training Boards and the Revenue Commissioners. DSP continued to work with Pobal to enhance the data collection process to allow the collection of all relevant data, with regard to Tús.

## **12. PLSS demonstration**

Mr. Sean Malone and Ms. Shira Mehlman from SOLAS presented a demonstration of the new Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS). This system will collect the data required under the ESF Regulations for the 2014-2020 round. The system was designed to accept applications from (a) DSP referrals, (b) walk-in applicants to the ETBs and (c) on-line applicants (to be introduced). The pilot for the database was due to commence in May 2016.

See diagram on the ESF website at: <http://esf.ie/en/Programmes/ESF-Programme-for-Employability-Inclusion-and-Learning-PEIL-2014-2020/Monitoring-Committee/PEIL-Monitoring-Committee-Meetings/PEIL-2014-2020-Monitoring-Committee-Meeting-13-May-2016/>

## **13. AIR for 2014-2015**

The Chairperson, Ms. McGarry, reminded the Intermediate Bodies of the deadline for the submission of the AIR to the Commission, i.e. 31<sup>st</sup> May 2016. The finalised Citizens Summary would be uploaded to the Members Area of the ESF website in the next two weeks. The PMC decision would be taken by means of written procedure.

## **14. HCIOP Closure**

Mr. Tom Whelan, Head of the ESF & EGF Certifying Authority, outlined the progress on the Closure of the Programme and the expenditure drawdown for the HCI OP 2007-2013. Drawdown to date for

the OP stood at €348.2m or 93% of the total allocation, of which €28.2m. (7.5%) were advances at the commencement of the Programme. He also outlined the timetable for closure, as follows:

### **Timetable for Closure**

- December 2015 PMC reallocation Decision taken resulting in
  - Within priorities reallocation
  - Decision sought from EC to related across Priorities – which was approved by EC in March 2016
- Another reallocation (updated AIPs required) of HCIOP ESF/exp required within Priorities by PMC written decision shortly.
  - €30m within P1
  - €19m within P2
  - €0.2m within P3
- 30 June 2016 Claim submitted to EC with c€80m/11% surplus (€827.4m v €750.7m allocation) – continued cooperating of PBBs/IBs needed to meet this deadline to address any issue that arise
- Payment up to 95% of allocation ceiling to IE (€8m)
- Audit of operation by AA completed and any corrective actions needed completed by end of Feb 2017 continued cooperating of PBBs/IBs needed to meet this deadline to address any issue that arise
- Final Claim, Final Report and Audit Report and opinion report submit to EC before 31 March 2017.
- Final €18.7m paid post 31 March 2017 subject to unqualified opinion that is accepted by EC
- Cumulative Error Rate <2% a key objective for unqualified opinion.

### **15. AOB**

#### **(a) Horizontal Principles**

The reporting on the Horizontal Principles under the PEIL 2014-2020, i.e. (i) Equal Opportunities and Non-discrimination, (ii) Equality between men and women and (iii) Sustainable Development, has been deferred to the Autumn meeting. The ESF Managing Authority will engage bi-laterally with the Oversight Bodies (IHREC, GED/DJE and DCELG) in relation to the requirements and reporting formats.

#### **(b) Financial Report**

The Financial Report in relation to financial progress of the Activities for the years 2014 and 2015 has also been deferred to the Autumn meeting.

(c) Data collection and Data Protection

The ESF Managing Authority will consult with the Data Protection Commissioner on the protection of the data collected on the ecohesion system. The Intermediate Bodies were invited to send in any queries/questions they had relating to data collection.

(d) Revised AIPs

A revised AIP for DJE (ESF 2.3) will be circulated to the PMC for approval following the re-allocation of funds from ESF 2.5 (Social Inclusion of prisoners/ex-offenders) to GYDP.

(e) Citizens summary of the AIR

The finalised copy of the Citizens Summary of the AIR 2014-2015 will be re-circulated to the PMC in the next two weeks.

(f) Finalised Evaluation Plan

The finalised copy of the Evaluation Plan will be circulated to the PMC, forwarded to the Commission, and put on the ESF website.

(g) Response to the YEI Report

The ESF Managing Authority's response to the YEI Evaluation will be circulated to the PMC once completed.

(h) Next meeting

The date of the next meeting of the PMC for PEIL was fixed for the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

**APPENDIX 1 - ATTENDANCE**

	<b>NAME</b>	<b>ORGANISATION</b>
1	David Kelly	SRA
2	Damien Clarke	DAFM EMFF MA
3	Neil Heffernan	DSP
4	Aoife Glennon	DSP
5	Gerry Browne	DJE
6	Tim Maverley	DJE
7	Cllr. Jason Murphy	SA
8	Gerrard Roughneen	DJE
9	Margot Dunne	DPER
10	Brian O'Loughlin	DPER
11	David Dunne	SOLAS
12	Elaine Doyle	DJE
13	Bridget McNulty	DECLG
14	David Salter	DES (ESF AA)
15	Joe Keaney	Probation Service
16	Simon Cornish	Probation Service
17	Labhaoise McKenna	EMRA
18	Gerard Gasparro	SOLAS
19	Ken Seery	SOLAS
20	Rod Tierney	SOLAS
21	Joanne Brown	ICTU
22	Andrew Diggins	SFU DES
23	Catherine Ryan	ESF MA
24	Brian Liggett	SEUPB
25	Brid O'Brien	INOUE
26	Shira Mehlman	PLSS (SOLAS)
27	Seán Malone	SOLAS
28	Teodora Corcoran	DJEI
29	Orla Kenny	DJEI
30	Catherine Conroy	DECLG
31	Pat Murray	DJE

32	Barry Guckian	NWRA
33	Mary McGarry	ESF MA
34	Tom Whelan	ESF MA
35	Hugh Geoghegan	ESF MA
36	Nicola Finnegan	ESF MA
37	Fiona Reilly	ESF MA
38	Catherine Ormsby	ESF MA
	<b>Apologies</b>	
1	Rory O'Rua	DPER
2	Lar Quigley	Justice
3	Dawn Lambe	Justice
4	Vincent Dunphy	SWRA
5	Michael Kelleher	SFU
6	Therese Callery	SFU
7	Paul Daly	SFU
8	AnnMarie Quarry	Justice
9	Berny Daly	SOLAS
10	David Sheils	HEA
11	Iain Maguire	SFU
12	Anne Marie Caulfield	DPER
13	Clodagh McDonnell	SICAP
14	Kevin O'Donoghue	DECLG
15	David Sheils	HEA
16	Alan McGrath	HEA