

European Update 6th October, from Network for Europe Cheshire, Cumbria, G Manchester, Lancashire, Liverpool CR

Headlines

Some ESF calls. New Priority 4.
ESIF/ERDF Bulletins resume
Brexit deadline approaching

ESF Calls

Calls restarted in August, with the intention of covering most of the £290m reserve fund by the end of September. In the event, there were four calls for under £11m for Cornwall at the beginning of August, the two calls totalling £10m for covid response (digital inclusion), and three calls for £4.5m (Humber and New Anglia) at the very end of September. October started with a call for York and North Yorkshire (for people affected by Covid in their employment) on 5th for £750k. It is thought that there might be a few more calls any day, including some local ones, but time is running out. There might be extensions of existing projects, for example with ESFA, but nothing is clear. There should be more covid specific calls, but again, timing and details are yet to be revealed.
www.gov.uk/european-structural-investment-funds

ERDF Reserve

All the reserve funding is committed, with three new funds totalling £80m rolled out locally.
Reopening High Streets Safely Fund
Kick Starting Tourism Fund
SME Fund

Appraisals

ESF and ERDF should all be committed by the end of December 2020, for spend to 2023. But both have only committed about 75% of the funds so far, with just a few months left for the 2014-20 Programmes. There should be some flexibility beyond the end of 2020, but time is running out. There are still long delays with project appraisals. ERDF approved the three Reserve Fund projects quickly, but is still working on the calls from June 2019. DWP has recruited an extra 62 ESF staff, but it appears that only five of them will be working on appraisals, which is most disappointing.

Operational Programmes

The ESF and ERDF Operational Programmes (which define what the funding can be used for) were both recently updated following the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII), with ERDF bringing in a new Priority Axis 10. This allows for short term projects which do not need match funding (the three reserve fund projects).

ESF is now revising the Operational Programme again with a similar change - a new Priority 4 for covid. Details of the OP are not yet available, but ought to be published in a while.

Flexibility for existing projects Q&A page

ESIF Coronavirus Response Page is a useful resource for those running projects, with updated Questions and Answers for three funds. ERDF was last updated on 24th July, EAFRD on 11th August, and ESF on 8th September,. All projects still have to be completed by 2023.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-coronavirus-covid-19-response

ESF Action Notes

Action Note 054/20 of 9th September. RQF accredited qualifications.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/esf-action-notes-2014-to-2020-programme

Publicising Good Practice

DWP and MHCLG are expected to issue their annual good practice booklets towards the end of this year. The ESF one is almost ready, but they are still keen to fill in gaps with projects - if you are interested, you would need to contact them in the next day or so (then follow up with a photo and a few words of explanation).

List of Beneficiaries

Transparency is a requirement for European Funds. As in our 4th August update, we noted that the published list of funded projects was updated for ESF on 25th February and ERDF on 29th July. The recent bulletins sent out on 5th October state that they have been updated (but don't say that was two or six months ago). The information is useful, but doesn't state which organisations were funded by the co-finance organisations (Lottery, ESFA, DWP, HMPPS) - as these cover the majority of ESF, the lists are not as useful as might appear. And the information is not up to date - it refers to £1.46m of ESF projects, not £2.32m.

Open Days - European Week of Regions and Cities

This year's EWRC has started, and will be almost completely on-line, now spread over three weeks. Every year, it brings together thousands of people across Europe to discuss how to tackle local issues, and look at good practice. This year there are 500 sessions. A few, despite being digital, have been fully booked for some while (such as the Simplification event), but despite the registration deadline having passed, it is still possible to book online for most of them - and streaming will be available 48 hours after each event.

Three weeks from 5th October-

Empowering Citizens

Cohesion and Co-operation

Green Europe

Daily at 5:30 BST from 5th to 11th there will be a brief programme covering a decade of the EU.

<https://euregionsweek2020-video.eu>

https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/home_en

Some recent reports

A report on ESF-YEI support to youth unemployment 2014-18 across Europe.

The DWP is an ESF Co-Finance Organisation, and has recently published statistics to May 2020.

This covers the ESF projects it funds in 25 of the 38 LEP areas (delivered from September 2016 onwards, with 31 contracts, of which 15 were extended, and with two new ones in October 2019).

The 33 included 12 with Reed, 6 for Working Links/Fedcap and 5 with G4S.

No Going Back, is from 22 Manchester third sector leaders on the response of VCSE organisations to Covid, and highlights the determination, passion and wealth of policy ideas from our sector.

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9793>

www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-cfo-european-social-fund-2014-to-2020-statistics-to-may-2020/dwp-cfo-european-social-fund-2014-to-2020-statistics-to-may-2020

<https://manchestercommunitycentral.org/news/>“invest-crucial-sector-or-risk-losing-it”-say-manchester's-voluntary-sector-leaders

ESF now and planned

A brief document about how ESF can helping tackle the impact of covid now, and how the new ESF+ (which we will replace with UK-Shared Prosperity Fund) will invest in people. This will include a focus on NEET young people, at least 5% of funds to reduce child poverty, a strong contribution to transitions so workers can thrive in a climate neutral, more digital and inclusive society, and future proofing for emergencies.

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8de4fbe6-a3df-11ea-bb7a-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

ESF crowdfunding manual

Looks at using ESF to support crowdfunding for the Social Economy, with some examples.
www.fi-compass.eu/news/2020/07/esf-crowdfunding-manual

ESIF and health

Health inequalities are rising across UK and Europe. Tackling this can be achieved by targeting vulnerable groups, and using ESF, ERDF and other European Funding, narrowing health gaps.
<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c1d39036-d7ff-11e8-90c0-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

Partnership Working and PES Delivery

A new report looks at the increasing necessity for Partnership Working for Public Employment Services (such as JCP+ in England)

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9784>

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1163&intPageId=3447&langId=en&>

European Investment Bank

The UK paid in €3.5bn as capital. Projects in the UK have received €119bn in loans, 8.1% of the total lent. Now that we have left, the €3.5bn will be returned.

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8145>

Getting Brexit done

The UK left the European Union at the end of January, and we are in the Transition Period, so we do not influence EU policy, but are bound by the rules. We still have funding - for example for ESF and ERDF. The UK failed to ask for an extension at end June, so the Transition Period ends on 31st December 2020. The ninth and final round of the planned trade talks has finished with no agreement. Some further negotiations will take place over the next few weeks, so we will either have no deal, or have a thin deal. The agreement needs to be by late October/early November in order to be ratified by the Member States, and the European Parliament, so we are almost out of time. None of this has been helped by the UK saying it could break international law, which was met with disbelief across Europe.

The UK has some preparations for the extra bureaucracy and transport delays expected from January, **and third sector organisations should be preparing for some disruptions.**

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_20_1817

https://ec.europa.eu/info/european-union-and-united-kingdom-forging-new-partnership/future-partnership/getting-ready-end-transition-period_en

www.nao.org.uk/report/learning-for-government-from-eu-exit-preparations

<https://ukandeu.ac.uk/research-papers/what-would-no-deal-mean>

<https://pbisemployers.campaign.gov.uk>

<https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2020/09/18/charities-must-prepare-for-brexit-uncertainty>

UK SPF

Although the budget is cancelled due to the uncertainty caused by Covid, the Comprehensive Spending Review seems to be going ahead before the end of this year. This could include the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to replace the approximately €13bn (£11.7bn) we would have received from Europe over the next seven years for ESF and ERDF. The open consultation that we had been promised does not appear to be taking place. Without the proper involvement of the Partners in discussions and the creation of the new fund, it will not be efficient or effective.

NCVO will shortly be publishing an updated paper on UK-SPF, calling for a fund designed around places and needs.

Civil Society Involvement - website

CSI supports third sector representatives on the English National Growth Board (PMC) for ERDF and ESF, and the National sub-committees. Register at <http://civilsocietyinvolvement.com>

ERDF Practitioner Network Bulletin

The October bulletin was issued on 5th, and states it is the first since March and the next will not be issued until December. It refers to the Q&A for flexibilities following CRII, and the three new projects, funded through the £80m ERDF Reserve, as well as latest figures, showing 74% of the Programme has been committed. There are examples of projects responding to COVID, including a Manchester gymwear enterprise. It states the online list of beneficiaries has been updated, and links to forms and guidance. Email esif@communities.gov.uk to subscribe for your own copy.

ESIF Programme Bulletin

The October bulletin was issued on 5th, and is the first since March. The next will not be issued until December. It refers to CRII flexibility for existing ERDF projects, and the three projects funded from the reserve, plus flexibilities for existing ESF projects, and the two new ESF-covid calls from the Reserve. It refers to the extended deadline for EAFRD, and gives figures on the programmes, confirming that ESF has committed under 77% so far. It says the list of beneficiaries has been updated, gives useful links, and says the annual ERDF and ESF case study booklets will be published soon. Email esif@communities.gov.uk

ESF Project Bulletin

Subscribe direct for your own copy of the Bulletin by emailing esf.2014-2020@dwp.gov.uk

ESIF Programme COVID-19 Notification Bulletin

Sent out to those subscribed to the other Bulletins. Email esif@communities.gsi.gov.uk

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European Union

European Structural
and Investment Funds