

**Minutes of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and  
Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020  
5<sup>th</sup> Monitoring Committee Meeting  
Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017  
Clock Tower, Marlborough Street, DES.**

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

Attendance and Apologies: See Appendix 1 – Attendance List

**CHAIRPERSON'S WELCOMING COMMENTS**

The Chairperson welcomed the members of the Committee to the fifth meeting of the PEIL PMC and apologised for the late delivery of the documentation for the meeting.

**1. AGENDA**

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

**2. MINUTES OF 4<sup>th</sup> PMC held on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

The Chairperson referred to the final minutes of the fourth PMC meeting circulated to the Committee for adoption. The minutes were adopted, incorporating an amendment proposed by Ms Bríd O'Brien in relation to the Pathways to Work Strategy mentioned in Section 6 Update on the Youth Guarantee. The minutes will be published on [www.esf.ie](http://www.esf.ie).

**3. Note on Technical Adjustment to the PEIL OP**

Mr. Hugh Geoghegan, ESF Managing Authority, presented [Paper No. 1 on the recent Technical Adjustment to the PEIL OP 2014-2020](#), which resulted from the Mid-Term Review of the Multi-Annual Financial Framework in 2016. Ireland received an additional allocation for the ESIF of €3.648m, the ESF's share for the PEIL OP amounted to €2,079,265 (in line with the overall allocations for ESF and ERDF). The MA proposed that the additional funding would be assigned to Priority 1 for the Springboard Activity; the proposal was approved by the PMC in June 2017 and forwarded to the Commission. The decision of the Commission approving the proposal was received in late November 2017.

**4. Simplified Cost Options (SCOs)**

Mr. Conor Kelly, ESF Certifying Authority, introduced [Paper No. 2 on Simplified Cost Options \(SCOs\)](#) to the meeting. He stated that the main advantages of adopting SCOs were a reduction in the error rate (the Commission's auditors require the error rate to be less than 2%) arising from audits of the activities' expenditure declarations and, secondly, a reduction in the administrative burden for all

the bodies involved. He outlined the details of the proposed SCOs currently under consideration by the Commission for the PEIL programme in relation to the ETB Training for the Unemployed, CTCs and SICAP. He noted that the ESF MA and CA would be examining the possibility of further SCOs in conjunction with the IBs.

Conor outlined the work the Commission had undertaken in proposing education off-the-shelf SCOs and noted that the Commission had engaged consultants to examine the current uptake of SCOs by the Member States and to identify other suitable activities for adopting a unit cost methodology, such as for training activities. He also noted the Commission proposal to include a flat rate approach to technical assistance in a Delegated Act in 2018 following the adoption of the Omnibus regulation.

A brief discussion followed on possible suitable Activities. Mr. Christian Aagaard, European Commission, explained that the purpose of the SCOs was to shift the emphasis from the cost element of the programme to focus instead on the outputs achieved. Dr Ruth Pritchard, POBAL, noted that in her experience there was a significant amount of work involved in developing proposals for SSUCs under Article 14(1), but that the effort is entirely worthwhile as it will significantly reduce the administrative burden going forward.

Mr Stewart Roche, HEA, queried if the “40%” would be audited where the “Pay+40%” cost model was used and was informed that there is no requirements to justify the 40% - all that is subject to audit is the Pay element. Mr Roche further noted that the HEA would be engaging contractors to conduct management verifications on its behalf and that the HEA would need to engage with the MA and CA regarding how those management verifications should be conducted.

There was also a discussion regarding the potential suitability of a Unit Cost based on salaries for the GYDP activity.

The Chair thanked the colleagues in SOLAS and SICAP for their work in relation to the adoption of SSUCs under Article 14(1).

## **5. Presentation on the Ability Programme (DEASP)**

Mr. Ciaran Diamond, Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection(DEASP), presented ([Presentation No 1](#)) an overview of the new pre-activation programme for young people with disabilities called the Ability Programme, as set out in [Paper No. 3 Ability Programme](#). The programme, aimed at young people with disabilities (aged 15 – 29) is designed to assist their transition from school to further education and employment. This is a new approach for DEASP, as previous programmes were aimed at working age participants. There was concern that this particular age group (who had supports up to school leaving age) were then left adrift. The programme had been welcomed by stakeholder groups.

The Ability Programme will be based on a person-centred, case management approach to support participants identify and follow progression pathways based on their needs and potential. The aim is to bring young people with disabilities who are not work-ready closer to the labour market. The programme will promote employment prospects and meaningful social roles for young people with disabilities and in particular, young people who are distant from the labour market using a range of person-centred supports. The funding is expected to be around €10 million over a three year period, being co-financed on a 50:50 basis from the ESF and the Irish Exchequer. The Programme is due to commence in Q22018 and run until 2021. The Programme will be managed by Pobal on behalf of the DEASP and the call for proposals issued on 3<sup>rd</sup> October. The on-line application facility will operate from 4<sup>th</sup> December 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018 and it is expected that successful applicants will be noted in April/May 2018. The minimum funding grant is €200k with a maximum of €750k. The estimated number of individual young people that will be assisted is 1,000.

During the subsequent discussion, Mr Diamond advised that some 130 people had attended information events to assist prospective applicants and that the DEASP expected a reasonable response to the call for proposals.

## **6. Youth Employment Support Scheme**

Mr. Andrew Diggins, ESF Managing Authority, outlined the details of a new proposed Activity for inclusion under Priority 4, Youth Employment Initiative, of PEIL 2014-2020 as set out in [Paper No. 4 - Proposed inclusion of YESS Programme](#) in Priority 4 YEI. The proposed activity is entitled **Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS)** which the DEASP is planning to introduce in 2018. This scheme is a work experience programme targeted at young jobseekers (aged 18-24) who are long-term unemployed or who face significant barriers to employment. The aim is to provide participants with the opportunity to learn basic work and social skills in a supportive environment while on a work placement.

Participation on the YESS Programme will be voluntary, with no financial penalties if jobseekers do not wish to participate in the scheme or if participants drop out. The payment under the scheme will comprise the weekly personal rate of payment for the participant plus a top-up allowance, resulting in a payment equivalent to the net minimum wage. The standard duration of the work experience programme is 3 months, with an option to extend the placement further to 6 or 9 months (with the consent of a Case Officer). Participants will be required to work 30 hours per week. A Learning and Development Plan will be agreed between all parties at the outset of the placement. The Host Organisation will complete an assessment for the participant at the end of the placement. At the end of the placement, employers they will be encouraged to hire satisfactory participants (i.e. offer them paid employment) and will qualify for a subsidy under JobsPlus Youth.

Mr Ciaran Lawler, DEASP, said that the funding for the scheme had been approved in the Budget and the scheme would commence in Q2 2018.

The Chair sought the agreement of the Members to the inclusion of the YESS in Priority 4 of PEIL 2014-2020. The proposal was agreed.

## **7. Decommitment**

Mr. Conor Kelly, ESF Certifying Authority, provided an update on the decommitment arrangements as set on in [Paper No. 5 - Decommitment Arrangements](#). He informed the Members that the Commission has recently updated the methodology for calculating the decommitment amounts during the operational programmes. The purpose of the revised approach is to provide greater flexibility at the level of the OP for achieving the decommitment target, and to respect the principle of non-transferability of resources between categories of regions when there is an amount to be de-committed.

The new methodology establishes that the amount to be de-committed for an operational programme will be calculated at the level of the OP. Where one Fund is performing better than the other compensation was possible between Funds; compensation is now permitted between the ESF and the YEI specific allocation for calculating the amount of the decommitment. In relation to Ireland's position on decommitment (N+3) for the end of 2018, this is significant as it allows expenditure from other priorities to fulfil the decommitment targets rather than from the YEI. Under the N+3 Rule, Ireland must submit payment applications of €127.7m which, if reflected in 50:50 co-financed interventions, implies total expenditure of €255.4m before the end of 2018.

## 8. Proposed Amendments to the AIPs and Financial Allocations

Mr Andrew Diggins, ESF Managing Authority, outlined a number of [Paper No 6 - Proposed Textual Changes to the AIPs](#) which were approved as follows:

### 1. For all existing AIPs

Under Section 5 (C) – Sustainable Development - Amend wording in paragraph 1, sentence 2 to read “This requires **that** support for environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, sustainable management of natural resources, risk prevention and management are addressed through both dedicated funding streams and through their horizontal integration across the Operational Programmes” and in paragraph 2, amend to read “the Government’s sustainable development framework document...”,

**Amend all references to Government Departments to new titles where appropriate.**

2. Updated Momentum AIP approved
3. Updated Garda Youth Diversion Projects AIP approved

In addition the Committee agreed to approve the CTC and SICAP AIPs by written procedure.

The proposed financial allocation changes related to Priority 1 (Promoting employment), Priority 2 (Social Inclusion) and Priority 4 (YEI) as per [Paper No. 7 - Proposed Financial Re-allocations](#). In relation to Priority 1, the changes involved

#### Priority 1

- As Momentum has been discontinued it is proposed to reallocate €13m to Springboard and ICT Skills conversion Courses.

#### Priority 2

- Reflecting the continuation of Youthreach in Priority 4, it is proposed that the allocation for Youthreach in Priority 2 be reduced by €25m.
- It is proposed to increase the SICAP allocation by €30m (which takes account of the Youthreach saving and the €5m associated with the previous removal of the Equality Mainstreaming activity).

#### Priority 4

- The PMC previously agreed in principle to the inclusion of the Community Training Centres (CTCs) (ESF 4.8) as an approved activity under the YEI with effect from 1 January 2017. It is proposed to allocate €60m to this Activity;
- The PMC agreed (May 2017) to the inclusion of the Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme (ESF 4.9) and it is proposed to allocate €0.84m (estimated cost for 2017-2019) to this Activity;
- Having unsuccessfully explored the potential to use an SCO model for the Tús Scheme (ESF 4.3), it is proposed to discontinue Tús which had been allocated €35.3m under the Priority;
- Following the discontinuance of JobBridge and in the light of audit trail difficulties arising with the Scheme, it is proposed to remove JobBridge (ESF 4.4) which had been allocated €57.2m under the Priority;
- As the expenditure on SICAP cannot be considered eligible in the absence of written evidence of the YEI eligibility, it is proposed to remove SICAP (ESF 4.7) which had been allocated €6m under the Priority;

- It is also proposed to approve an allocation of €16m for the Youth Employment Support Scheme to be operational from Q2 in 2018; and
- As Youthreach will continue to be claimed under this priority it is proposed to increase the allocation by €21.3m.

Mr Diggins noted that following the Commission update on the decommitment methodology, the MA is confident that the full YEI allocation will be drawn down from ongoing expenditure on the approved activities. The PMC agreed to the proposed financial re-allocations.

It was noted that it will be necessary to seek an OP amendment to review the 2018 milestone targets for the YEI of 26,330 participants and certified expenditure of €185.94m. The proposed amendment will be developed and circulated to the PMC for approval next year.

The Chair noted the considerable work undertaken by colleagues in DEASP and SICAP in endeavouring to maintain the activities being removed from Priority 4 and noted the flexibility offered by the revised decommitment methodology which will allow the YEI allocations to be drawn down over a longer period.

## 9. OP Targets and Milestones

Mr Hugh Geoghegan, ESF MA, gave an overview of [Paper No. 8 - PEIL Performance Framework Milestones and Targets](#), and progress towards their achievement. He outlined the Regulatory requirements underlining the need for compliance, including the retention of 6% of the allocation until the targets are met, possible suspension of part of the OP and, potentially, financial penalties.

In relation to the achievements against the targets achieved to date, the latest data covers the period 2014 to 2016 (from the AIR 2017 submitted to the Commission), with the number of participants reaching 329,508 against the 2018 Milestone Target of 659,826. He outlined the issues that were affecting the achievement of targets, particularly in Priority 4 YEI, which included the reduction in youth unemployment by over 50% since 2012, the discontinuance of two Activities (JobBridge and Momentum), and the decision to discontinue SICAP under the YEI Priority and focus it under Priority 2 (Social Inclusion) only. However, a number of new Activities have been approved for inclusion under the YEI - the Community Training Centres were approved by the PMC in December 2016, the DFESS in May 2017 and, now, YESS.

Mr Geoghegan outlined the potential effect that the introduction of SCOs would have on achieving the targets and milestones. The introduction by SOLAS of the PLSS system across all ETB activities, (covering a significant proportion of the PEIL non-financial data) and the finalisation of the eCohesion will also enable better monitoring of non-financial data and may result in an apparent drop in participants for relevant activities.

The MA will re-assess Milestones and Targets in the light of the approved re-allocations, the use of SCOs in particular and the results of the “pre-PLSS” data to be uploaded to eCohesion. The MA will seek to amend the PEIL OP document accordingly, with the approval of the PMC and the Commission.

Mr. Aagaard, EU Commission, enquired if the proposed adjustments would result in the 2018 Milestones being achieved. He noted that any changes to the OP document must be duly justified, and asked the MA to provide justifications for the proposed changes. He also noted that such justifications should mainly be outside of the control of the MA. Mr Geoghegan noted the decline

in youth unemployment, coupled with the discontinuation of Job-Bridge and Momentum, which had resulted in lower take up rates than expected.

## **10. Designation, ecohesion and Data Protection Updates**

### **(a) Designation:**

Mr Geoghegan, ESF MA, said that the Managing (and Certifying) Authority expected to have the final designation documentation completed early in 2018. Mr Aagaard, European Commission, while noting the slow pace of designation across Member States, stressed the importance of the Irish authorities completing the designation process as soon as possible.

### **(b) ECohesion:**

Mr Geoghegan, ESF MA, outlined the progress so far in relation to the eCohesion system from its commencement in April 2017. The system was being rolled out in three phases, the third phase was due for completion early in the New Year. Testing of the system was ongoing and it would continue into January 2018. Training for beneficiaries and IBs would also be provided, with ETB staff having attended training over three days in early December.

### **(c) Data Protection:**

Mr Geoghegan, ESF MA, informed the Committee that legal advice had been sought from the CSSO and the Office of the Attorney General in relation to Data Protection issues, particularly in the context of the rollout of eCohesion. The most notable aspect of the advice received to date is that all Bodies in the ESF Cascade are considered to be Joint Data Controllers under the terms of the GDPR. Therefore, supplementary agreements are required with the IBs and beneficiaries to include new requirements such as informing all participants of their rights in relation to personal data held by any Bodies in relation to them and their right to see and amend that data. These agreements are currently being prepared in consultation with the CSSO and will be circulated to all the relevant bodies in due course.

Mr Stewart Roche (HEA) enquired about the apparent conflict created by the need to collect and store data on all participants for an extended period, and obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Mr. Geoghegan noted that the EU Regulations not only created a legal basis for collecting and storing personal data, but required that such data was collected. As with data relating to expenditure, it is required to retain that data for an extended period so that an adequate trail is maintained. The MA will notify all IBs when the data is no longer needed, which is likely to be in or around 2026.

## **11. UPDATE ON THE EVALUATION PLAN**

Ms. Theresa Ryan, ESF MA, provided an update on the [Evaluation Plan \(Paper No 9\)](#) and the upcoming evaluations scheduled for completion before the end of 2018.

### **1. YEI Evaluation**

Article 19 (6) of Regulation 1304/2013 requires that at least twice during the programming period, an evaluation of the implementation of YEI must be undertaken. The first evaluation was completed in December 2015 and the second evaluation must be completed by 31 December 2018.

## 2. Mid-Term Evaluation

Article 56 of Regulation 1303/2013 requires that at least once during the programming period, an evaluation is carried out on how support from the ESF has contributed to the objectives of each Priority. The Mid-Term Evaluation had been originally timetabled for 2017 and the Committee was provided with draft terms of reference that had been developed for it. However, to ensure that the evaluation can yield useful information and recommendations, it is being deferred until 2018 with a view to combining it with the second YEI evaluation.

A standing steering group to assist in the oversight of evaluation activities will be established in early 2018. One its first roles will be to discuss and input on the draft terms of reference for the evaluations. Ms Ryan noted that Tim Maverley, DJE, had previously agreed to be part of the steering group and invited expressions of interest from other Committee members. It is intended to also invite relevant colleagues from the European Commission and the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) to become members of the Group. Committee members were also requested to continue to advise the ESF MA of proposals for new and relevant research activities which could benefit from support through ESF Technical Assistance funding. It was also noted that the ESRI are currently undertaking a review of Youthreach, and the results of this review would be brought to the attention of the PMC.

## **12. Social Inclusion Performance Audit Report**

Mr. Hugh Geoghegan, ESF Managing Authority, presented an overview of the Performance Audit carried out in late May/early June on behalf of the EU Commission – [Presentation No 2 Social Inclusion Performance Audit](#). The focus of the audit was the Social Inclusion Priority and the objective of the audit was to assess the implementation of actions designed to promote social inclusion, and to combat poverty and discrimination. Only GYDPs, YPPs and Tus Nua were operational at the time of the audit. The audit team noted that while the indicators for the Priority lagged behind the 2018 Milestone and 2023 Target they did not believe there was any significant reason at this stage to be concerned that the targets would not be met. The Report set out 13 findings, of which two were described as critical. The first of these findings related to the delays in implementing the new ecohesion system which the audit team saw as hampering monitoring and preventing designation. The second finding related to the delay in designation caused by the slow progress of the completion of the ecohesion system. Other findings related to monitoring of the performance data and the financial data by the Managing Authority; the auditors suggested monthly monitoring, but the Managing Authority was of the view that this would place an undue administrative burden on the implementing bodies.

In relation to the Programme Monitoring Committee itself, the auditors noted that there was no Code of Ethics or statements on confidentiality or impartiality. The Managing Authority agreed with this finding and was currently drafting a Code of Ethics for circulation to the Monitoring Committee. Mr. Aagaard, EU Commission, proposed that the Members of the PMC should receive all the documentation for the meetings at least 14 days in advance of the meeting and that this be included in the PMC procedures.

### 13. Presentation on the Review of the FSD (HEA)

Ms. Orla Christle, HEA, introduced her [Presentation No 3 on the Review carried out on the Fund for Students with Disabilities \(FSD\)](#). The FSD was established in 1994 as part of the Third Level Access Measure and is managed by the HEA on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills. The FSD operates in addition to the framework of rights and mainstream services provided for students with disabilities. The Fund is open to full-time students in both further and higher education and is administered by the Access or Disability Service in the colleges, who assess the applicants' needs. The types of costs covered included the provision of personal assistance, learning supports, transport costs and assistive technology. The number of students supported between 2008 and 2016 was 50,000 and 74% of the students assisted were in Higher Education.

The Review of the Fund was published in October 2017. The main findings of the Review included the fact that the FSD was a valuable support for students; there were significant increases and changes in the demand for the assistance; the operation of the FSD was resource intensive for the HEA and the HEIs. The Review also found that changes were required to improve the Fund. The Report also outlined 14 recommendations which included the need for a new allocation model, the inclusion of part-time students under the Fund, an increase in the funding as the profile of the students was changing, the suggestion to transfer the Further Education element to SOLAS, a 'Whole of Institution' approach to support, and the introduction of a "Disability Passport" (detailing the needs of the student, which could be updated as they progressed through school from primary onwards. Work on a new allocation model had started.

### 14. Information and Communications update

Ms. Catherine Ormsby, ESF Managing Authority, introduced [Presentation No 4 on the Information and Communications](#) activities carried out throughout the year. There were 8,745 visits/users of the ESF website ([www.esf.ie](http://www.esf.ie)) in 2017. She outlined the training carried out in November and December in relation to the introduction of the new eCohesion system and noted that further training scheduled for January 2018. The ESF MA provided funding under the Technical Assistance for a number of ESF publicity related activities by Projects including:

- SICAP Europe in My Region Photo Competition
- Student Assistance Fund full page advertisement in the Students Union Handbook
- National Youthreach Video: <https://youtu.be/YCrdPs4-AXw>
- Youthreach Art Competition
- Printing of leaflets and brochures for our new projects

The ESF MA attended several events including the following:

- Europe in My Region
- National Ploughing Championships
- FET Fairs
- Information Days
- Graduations/Awards Ceremonies
- Launches

The **ESF 60 Years Conference** was held on the 28<sup>th</sup> November in the Printworks, Dublin Castle to celebrate 60 years of the European Social Fund investing in people in Europe.

**15. AOB**

The Chair thanked all concerned for their contributions to the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference particularly colleagues in the Department of Justice and Equality for their organisation and moderation of the session on Employment and Entrepreneurship for Women and Migrants.

The Chair noted that the Commission had accepted the final report in relation to the HCIOP and that the final instalment of €18.8m was expected this year. An update will be circulated on receipt of the closure letter.

**Next PMC meeting**

The next Programme Monitoring Committee meeting will be held on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

**APPENDIX 1 - ATTENDANCE**

	<b>NAME</b>	<b>ORGANISATION</b>
1	Gerard Gasparro	SOLAS
2	David Dunne	SOLAS
3	Rod Tierney	SOLAS
4	Maureen Power	EMFF
5	Donal Bergin	Department of Defence
6	Sinéad Quinn	DRCD
7	Ruth Pritchard	POBAL
8	Christian Aagaard	European Commission
9	Ciarán Lawler	DEASP
10	Elaine Houlihan	DJE
11	Grace O'Malley	DEASP
12	David Waters	DEASP
13	Jennifer Doyle	DEASP
14	Tim Maverley	DJE
15	Brian Liggett	SEUPB
16	Gerry Browne	DJE
17	Deirdre Toomey	IHREC
18	John Collins	DES AA
19	Ciaran Diamond	DEASP
20	Bríd O'Brien	INOÜ
21	Joseph Keaney	Probation Services
22	Simon Cornish	Probation Services
23	Paddy Duffy	IYJS
24	Paul Dunphy	IYJS
25	Margot Dunne	DPER
26	Stewart Roche	HEA
27	Carole Sullivan	DJE
28	Mary McGarry	ESF and EGF Policy and Operations
29	Hugh Geoghegan	ESF MA
30	Andrew Diggins	ESF MA
31	Theresa Ryan	ESF MA

32	Conor Kelly	ESF CA
33	Catherine Ryan	ESF MA
34	Therese Callery	ESF MA
35	Ashling Abbott	ESF MA
36	Pat Costello	ESF MA
37	Paul Daly	ESF MA
38	Stuart Morris	ESF MA
39	Iain Maguire	ESF MA
40	Catherine Ormsby	ESF MA
	<b>Apologies</b>	
	Vincent Dunphy	Southern Regional Assembly
	James Doorley	National Youth Council of Ireland
	Labhaoise McKenna	EMRA
	AnneMarie Quarry	DJE
	Barry Guckian	NWRA
	Clare Droney	DJE