

**Minutes of the Eight Meeting  
of the  
EQUAL Mainstreaming Policy Group  
Killashee House Hotel, Naas, Co. Kildare**

**5<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

Joint Chairs: Vincent Landers                      Dept. Enterprise, Trade and Employment  
                  Niall Crowley                              Equality Authority

Attendance: See Appendix 1

Mr Landers welcomed the members of The Mainstreaming Policy Group and said that the purpose of the meeting was to inform the members of the current status of the new ESF Operational Programme 2007-2013.

**Agenda** ( see appendix 2)

**Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted

**Adoption of Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted subject to an amendment pointed out by Ms Patricia Callan. She said that she represents the SFA not IBEC as indicated in the minutes.

**ESF Operational Programme (OP) 2007-2013**

Mr Landers gave a presentation on the (non-paper) OP. He indicated that while the OP is quite advanced, the performance indicators have not been included yet. He further indicated that while most of the negotiations relating to the financial tables have taken place, the tables cannot be signed off on until the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) has been finalised. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment are meeting with the Department of Finance tomorrow to discuss the NSRF and it is expected to be finalised this week.

Mr Landers said that the ESF will be a much smaller fund this time, approx. €340m. He emphasised the importance of the NDP in providing funding across a wide range of areas while the OP will focus on specific areas.

**Priorities and Objectives**

Mr Landers informed the members that the priorities chosen for co-funding by the ESF for 2007-2013 will contribute to meeting the terms of the Community Strategic Guidelines. He then went on to say that the goal of creating more and better jobs is to be met by attracting more people into employment or entrepreneurial activity, by improving the adaptability of workers and enterprises and by investing in human capital through better education and skills. These will be met through investment

under the OP (2007-2013) and also by interventions funded by the National Development Plan 2007-2013. 75% of the ESF has been earmarked for Lisbon type activity.

Mr Landers said that the ESF regulation was adopted along with the Structural Funds Regulation on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2006. The ESF Regulation sets out all the objectives of the ESF:

- assist with increasing the adaptability of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs
- enhance access to employment for inactive people
- prevent long term unemployment
- reinforce social inclusion of disadvantaged people,
- combat discrimination in the labour market and increase participation in the in the labour market

#### National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF)

Mr Landers mentioned that labour market policy and trends were looked at in the context of trying to ensure consistency between the NSRF and the NDP. The two priority areas identified for both the NSRF and the NDP are:

- (i) Participation and activation of the Labour Force, and
- (ii) Improving the Adaptability of the Workforce

Mr Landers mentioned that when the NSRF is finalised it will be a legal document between Ireland and the Commission.

#### National Development Plan

Mr Landers said that the principle player in the Human Capital Investment Priorities for the next period will be the NDP. He mentioned that in the course of consultations with the ESRI in the context of the ex-ante evaluation of the NDP there was a meeting of minds. The ESRI have yet to produce the ex-ante evaluation. This should happen in late September or October.

The NDP is currently being drafted by the Department of Finance. It is expected that the NDP will be produced by the end of the year or early January 2007.

#### Management of ESF OP 2007-2013

Mr Landers indicated that the structure will be identical to the current round. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will have responsibility for The Managing Authority and the Paying Authority. It is intended that the Monitoring Committee will be similar to the current EHRDOP Monitoring Committee although there may be changes to reflect the more narrow focus of the OP. The Government will decide on the members once the rules of procedure are decided. He indicated that Member States will have more responsibility for financial control in the new round. The Audits will continue to be carried out by the Financial Control Unit, the Internal

Audit Unit and the Commission. Approximately €340m will be available under the new OP, this will be significantly less than the current OP.

### Measures for Co-funding

The two measures for co-funding are:

1. Improving Adaptability of the Workforce
2. Activation and Participation

### Improving Adaptability of the Workforce

Mr Landers said that this priority is concerned with the delivery of activities necessary to upskill the Irish labour force as a means of enabling it to respond effectively to the evolving needs of industry and the economy. It is anticipated that much of the available funding under this priority will be used to co-finance certain activities undertaken by FAS and the Department of Education and Science. These include:

- Third Level Access
- Undergraduate Skills
- Early School Leavers
- Skills Training
- Lifelong Learning – Back to Education Initiative
- Industrial Re-structuring
- Apprenticeships

### Activation and Participation

Mr Landers said that this priority is designed to provide for the increased activation and participation within certain groups that are regarded as being a potentially valuable source of workers to Ireland's labour force. The priority will allow for a range of activities that will deal with the disparate requirements of each group. The groups include:

- Unemployed
- People with Disabilities
- Lone Parents
- Travellers Prisoners
- Prisoners
- Females
- Older Workers
- Part-time Workers
- Immigrants

Mr Landers mentioned that we are only obliged to make a commitment on priority level in the next round of ESF so the final OP might be less specific. He also mentioned that a large number of existing measures will continue to receive funding (such as in-company training, lifelong learning- back to education initiative and third level access). Mr Landers indicated that there will be no major change in relation to the type of measures that we will be co-financed.

He also mentioned that the OP is not cast in stone so there will be more flexibility for movement of the funding within the Programme in later years. If existing measures are underperforming funding could be reduced or withdrawn. New proposals could be put forward for consideration in later years.

#### Timeframe for OP

Mr Landers said that ESF Unit intends to refine the document for the EHRDOP Monitoring Committee Meeting on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September and the performance indicators would be included at that stage. He also said that the final draft of the OP would probably be ready by the end of September or early October depending on the completion of the NSRF. Mr Landers informed the members that two meetings already had taken place with the relevant implementing bodies and they would be engaging fully with those who made submissions over the next few weeks. Consultations with the Commission would also take place next week.

In his concluding remarks, Mr Landers said that he would welcome comments/observations regarding the OP as soon as possible.

#### Mainstreaming Proposal submitted by the MPG Sub-Committee

Mr Crowley reminded the members of the background leading to the drafting of the proposal, explaining that during the last MPG meeting (28<sup>th</sup> February 2006), Mr Landers indicated that while there would be no EQUAL programme in the next round of Structural Funding there was an important opportunity for the EQUAL learning to be incorporated into the next Programme. In this context, at the request of Mr Landers, Mr Crowley set up and chaired a sub-group of the MPG to discuss mainstreaming/innovation and produce a paper for submission to the ESF Unit.

Mr Crowley went on to say that the draft mainstreaming proposal 'A Measure to Enhance Delivery Mechanisms for Labour Market Programmes' was discussed at the MPG Steering Group Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2006 resulting in a revised draft which was further discussed at the MPG Steering Group Meeting on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2006 where it was decided to circulate the proposal to the relevant policy people within the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE).

Mr Crowley informed the members that at present there is no owner for the Measure.

Mr Crowley mentioned that the proposal contains five core dimensions for delivery mechanisms. He indicated that the aim of the proposal is to enhance the delivery mechanisms for labour market programmes to groups that experience inequality in the labour market and the objective is to develop a framework for effective delivery mechanisms within that context. He further indicated that the framework could be tested on a pilot basis within a particular set of groups (such as minority ethnic groups including travellers) by bringing together labour market providers at national level, interagency level and local level in a forum to develop and implement a strategy to apply and keep the framework under review.

The review of the pilot exercise for implementing the framework would assist towards further development of the framework and the roll out of the framework across other areas and also to apply framework to other groups.

Mr Crowley went on to mention some of the outputs that would be in place as a result of implementing of the measure:

- framework for effective delivery mechanisms;
- a network at national level of labour market programme providers to support the development and implementation of the framework;
- five local county/city based networks of labour market programme providers to support implementation of the framework.

Mr Crowley concluded by saying that while the measure will require further development, ownership of the measure will be key in relation to fleshing it out and managing it.

Mr Landers informed the members that following the MPG Steering Committee on Friday the proposal has now been circulated to the relevant policy people within the DETE for their views on the principle of the Measure. He indicated that the ESF Unit is supportive of the Measure which is a clear concept for bringing forward the best practice from EQUAL.

#### **Questions/Comments from members**

Mr Michael McCauley, BMW Region, asked if there will be a mechanism for equalising the funding of the new Programme over all of the years.

In response, Mr Landers said that it would be preferable to have measures for 3 or 4 years rather than 7 years. The N+2 will allow scope for spending. Mr Landers also said that a large amount of the funding in this OP will be aimed at the BMW Region. He went on to make the following points regarding the BMW and SAE Regions:

- the requirements of the BMW region are only barely being met: very few proposals were received;
- will struggle to meet the commitment in the BMW Region, focus needs to be in this region;
- while there are less people employed in the BMW region than in the SAE region, more funding is available for BMW region.

Ms Patricia Callan, SFA, asked what is meant by lifelong learning being more individualised in the new Programme.

In response, Mr Landers referred to the individualised approach to lifelong learning as outlined in Towards 2016. Co-financing should be available to increase lifelong learning.

Ms Callan also commented that fewer bodies would receive funding in the new Programme.

Mr Landers indicated that they focused on picking a number of large measures/big programmes with small ESF allocations so if some programmes do not perform as expected, funding could be diverted to another measure.

Ms Callan asked if there would be no EQUAL type programme in the new ESF Programme.

In reply, Mr Landers confirmed that this is the case.

Ms Callan asked Mr Crowley for more detail about the 'Enhanced Measure for Delivery Mechanisms'.

In response, Mr Crowley clarified the type of activity involved in the Measure and said that the framework has yet to be decided. He further added that there was more detail in the original paper, also, the principle has to be agreed before a decision can be taken on resource requirements in terms of financing and staffing and then whoever takes ownership of the Measure will flesh it out.

Ms Marion Wilkinson, National Disability Authority, said that they are in discussions with the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA) regarding their proposal, they need the DSFA to manage it as they are not in a position to do it themselves.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Mr Landers thanked the members for their comments and went on to say that the ESF Unit has not received any significant proposals yet and they are willing to take proposals and have bi-laterals regarding proposals if necessary. He also said that if people come in much later with significant proposals that require co-financing it may be problematic but the ESF Unit might be prepared to take some money from the FAS and Department of Education allocation if a particular proposal could make a difference to target groups.

## Appendix 1

### EQUAL Mainstreaming Policy Group Meeting – 5<sup>th</sup> September 2006

#### Attendance List

Organisation	Member (Alternate)	Attendance
<b>Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment</b> Chairperson & Head of ESF Section Secretary to MPG EQUAL National Co-ordinator EQUAL Managing Authority EQUAL Managing Authority Labour Market Policy Policy on Unemployment	Vincent Landers Mary Moriarty Catherine Curran Olivia Keyes Bróna Deegan Máirin Cahill Brendan O’Leary	Attended Attended Attended Attended Attended Attended Apologies Received
Department of Education & Science	Paul Doyle Peter Kelly	Apologies Received Apologies Received
Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform	Pauline Moreau	Apologies Received
Department of Social & Family Affairs	Deirdre Shanley Evelyn O’Donnell Stephen Hanna	Apologies Received Apologies Received Attended
Technical Support Structure for EQUAL - Work Research Co-operative, Social and Economic Consultants	Tony Tyrrell Ciara Monaghan Sinead Jackson	Attended Attended Attended
Irish Business and Employers Confederation	Heidi Loughheed	Apologies Received
Irish Congress of Trade Unions	Frank Vaughan	Apologies Received
National Disability Authority	Marion Wilkinson	Attended
FÁS	Shira Mehlman	Attended
Special EU Programmes Body	Shaun Henry	Apologies Received
Equality Authority	Carole Sullivan Laurence Bond	Apologies Received Apologies Received
Joint Chairperson	Niall Crowley	Attended
Chambers of Commerce in Ireland	Caoimhe Gavin	Apologies Received

Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly	Dolores Keating	Apologies Received
Border Midland & Western Regional Assembly	Michael McCauley	Attended
National Centre for Partnership and Performance	Edna Jordan	Apologies Received
Small Firms Association	Patricia Callan	Attended
National Economic and Social Forum (NESF)	Gerard Walker	Apologies Received
Central Evaluation Unit, D. Finance	Brian Carroll	Apologies Received
Dept Justice, Equality and Law Reform – Gender Mainstreaming Unit	Kathleen Connolly	Apologies Received

## **Appendix 2**

### **EQUAL Mainstreaming Policy Group Meeting**

**Meeting: Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2006 at 10.30am  
Killashee House Hotel, Naas, Co.Kildare**

#### **AGENDA**

- 1. Adoption of Agenda**
- 2. Adoption of Minutes of previous Meeting**
- 3. Mainstreaming - ESF Programme 2007 – 2013**
- 4. AOB**