

Proposed Inclusion of the Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme within the PEIL 2014-2020

The ESF Managing Authority requests that the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) approve the inclusion of an additional activity within the PEIL OP.

The activity concerned is the Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme (DFESS). The objective of the DFESS is to help develop a path to economic independence for participants, aged between 18 and 24 years, who are at a distinct disadvantage in terms of being able to develop their own human capital owing to their current socio-economic situation. While the scheme is under the aegis of the Defence Forces, it is implemented in collaboration with the Department of Social Protection and relevant ETBs.

The implementation of the Scheme is one of the actions to be implemented under the Department of Social Protection's Pathways to Work 2016-2020, which outlines the Government's approach to addressing unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment. The inclusion of this Scheme within PEIL therefore complements the inclusion of other relevant activities, including SOLAS Skills Training for the Unemployed, Youthreach, Tús, the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, etc.

The DFESS is designed to exert a positive influence on participants with the specific aim of equipping them with life skills and other marketable and certifiable skills which will assist them both in their capacity to participate fully in society as well as their ability to enter the workforce or to pursue further education for this purpose.

The Scheme encompasses a training programme of 10 weeks duration, consisting of 5 weeks of military orientated training interspersed with 5 weeks of educational orientated training. Participants are exposed to an environment which encourages personal development, achievement and hard work and, on successful completion of the programme, should be able to:

- a. Display social and team skills.
- b. Display other skills that increase their employability and prove their competence to prospective employers, leading to the likelihood of obtaining sustained employment or successfully entering further education for this purpose.
- c. Demonstrate an increased sense of self confidence, self-discipline, self-motivation and self-worth
- d. Demonstrate an increased level of physical fitness, physical fitness education and motivation, and
- e. Communicate more confidently with potential employers.

A pilot phase of the scheme took place in Meath/Dublin from June-August 2016 and involved 25 participants. A subsequent evaluation recommended that the activity be mainstreamed, noting in particular that –

- the participants were exceptionally committed to the programme,
- the participants' success in accredited learning modules was above the norm,
- participants improved their levels of confidence, and
- personal development occurred across all aspects of the programme.

It is expected that the scheme will, over the next three years, cater for approximately 180 participants. As the target cohort is between 18-24 years, it is intended to include the activity under Priority 4 (YEI) in 2017, with the activity then moving to Priority 2 (Social Inclusion) from 2018

onwards. Colleagues from the Department of Defence will give a presentation in relation to the scheme at the upcoming PMC on Thursday 18 May.

An Activity Implementation Plan for the activity is attached for your information and the ESF MA will seek the formal approval of the PMC principle to the inclusion of the activity within PEIL on 18 May.