

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

4th Monitoring Committee meeting

Thursday 18th May 2017

Clock Tower, Marlborough Street, DES.

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

Attendance: See Appendix 1 – Attendance List

CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOMING COMMENTS

The Chairperson welcomed the members of the Committee to the fourth meeting of the PEIL PMC. She welcomed in particular Mr Christian Aagaard, DG Employment, European Commission, who was attending his first PEIL PMC.

1. AGENDA

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

2. MINUTES OF 3rd PMC of 11th November 2016

The Chairperson referred the final minutes of the third PMC meeting to the Committee for adoption. It included a number of textual amendments received previously from Mr Paddy Duffy, Irish Youth Justice Service, DJE and some additional amendments put forward by Ms Bríd O'Brien, INOU. The minutes were adopted, incorporating the final amendments.

3. EU & National Developments and Progress towards Europe 2020 targets

Mr Hugh Geoghegan updated the Committee on the latest developments at EU and National level.

- The European Commission published a ***White Paper on the Future of the EU*** in March 2017, which sets out its analysis of the main challenges and opportunities for the EU to 2025, with five scenarios depending on how the EU chooses to respond (e.g. proceed based on Single Market alone, or allow "willing Member States" to proceed together on specific issues, etc.). While the White Paper does not refer to ESIF Funds directly, the Funds are bound up with the larger issue of EU finances, where the White Paper lays out a number of options (e.g. proceed based on status quo, increase "own resources", etc.) which will impact on the 2021-2027 round. Clearly, BREXIT will also impact on the EU's finances, perhaps before the end of the current 2014-2020 period, as the 2 year negotiation period for Brexit concludes in March 2019.

- The **Mid-Term Review of the MFF** was published in 2016, which resulted in an additional €3.7m for Ireland, of which €2.08m has been allocated to the ESF. It is intended to allocate this to the Springboard activity, on foot of a proposal for the extension of the activity beyond the period initially programmed.
- The **EU Council Conclusions on Cohesion Policy** were published under the Maltese Presidency on 25 April. The conclusions noted the need for greater visibility of the role and impact of cohesion funding, the key importance of measurable impacts/outcomes, and also call for greater simplification.
- As a result of persistent high levels of youth unemployment across the EU the Commission has now proposed additional funding of €1bn for the **Youth Employment Initiative** for the years 2017-20. However, six Member States, including Ireland, which qualified for the initial round of YEI funding will not qualify for the additional funding, as their youth unemployment rates have fallen below the relevant threshold.
- The **Skills Agenda** was published by the Commission in June 2016 and proposes 10 Actions to be taken within two years, including a review of the European Qualifications Framework, actions to address skills shortages and the development of a Skills Guarantee. The **Skills Guarantee** entitled "**Upskilling Pathways**" - was formally adopted by the Council in December 2016 and targets adults with a low-level of skills, and is comprised of three steps (i) skills assessment, (ii) an offer of learning and (iii) validation and recognition. Member States will now adopt their own approaches to implementing Upskilling Pathways, with the Skills Policy and Enterprise Engagement Unit (SPEE) of DES leading Ireland's response.
- The **Migrant Integration Strategy** was launched by the Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald, TD, in February 2017. It sets out a range of actions across all Departments, with a mix of mainstream and targeted approaches. The Census 2016 underlines how relevant this Strategy is, with over 800,000 residents born outside Ireland, approximately 600,000 Irish residents speaking a foreign language at home, and around 55,000 non-Irish migrants moving to Ireland in the year to April 2016 alone.
- The **National Strategy for Women and Girls** was published in May 2017 and sets out six main objectives as follows: (1) Advance Socio-Economic Equality for Women and Girls; (2) Advance the Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing of Women and Girls; (3) Ensure the Visibility in Society of Women and Girls, and their Equal and Active Citizenship; (4) Advance Women in Leadership at All Levels; (5) Combat Violence Against Women and (6) Embed Gender Equality in Decision-making.
- With regard to ongoing implementation of existing strategies, the implementation of the **National Strategy for Higher Education** continues, including the bedding down of regional clusters of higher education institutions (HEIs) reform of Leaving Cert grades and CAO points from 2017, continued merger activity between Institutes of Technology in advance of the establishment of Technological Universities, and further implementation of the performance framework with HEIs through the strategic dialogue process.
- Among the recommendations of the **Expert Group on the Future Funding of Higher Education** (the "Cassells Report", published in March 2016) was the suggestion that the employer

contribution to the National Training Fund be examined, with a view to increasing that contribution, and this is being advanced by relevant colleagues within DES.

- With regard to the implementation of the **Further Education Strategy**, developments include the continued rollout of new apprenticeships and the bedding down of new processes within/between DES, SOLAS and the ETBs. In terms of measuring performance in the sector, the Annual Service Planning Process between SOLAS and ETBs is deepening year-on-year. There is now a greater emphasis on performance against targets. A strategic Pilot exercise involving 3 ETBs recently concluded and a report was under consideration by the Department. Minister Bruton is particularly interested in this approach, and there was engagement between the Minister's side and SOLAS in that regard.
- Under the **National Skills Strategy 2025** a number of structures have been established, including eight Regional Skills Fora to facilitate deepened engagement between employers and education providers within the regions concerned, a National Skills Council, and the new SPEE Unit within DES.
- The Department has published an **Action Plan for Education 2016-2019**, which has the ambitious aim of making Ireland's education and training system the best in Europe by 2026. The Action Plan reflects the approach taken by Minister Bruton previously in the Action Plan for Jobs. It was noted that the **Action Plan for Jobs'** current target is to have 45,000 additional people at work before the end of 2017.
- The **Pathways to Work Strategy 2016-2020** sets out the Government's approach to labour activation, and is relevant to many of the activities funded through the current PEIL programme, including YEI activities.
- Implementation of the **Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities 2015-2024**, which sets out a 10 year approach to ensure that people with disabilities, who are both able to and who want to work, are supported and enabled to do so, continues. The Disability Activation Activity under Priority 2, which will be rolled out from later in 2017, forms part of this approach.

See Presentation at: <http://www.esf.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Repository/Members-Area/04-EU-and-National-Developments-Progress-Towards-Europe-2020-Targets.pdf>

With regard to the overall economic outlook, the main economic indicators are as follows –

- GDP increased by 5.2% in 2016,
- overall employment increased by 2.9%, with all employment sectors seeing growth,
- the unemployment rate in April was 6.2% per the CSO, down from 6.4% in March and 8.2% in April 2016, and
- inflation remains low at approximately 1%.

Regarding Ireland's Europe 2020 targets, the Committee was reminded that certain of these targets are extremely relevant to the PEIL OP, namely the targets relating to Employment, Education, and Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction.

For employment, Ireland's target is to have 69-71% of men and women aged 20-64 in employment. Ireland's employment rate increased to 70.3% in 2016 (76.5% for men, and 64.2% for women) and is expected to reach 73% by 2020.

For education, there are two separate targets, the first of which requires Ireland to reduce the proportion of 18-24 year olds with only lower secondary education (i.e. Junior Cert level) to 8%. The early school leaving rate fell to 6.9% in 2015, a significant drop from 8.4% the year before.

The second education target is to increase to at least 60% the share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary or equivalent education. In 2015, this rate increased to 52.3%, from 50.1% in 2010.

With regard to social inclusion, the news is less positive. Ireland's target is to reduce those experiencing consistent poverty of less than 2% by 2020 and to also reduce the number in combined poverty by 200,000. While the proportion of those in combined poverty fell from 37.4% in 2014 to 33.7% in 2015, this means there are 1.6 million in combined poverty in Ireland, which is 150,000 higher than the 2010 baseline figure. This means Ireland must lift 350,000 people out of combined poverty to meet this target, so clearly further action is required.

Mr Christian Aagaard, DG Employment, Inclusion and Social Affairs, concurred with Mr. Geoghegan's overview and also noted the additional allocation of €3.6m which had been proposed for Ireland following the Mid-Term Review of the Multi-annual Financial Framework.

Ms Margot Dunne informed the Committee that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, as the Department with lead responsibility for the Partnership Agreement (PA), is handling the changes to the PA arising from the additional allocation. An informal draft of the PA is due to go to DG Regio on the 18th May and would be circulated, by DG Regio, to colleagues in relevant DGs. The formal revised draft will be submitted by mid-June and these timelines have been agreed with DG Regio.

4. UPDATE ON PEIL ACTIVITIES

Overview of Calls for proposals for Gender Equality and Migrant Integration

Ms Carole Sullivan, EU Funds Unit, Department of Justice and Equality, introduced her presentation in relation to the set-up of the new EU Funds Unit within that Department and the issuing of two calls for proposals in 2016. The EU Funds Unit was established in the Equality and Integration Division of DJE. They are joint Beneficiary with Gender Equality Division and the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration for their respective ESF activities. The Unit issued three separate Calls for Proposals in September 2016, two of which will be part funded by the ESF and the other by the EU's Asylum and Migration Integration Fund.

The first ESF supported Call for Proposals involved ESF 2.7- Integration and Employment of Migrants, with a budget of €3.3m over four years (minimum Project size €250k). This activity will be focused on legally resident migrants experiencing barriers to participation and employment. The purpose was to implement a programme to increase employment prospects through a comprehensive employment programme including language training around the workplace, social skills training and mentoring.

The second Call involved ESF 2.9 - Gender Equality, with a budget of €5.5m over three years divided between –

- (i) Women Returning to the Workplace (€4.5m), which is aimed at women detached from the labour market, not in paid employment but not registered as unemployed, with the objective of delivering one or more training modules to offer self-developmental training in employment related skills on a part-time basis; and
- (ii) Women Entrepreneurship Projects (€1m), which are to deliver interventions aimed at addressing the gender gap in entrepreneurial activity through targeted supports.

Both Calls for Proposals were in line with the recent developments in national policy in these areas, namely the Migrant Integration Strategy and the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020.

Ms Sullivan outlined the steps involved in the calls for proposals process, the supports provided, and the management and appraisal of the process. The details of the successful projects, the amounts approved for each project and their locations were provided. She then outlined the next steps in the management of the projects, i.e. reporting by the projects (operational, financial, targets, and tracking of participants' progress). The full presentation can be found at:

http://www.esf.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Repository/Members-Area/EU-Funds-2016-Call-for-Proposals-2_7-and-2_9-Presentation-Final.pdf

Mr Aagaard, EU Commission, asked if the Department had considered an online application system for the projects. Ms Sullivan stated that they had considered it, but there was insufficient time to do so before the calls for proposals were launched.

Overview of Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme (DFESS)

Mr Paul Connick, Department of Defence, introduced his presentation on the new proposed Activity entitled "Skills for Life - Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme".

The basis for the scheme was the 2015 Defence White Paper (section 4.10) and aims to contribute to the wider societal objective of generating employment opportunities. It is targeted at unemployed 18-24 year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds and is promoted by the Dept Social Protection.

The objectives of scheme include increasing the personal development and confidence of the participant, enabling effective communication with prospective employers, and assisting in the development of a path to greater economic independence for the participant. The Department of Social Protection has put in place arrangements to identify suitable participants. Participation in the Scheme is voluntary, and the participants must be certified as physically fit to take part in outdoor activities. Participants retain their Social Protection benefits for the duration of the Scheme, which encompasses five weeks of military-oriented training, interspersed with five weeks of education-oriented training by the local ETB.

A pilot programme was concluded in 2016 with a total of 25 participants, all of whom completed the programme. The status of the participants at the end of February 2017 included six in employment; six in further education supported by DSP's Back to Work or Education Programme; 13 still in receipt of jobseekers' payments and eight were undergoing further training programmes for long-term unemployed. The next stage for the Scheme will be to hold two programmes per year, over three years, with 30 participants per programme. The programmes this year will be held in Limerick (May to July) and Dublin (late-autumn). The full presentation can be found at:

<http://www.esf.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Repository/PMC-2014-2020/DF-ESS-ESF-PMC-presentation.pdf>

Ms Brid O'Brien, INOU, enquired about the design and structure of the scheme. Mr Connick explained that a framework had been put in place between each of the bodies involved in the delivery of the scheme, including SLAs, which is important for the success of the programme. In response to a question from Ms Quarry, GED/DJE, there were no credits awarded for completing the programme, but it had other benefits for the participants. The gender split for the pilot programme was 60% male/40% female. There were separate measures to encourage female participation and ethnic diversity. Mr Stewart Roche, HEA, said that it was an excellent programme and noted there may be scope for interaction with the Springboard programme. Ms Aileen Nolan, Dept of Defence, noted that there is a time lag between application and acceptance, due to security clearance issues, of at least four months.

The Chairperson sought the approval of the Committee to the inclusion of the DFESS activity within the OP, under Priority 4 in 2017, and then under Priority 2 in 2018 and 2019. The Committee granted its approval.

Update of Activities by the IBs

The Chairperson referred to the proposal to include the Community Training Centres (CTCs) activity within Priority 4, YEI, which the Committee agreed to in principle at its previous meeting in November 2016. Mr Gerard Gasparro, SOLAS, gave an overview of the CTC activity, which is aimed at early school leavers and young unemployed. He outlined the costs of the CTCs per year and the number of participants to be supported (1,800 approx.)

Mr Gasparro, SOLAS, gave an update on the progress of the **ETB Training for the Unemployed**. The cumulative expenditure had reached €221m to date, although they were behind in the BMW Region due to the inclusion of 2014-15 expenditure in the HCIOP. They expected to catch up with the BMW expenditure. He noted that **Momentum 2** was now closed, but there had been 4,200 participants on the scheme, split between Priorities 1 and 4. There are no plans for a Momentum 3 at present.

Mr Stewart Roche provided an update on **Springboard** and **ICT Skills Conversion Courses**. Both initiatives are aimed at unemployed and previously self-employed people to enable them to enter the labour market by accessing part-time flexible higher education and training opportunities to upskill or reskill in areas where there are identified skills shortages, and where sustainable employment opportunities may arise as the economy recovers.

Ms Rosie Smyth, DHPCLG, provided an update on the **SICAP** activity. The NEETS research project is ongoing, and the next round of SICAP is planned for 2018 onwards. A lot of publicity has taken place in relation to SICAP, including the approximately 1,200 leaflets which were issued during the three days of the National Ploughing Championships from the SICAP stand. The Activity was focussed solely on the under 25s under Priority 4, YEI. It was hoped to broaden this to include the over-25s as well, under Priority 2, for the next round of SICAP.

Mr Paddy Duffy, IYJS, updated the Committee on the progress of the **Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDP)**. There are currently 105 GYDPs in operation providing support and services to over 4,000 young people aged between 12 and 17 years - 75% were male and 25% female. The breakdown of the Youth Workers were 32% male and 68% female. Up to 60% of the participants were from households where nobody was working; 44% were from single parent households; 19% were

migrants; and 9% had disabilities. The cost per participant was €3,500 to €4,000 per annum, while the cost of keeping a youth in a detention centre was €300,000 per year. The number of participants had declined slightly on the previous year and youth crime was also down nationally.

Mr Joe Keaney, Probation Service, provided an update on the **Young Person Probation (YPP)**, which delivers services to young offenders in their communities. There are currently 18 YPP projects in total, of which 4 are ESF co-funded. Those projects are **Le Chéile** (a nationwide mentoring service), "**Céim ar Chéim**" and **Southill** projects based in Limerick City, and the **Dóchas** project based in Galway. A recently published evaluation of **Le Chéile** found that mentoring made a positive difference for young people, by reducing their offending behaviour. It also found that for every €1 invested in the **Le Chéile** project, the economic return was €4.35.

Mr David Waters, DSP, gave an update on the proposed **Disability Activation** activity under PEIL. While this activity has not yet commenced, a Call for Proposals will issue later in the year. The proposed expenditure for the three years was in the region of €3.3m.

Mr Keaney, Probation Service, updated the Committee on the progress of the **Tus Nua** activity for women offenders. The Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service have identified strategies that focus on the particular issues for the women, such as entering the labour market. Many of them were also homeless once they left prison. A whole range of supports are provided as part of the Tus Nua programme, including life skills development, personal development, etc. In 2015 there were 17 participants and in 2016 the number had increased to 37. They mainly come from jobless households, many were homeless and they had other disadvantages. In 2016, 13 participants completed the course.

Mr Stewart Roche, HEA, gave an update on each of the schemes which make up the **Third Level Access** activity. He referred to the ongoing review of the **Fund for Students with Disabilities**, which was not finalised as yet. The review of the **Student Assistance Fund** was completed in 2016 and implementation of the recommendations commenced in 2017. The expenditure on the two funds was approximately €15m per year. He noted that there were issues with tracking the gender breakdown of the participants and that there were 25,311 participants in total in 2016, of which the FSD had 9,790 and the SAF 15,221.

Mr Gerard Gasparro, SOLAS, provided an update on the **Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)** and the **Adult Literacy** activities, noting that both Activities were back on track as regards expenditure following the closure of the HCIOP. There were 33,675 participants in 2016 for BTEI and 58,865 for Adult Literacy. The cumulative target for 2018 for BTEI was 140,600 and the target for Adult Literacy was 218,000. Cumulative expenditure for BTEI reached €55.8m and €60.1m for Adult Literacy.

Mr David Waters, DSP, provided an update on the four DSP Activities under the YEI. Due to the reduction in the number of unemployed youth, demand for the services offered by the four Activities has reduced. In relation to the **Back to Work Enterprise Allowance**, a review was carried out in 2016 and published in 2017. As a result, some elements were redesigned. **JobsPlus**, which provides employers with a monthly payment for recruiting employees under this programme, had 483 participants in 2016. He noted that **Tús**, a community work placement initiative aimed at providing short-term work opportunities for the more disadvantaged, continues to be implemented. However, the **JobBridge** scheme ended in October 2016, following a review of the scheme, although a relaunch of the First Steps Scheme is planned.

Mr Gasparro, SOLAS, provided an update on the **Youthreach** activity. The cumulative expenditure for Youthreach reached €161.3m. The allocation for the period 2014-15 was €79.8m, which was

exceeded. The 2018 cumulative target for the number of participants was 5,950, which has also been exceeded. In relation to **Momentum 2**, the Activity was behind by 50% as there was no Momentum 3 programme planned.

5. OVERVIEW OF EURES

Ms Deirdre Reid, Deputy National Co-ordinator, EURES Ireland, introduced her presentation on EURES in the EU and Ireland. EURES is a network formed in 1993 by public employment services in 32 countries in Europe. The European database contains over 1 million jobs available throughout the EU. The main functions of EURES include promoting mobility in the European Labour Market, providing Europe wide matching and placement service for employers, and providing employers with information on European recruitment. EURES in Ireland comprises five co-ordination offices. The focus in Ireland is on finding workers from Europe for “difficult to fill” vacancies in Ireland, finding jobs in Europe for mobile, Irish based jobseekers, recruitment campaigns/ Jobs Fairs and integration of migrants (DIALOG). The DIALOG Initiative aimed to assist migrants to integrate and provide solutions to issues affecting them.

A number of European Job Fairs were held recently in Dublin, the Midlands and the Southeast, all of which were well attended. Other initiatives included Experience Your Europe (EYE), which promoted a Co-sponsored Placement Programme for 18-30 year olds; “Your first EURES Job” for 18-35 year olds; and “Reactivate” for over 35’s to assist with job seeking and relocation. The EURES website could be found at: www.euresireland.ie.

The full presentation can be found at: <http://www.esf.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Repository/PMC-2014-2020/Presentation-on-EURES-May-2017.pdf>

6. UPDATE ON THE YOUTH GUARANTEE

Ms Kasey Treadwell Shine, DSP, introduced her presentation on the current position with regard to Youth Guarantee in Ireland. She outlined the background to the Youth Guarantee and the reasons for its introduction by the EU Commission, i.e. high youth unemployment across the EU, reaching 31.1% in Ireland in 2012. By the end of 2016, the Irish rate had fallen to 15.2%, but it was still more than double the overall unemployment rate of 7.1%. The Pathways to Work Strategy was initially launched in 2012, with the strategy for 2016-2020 being launched in January 2016. This strategy commits to building on the reforms introduced in 2016/17 and will be expanded from 2018 to include other people although not classified as jobseekers, who have the potential and desire to play a more active role in the Labour Force. The Action Plan for Jobs 2017, building on the progress of the Plan from 2012-2016, focusses on creating jobs - Pathways to Work seeks to ensure that these jobs are taken up by jobseekers in receipt of social welfare jobseeker payments. Ms Shine then outlined the actions and activities comprising the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP), including the supports and services being provided. She also referred to the European Court of Auditors report of 5/2017, wherein they found that the Youth Guarantee fell short of the initial expectations. While some progress was made, it had not ensured that all NEETs could take up an offer within four months. The Commission and the Member States had concerns over the misunderstandings of national contexts, data collection, definitions and approaches.

The full presentation can be found at: http://www.esf.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Repository/PMC-2014-2020/2017-05-18_YG_ESFMonitoringCtte.pdf

7. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE AIPs

Mr Andrew Diggins, ESF Managing Authority, outlined the proposed changes to the AIPs. The changes fell under two main categories. The first was as a result of structural changes within the ESF Managing Authority itself – the former Structural Funds Unit, which acted as Intermediate Body (IB) for a number of Activities, was amalgamated into the ESF Managing Authority, and SOLAS assumed the role of Intermediate Body for those Activities (ETB Training for the unemployed, BTEI, Adult Literacy and Youthreach).

In relation to Momentum, SOLAS is the Beneficiary and there is no IB. In relation to Springboard and ICT Skills, the HEA is the Beneficiary and, again, there is no IB. The AIP in relation to the proposed Social Inclusion of Prisoners/ex-offenders has been cancelled as the Activity itself was withdrawn by DJE. There were also a number of small textual changes to some of the other AIPs. Two new Activities were proposed for approval: the first was the Community Training Centres (CTCs), which would commence under Priority 4 (YEI). The second proposed new Activity was Defence Forces Employment Services, which would contribute to both Priority 2 (Social Inclusion) and Priority 4 (YEI). The relevant AIPs had been circulated to the Committee.

The Chairperson sought the agreement of the Committee to the proposed amendments and the changes were agreed.

8. UPDATE ON DESIGNATION, EX-ANTE CONDITIONALITIES AND ECOHESION

Designation and ex-ante conditionalities

Mr Geoghegan, ESF MA, gave an update on the designation process. Designation was based on the opinion of an independent audit body (IAB) which must be satisfied that systems were in place to allow the ESF authorities to perform their required functions. Designation requirements included the establishment of a computerised information system to meet the requirements in the Regulations for 2014-2020. A “Contingency” IT system, with more limited functionality, was put in place as a backup, with designation being based on this system. The ESF MA and CA intended to have the “designation” package of documentation (e.g. Procedures Manual, Description of MCS, etc.) to the AA in the coming weeks. A contractor had also been appointed to deliver the new IT system and the design of the new system had commenced. The MA’s intention is to compile a first interim payment claim for submission before the end of the year.

In relation to the Ex-Ante Conditionalities, Ireland had availed of EAC 7 on data collection and, at the outset of the OP, had submitted to the Commission an Action Plan setting out how Ireland would fully comply with the data collection requirements by 2017. The plan was developed in consultation with relevant IBs, i.e. SOLAS and DSP, who needed to address data collection issues. In relation to SOLAS, the development and rollout of the PLSS system means the ESF MA is satisfied that the relevant data will be collected. In relation to DSP, the situation is less clear and DSP is currently undertaking a review.

Ecohesion

Ms Rhoda Kerins, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, gave an update on the progress of the introduction of the Ecohesion IT system. The contract had been signed with the contractors, and they had commenced the design of the system and 20% of the system had been developed so far.

The system will be completed in phases - the 1st phase, which will allow beneficiaries to submit all of their data on to the system, will be completed by mid-July; the 2nd phase, providing additional functionality for CAs, MAs and IBs, will be completed by end of September; and the 3rd phase relating to the AA functionality, reports, enquiries, etc., is expected to be completed by November. Training will be provided to target individuals in each Fund, who will in turn, train the relevant persons in their area (i.e. train the trainer). A number of queries were raised in relation to the timetable for completion of the system, availability of templates for uploading the data, the different levels for testing, etc. and the data required to be uploaded.

Mr Aagaard, EU Commission, said that the progress on the design of the Ecohesion IT System had been a concern for the Commission for some time. In addition, the Commission is awaiting the Designation notification and he noted that there are significant penalties for non-notification.

9. HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

Gender Equality

Ms AnnMarie Quarry, GED, Department of Justice and Equality, introduced her draft review paper for the Gender Equality Horizontal Principle Reports for the Activities under PEIL. She thanked the Projects for their reports, particularly those that provided detailed explanations on disaggregated data, which showed a clear commitment supporting the gender equality principle.

She reminded all the projects of the requirements of Article 7 of the ESF Reg. 1304/2013 and the public sector duty created by Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014. Ms Quarry outlined her comments on each of the individual Project reports. She reiterated that disaggregated data was necessary to help identify barriers to participation so that systems could be put in place to ensure equality of opportunity existed. She also referred to the recently published National Strategy for Women and Girls which proposes that all reviews of existing policy should include a gender perspective. Ms Quarry that a final version of her review paper would be prepared and made available to the PMC. A copy of the full review paper can be found on the ESF website at: <http://www.esf.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Repository/Members-Area/FINAL-GE-Report-300517-Recd-from-AMQ.pdf>

Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination

Ms Deirdre Toomey, IHREC, introduced her review paper on the Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination Horizontal Principle. She provided an overall assessment of the reports and noted that while some of them had broadened their focus, there was a need for support to develop a better understanding of what was required in the reports and how the principle could be applied at the implementation stage. She gave examples of how the reporting could be developed and the principle further applied (depending on the activity). The revised template should be used by all projects. Ms Toomey's paper gave a brief summary of each of the Activities reports in relation to the horizontal principle. A copy of the full review paper can be found on the ESF website at: <http://www.esf.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Repository/Members-Area/IHREC-Comments-on-ESF-Operational-Programme-for-Employability-ENDHP-May-2017.pdf>

The Chairperson indicated that a group would be set up to discuss the Horizontal Principles, including Ms AnnMarie Quarry, Gender Equality Division, Ms Deirdre Toomey or another from IHREC, Ms Carol Sullivan, EU Funds Unit/DJE and the ESF MA.

10. UPDATE ON THE EVALUATION PLAN

Mr Hugh Geoghegan, ESF Managing Authority, updated the Committee on the progress of the Evaluation Plan for PEIL 2014-2020. The YEI Evaluation was completed by December 2015, as required. The Mid-Term Evaluation of PEIL is due to be completed by the end of 2017. The draft Terms of Reference were in preparation as well as discussions with OGP regarding possible procurement via a Framework. The TOR would be issued shortly, with a view to completing the evaluation by November 2017. The Final YEI Impact Evaluation was due to be completed by end of 2018 and the Impact Evaluation on Priorities 1, 2 and 3 by the end of 2019.

Mr Geoghegan also gave a brief overview of other evaluation or research activities which are of relevance to PEIL.

- An Evaluation of **Springboard+**, 2011-2016 was published in November 2016. Among the findings of the evaluation was that, between 2011 and 2014, 72% of participants graduated and 28% did not complete the courses. 53% were in employment within 3-6 months and 19% commenced further studies. 90% said Springboard made a positive impact and 96% would recommend it to others. The average cost per place was €4,264.
- A Review of the **Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA)** was published in February 2017. The main findings of the review included that the BTWEA offered effective support for LTUs that it supported the development of new enterprises and that participants were twice as likely to remain off the Live Register after 6 and 18 months. Recommendations included that clarity is required regarding the specific role of DSP case officers vs. LEOs and LDCs, the need to tailor supports to individual needs, and a need for greater emphasis on training.
- The **Le Chéile Mentoring and Youth Justice Support Services** Evaluation was published in March 2017. It was based on the impact of the activity over the period 2013 to 2015. Among the findings of the report were that there is a return of €4.35 for every €1.00 invested in the service, there was a 28% reduction in reoffending during the mentoring period, reductions in alcohol and drug use, improved self-confidence and communication skills, greater involvement in education, work and training, and improved relationships.

Other relevant evaluations which are ongoing or planned in 2017 include -

- The Adult Literacy evaluation which was conducted in 2016 will be published in 2017
- The Fund for Students with Disabilities review has been completed, and findings were due to go to Government shortly,
- SOLAS are to commission an independent evaluation of Youthreach during 2017
- SICAP NEETs Research Project is to be completed by mid-2017 and the broader research programme involving ESRI is to conclude by mid-2018. The SICAP NEETs Research Project is part financed by DHCPLG and ESF MA, to be completed shortly.

The full presentation can be found at: <http://www.esf.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Repository/Members-Area/08-ESF-PMC-18-May-2017-Evaluations.pdf>

11. Information and Communications update

Ms Nicola Finnegan, ESF Communications Officer, introduced her presentation updating the Committee on the latest developments in relation to Information and Communication activities of the ESF.

The Council of the European Union in its paper (Feb 2017 *'Making Cohesion Policy more effective, relevant and visible to our Citizens'*) concluded that more effort was required by both Member States and the Commission to increase visibility of ESI Funds and to show the tangible results of Cohesion Policy on the everyday lives of EU Citizens. Similarly, the White Paper on the Future of Europe, concluded that communities were not always aware that many of the services in their area were co-funded by the EU, i.e. the EU's positive role was not visible if the story was not told locally. The EU was encouraging more engagement through Social Media.

The National ESIF website was launched on the 5th April 2017 (<http://eufunds.gov.ie/>) in compliance with Article 117 and Annex XII of the Common Provisions Regulation. The website was a valuable source of information on ESI Funds for Citizens, it provides information on how the Funds are being invested and it also includes a number of Case Studies across each of the Funds. The re-development of the ESF website (<http://esf.ie/>) is ongoing, and participant stories have been added to the website, as well as a new Twitter feed.

IBs and Beneficiaries were requested to liaise with the MA in relation to any Information Events such as launches, conferences, seminars and exhibitions and any other associated publicity events proposed for the co-funded Operations. The ESF MA attended a number of events including the Launch of the National Website and the launch of Le Cheile's 'Reducing Youth Crime in Ireland' Mentoring Evaluation. The Europe in My Region Campaign was supported for the first time with a number of events taking place across the country, and more still to come. 2017 marks 60 years of the ESF in Europe, and to mark this occasion the MA will hold a Conference on 28th November in the Printworks, Dublin Castle – further details will follow. The MA requested case studies and photographs from 2016 for the ESF newsletter.

The full presentation can be found at: <http://www.esf.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Repository/Members-Area/Info-and-Comms-Presentation.pdf>

12. HCIOP Closure and Final Report

Mr Tom Whelan, ESF Certifying Authority, reported on the submission of the HCI OP 2007-2013 closure documents to the Commission that took place in March 2017. As part of the closure submissions the (1) Final Statement of Expenditure and Application for Payment for the HCIOP and the 2016 Withdrawal and Recoveries Report were sent by the Certifying Authority (2) Final Annual Control Report and Audit Opinion were sent by the Audit Authority, and, (3) Final Implementation Report was sent by the Managing Authority. The Commission retain the final 5% (€18.8m) of the fund until they are satisfied that all the closure requirements had been met. The Commission has a period of three years to complete their checks; this could include a post-closure audit of the fund. Therefore, all supporting records have to be retained until at least 3 years after the final payment is received by Ireland.

The Commission indicated that the HCIOP closure is progressing well on their side and expects the final 5% to be paid to Ireland before 2017 year-end.

13. AOB

ESF Conference

A conference to celebrate 60 years of the European Social Fund in Europe is planned for the 28th November 2017 in Dublin Castle. The theme of the conference will be “ESF: an Irish Perspective”. More details will be provided closer to the planned date.

14. Next PMC meeting

The next Programme Monitoring Committee will be held on 14 December 2017.

APPENDIX 1 - ATTENDANCE

	NAME	ORGANISATION
1	Gerard Gasparro	SOLAS
2	Carole Sullivan	DJE
3	Joseph Keaney	Probation Services
4	Tim Maverley	DJE
5	Aidan O'Brien	DJE
6	Labhaoise McKenna	EMRA
7	Rosie Smyth	SICAP DHPCLG
8	Dr Ruth Pritchard	POBAL
9	Geraldine Kennedy	Probation Services
10	Sinéad Murphy	IYJS
11	Paddy Duffy	IYJS
12	T Stewart Roche	HEA
13	AnnMarie Quarry	DJE
14	Deirdre Toomey	IHREC
15	Damien Clarke	EMFF MA
16	David Dunne	SOLAS
17	Rod Tierney	SOLAS
18	Aileen Nolan	Dept. of Defence
19	Paul Connick	Dept. of Defence
20	Bríd O'Brien	INOUE
21	Gerry Browne	DJE
22	David Waters	DSP
23	Rhoda Kerins	DPER
24	Margot Dunne	DPER
25	Monica Doyle	DPER
26	Jason Murphy	Southern Assembly
27	Barry Guckian	NWRA
28	Vincent Dunphy	Southern Regional Assembly
29	Bridget McNulty	DCCAIE
30	Clare Dronev	DJE
31	Christian Aagaard	European Commission

32	Deirdre Reid – Speaker	EURES
33	Kasey Treadwell Shine – Speaker	Youth Guarantee
34	Mary McGarry	ESF MA
35	Tom Whelan	ESF CA
36	Hugh Geoghegan	ESF MA
37	Andrew Diggins	ESF MA
38	Catherine Ryan	ESF MA
39	Nicola Finnegan	ESF MA
40	Therese Callery	ESF MA
41	Pat Costello	ESF MA
42	Frances-Mary Long	ESF MA
43	Noreen Moloney	ESF MA
44	Catherine Ormsby	ESF MA