



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Cómhaoinithe ag an
Aontas Eorpach
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Minutes of the Employment, Inclusion, Skills and Training (EIST) Programme 2021-2027

Monitoring Committee Meeting
10am, 21st March, 2023
The Gibson Hotel, Dublin 1

Chairperson: Dervila Twamley, Head of ESF Unit, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

Attendance and Apologies: See Appendix 1 – Attendance List

1. Introduction and Adoption of the Agenda (for approval)

The Chairperson extended a warm welcome to the members of the Monitoring Committee (MC) to the inaugural meeting of the EIST MC and gave a brief outline of the day's events. The Chairperson invited Ms Andriana Sukova, Deputy Director General of DG Employment and Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) to address the meeting.

Ms Andriana Sukova (AS), offered greetings and congratulations on the 50th anniversary of Ireland joining the EU. AS welcomed the opportunity the meeting presented to strengthen co-ordination and co-operation between the MC and the Commission. AS noted the commitment by the Managing Authority (MA) to provide meeting documentation in advance and encouraged feedback from MC members. AS highlighted that Ireland has had a positive record with implementation of ESF funding, already achieving many of the targets set by the EU and welcomed the focus in the Programme on a wide range of initiatives including upskilling and reskilling, social inclusion and reducing poverty. AS particularly welcomed the focus on young people, and those most at need highlighting the European Pillar on Social Rights Action Plan's target to reduce by at least 15m the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU by 2030, including at least 5m children.

The Chairperson asked that thanks on behalf of the ESF+ MA to Ms Sukova and the Commission for the agreement reached on the EIST Programme be put on record and welcomed feedback and discussion from all members of the MC.

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

2. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure of the MC (for approval)

The Chairperson referred to the EIST Rules of Procedure and Code of Conduct which were circulated to the MC members in advance. The Rules of Procedure set out the establishment, composition and functions of the MC under Articles 38, 39 and 40 of the [Common Provisions Regulation \(EU\) No. 2021/1060](#) (CPR).

As no amendments were proposed, the Rules of Procedure were adopted.

3. Overview of the ESF+ EIST Programme 2021-2027

The Chairperson presented an overview of the EIST Programme for 2021-27. The CPR provides the overall legislative framework for Cohesion Policy covering the ESF+ and other Funds. The [ESF+ Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1057](#) provides further fund-specific rules for ESF+ including a number of ‘thematic concentration’ requirements for ESF+, meaning areas where Member States must spend a minimum amount of their allocation. ESF+ is a co-financed programme, meaning that the EU allocation must be matched by national funding. The EIST Programme has a total allocation of €1.081bn, which is made up of €508m in EU funding and €573m in national co-financing. The EIST programme will see investment in 5 Priorities: Access to employment; Skills and lifelong learning for all; Tackling poverty and social exclusion; Social innovation and Food and basic material assistance to the most deprived

3.1 Allocations Overview

Andrew Diggins (AD) presented further details on the EIST allocations by Priority including a breakdown of the proposed funding per Action and the participation targets. AD clarified that the proposed funding per Action totals presented here were slightly different to those circulated as the 6% Technical Assistance has been factored in, as when each claim is made the Technical Assistance will also be claimed.

3.2 Communications Update

Theresa Ryan (TR) presented an overview of communications requirements which are set out in Articles 46 – 50 and Annex IX of the CPR. TR outlined the responsibilities of each Body involved in the implementation of EU funding in relation to communication and the financial penalties for non-compliance. TR noted that Communications Guidelines for the 2021-2027 period are available to download from the [eufunds.ie](#) website under “Regulations and Guidance”. TR also highlighted the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is the EIST Operation of Strategic Importance which provides a significant contribution to the achievement of the objectives of the Programme and which is subject to particular monitoring and communication measures.

3.3 ICT Update

Ruairí Smyth (RS) presented an update on the proposed ICT system for EIST 2021 – 2027, including background, procurement of the successful vendor and the two go-live phases for the non-financial and financial reporting.

Gregorio de Castro (GdC), DG EMPL, asked about the timeframe for rollout of the new system, and if there will be interoperability with the SFC (Structural Funds Communication system) portal. RS clarified that the first phase roll-out will be in Quarter 3 of 2023 and will include interoperability with the SFC.

Mary May, HEA asked if training will be provided for staff using the new system and will this be done in advance of the first phase roll-out. RS replied that not everyone will be on new system for the first phase, and that there will be training for Actions that will be expected to make a declaration. Training

will be provided in waves as the rollout happens. Some Intermediate Bodies (IBs) and Beneficiaries (Bs) will also be invited to take part in User Acceptance Testing (UAT) of the new system.

4. Project Selection Criteria (for information)

AD referred to the draft Selection of Operations Criteria document circulated and that there will be clear selection criteria for all Actions. The MA will be in contact with each IB and B in the coming weeks to finalise the draft. Joanna Gawrylczyk-Malesa (JGM), DG EMPL clarified that the Commission had agreed to the MA's request to postpone adoption of the selection criteria until draft document is fully completed.

Orla O'Connor, National Womens' Council, asked what information is required for "the gender mapping" - is it aggregated data or impact? AD replied that this has yet to be agreed upon, but that the MA would consult with IHREC and relevant stakeholders. The Gender Equality Action is specifically targeting gender, all Actions by their nature are open to everybody.

Helena Stromberg (EMRA) enquired what the mechanism for approval of an Action will be. AD answered that this will be approved by the Commission, working with IBs and Bs, and would be brought to the MC for approval by written procedure. (NOTE: chronologically this question was asked right before AOB.)

5. Draft Implementation Plans (IPs) (for information)

AD outlined that draft IPs are currently being prepared for all Actions, based on the ERDF template, and the MA will be in touch with all stakeholders in the coming weeks to finalise them.

6. Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission new reporting template - presentation

Bernie Bradley (BB), the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), highlighted that the 21st March is World Down Syndrome Day which advocates for the rights and well-being of people with Down Syndrome. BB thanked all the various Funds' MAs present for work to date to support implementation of equality and human rights across all EU funds.

BB referred to the increased focus on equality and human rights reflected in the governing regulations through the enabling conditions and Horizontal Principles (HPs) which apply to the whole of the Programme. The HPs require Member States to ensure compliance need to ensure respect for fundamental rights and compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU in the implementation of the Funds.

At national level public bodies are required in the performance of their functions, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights of staff and service users, through the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, a statutory obligation under S.42 of the IHREC Act, 2014.

BB presented slides outlining the new reporting template which has been agreed between IHREC and the MAs, to be used in conjunction with the [Equality and Human Rights in EU funds guidance](#). From early 2024, each IB or B will be required to report annually on equality and human rights which will be reviewed by IHREC as part of their monitoring role. IHREC will prepare an annual report for consideration by the MC on compliance with the enabling conditions and Horizontal Principles.

BB also highlighted the use of Technical Assistance funding for further training and capacity building on equality and human rights and the IHREC [eLearning module](#).

BB advised that IHREC may need propose revisions to the reporting template to the MC in the future. Stakeholders are also encouraged to share experiences on how they overcame any obstacles in the new reporting system.

Dearbhail Lawless, and Bríd O'Brien (BO'B) thanked IHREC for the presentation and expressed their support for the new reporting template. BO'B also noted the importance of including socio-economic status in the reporting template. JGM also noted the great work by IHREC and mentioned that the reporting template has been shared with other EU countries to assist with reporting.

The Chairperson thanked BB and IHREC, emphasising that further discussion was important to ensure that Ireland remains compliant with all equality and human rights provisions. The Secretariat will circulate IHREC guidelines and slide presentation with the minutes from this meeting.

7. AOB

The Chairperson advised that the draft MC minutes will be circulated within one month of the meeting. MC members are requested to sign the hard copies of the Code of Conduct form and return it to the sign-in desk after the meeting.

Andrew Condon, DPER/NDP noted how well both his Department and DFHERIS had worked together to get the REACT-EU amendment completed and welcomed the launch of the ESF+ programme. GdC, BB, and AS noted that the Irish reaction to the Covid19 crisis and the war in Ukraine was positive and that there were many lessons learned from the Covid19 pandemic response which could be drawn upon in future.

APPENDIX 1 – Attendance

	NAME	ORGANISATION
1	Dervila Twamley	Head of ESF Unit
2	Andrew Diggins	ESF+ Managing Authority
3	Ruairí Smyth	ESF+ Managing Authority
4	Theresa Ryan	ESF+ Managing Authority
5	Winnie Ryan (observer)	ESF+ Managing Authority
6	Padraig Creed (observer)	ESF+ Managing Authority
7	Geraldine Ruane (observer)	ESF+ Managing Authority
8	Ailbhe Murphy (observer)	ESF+ Managing Authority
9	Patrick Cahir (observer)	ESF+ Managing Authority
10	Sinead Hickey (observer)	ESF+ Managing Authority
11	Cathy Dolan (observer)	ESF+ Managing Authority
12	Cathal Quaid	ESF+ Certifying Authority
13	Máire O'Mahony	ESF+ AA
14	John Collins	ESF+ AA
15	Gregorio de Castro	European Commission
16	Joanna Gawrylczyk-Malesa	European Commission
17	Andriana Sukova	European Commission
18	Andrew Condon	DPER/NDP
19	James Boylan	DSP
20	Carron Hodson	DSP
21	Grace Saunders	DSP
22	Charlie Martin	DSP
23	Ciara Pidgeon	DCEDIY
24	Ronan McCabe	DCEDIY
25	Paul Gleeson	DCEDIY
26	Gerry Browne	D/Justice
27	Ross Wynne	D/Justice (Youth Justice)
28	James Lavelle	TCAGSM
29	Mark Reidy	TCAGSM
30	Shane Crowley	DAFM

31	Kevin Holmes (Observer)	DRCD
32	Edel Healy	DRCD
33	Elaine Jennings	DRCD
34	Brendan Horgan	SOLAS
35	Deirdre Casey	POBAL
36	Bernie Bradley	IHREC
37	Bríd O'Brien	INOUE
38	Aileen Marron	HEA
39	Fergal Noone	HEA
40	Caitriona Ryan (Observer)	HEA
41	Mary May	HEA
42	Amy Mulvihill	TUSLA
43	Aoife O'Sullivan	Skillnet Ireland
44	Jason Totos (observer)	Skillnet Ireland
45	Siobhán Leonard	Sport Ireland
46	Dearbháil Lawless	AONTAS
47	Helena Stromberg	EMRA
48	Patrick Devine	NWRA
49	Karen Coughlan	SRA
50	Owen O'Mahony	WWETB
51	Julie Ahern	Children's Rights Alliance
52	Mairead O'Connor	The Wheel
53	Orla O'Connor	National Women's Council
	Apologies	
	Amanda Taylor	CMETB
	Anna Shakespeare	Pobal
	Gerard Gibbons	ICTU
	Keith Kelleher	DAFM
	Mary Colhoun	DCEDIY
	Paul Geraghty	DRCD
	Roshin Sen	DSP

	Tanya Ward	Children's Rights Alliance
	Frank Maughan	DECC