



European Union

European Structural
and Investment Funds

**European Structural and Investment Funds
2014 - 2020**

Growth Programme for England

ESI Funds Growth Programme Board

Programme Communications Activities 2017 and Activity Plan for 2018

Purpose:

To provide the Board with an overview of the communications activities carried out by DCLG and DWP during 2017 and to share with the Board the 2018 Communications Activity Plan, as required by EC regulation.

Recommendation(s):

That the board:

- (i) note the communications activities undertaken in 2017; and
- (ii) note the 2018 Communications Activity Plan.

Summary:

DCLG and DWP are required to deliver a range of communications activities to promote (and help others to promote) European Programmes and their benefits across England. An overarching communications strategy was approved by the PMC in 2015 and updated in late 2016. Annual communications activity plans should be viewed by the PMC every year.

This paper summarises the key communications activities carried out by the managing authorities during 2017. It also provides the Board with the proposed communications activity plan for 2018 (Annex 1) for information / comments.

Although activities were restricted due to an extended period of sensitivity ahead of local and then the general election (from late March to mid-June), external communications were delivered on a number of fronts, ensuring the managing authorities met regulatory requirements. A summary of these activities can be found in the main body of this paper.

Programme communications activities 2017

Programme communications are delivered, wherever possible, as joint activities across ERDF and ESF. The annual communications activity plan is also a joint document, although itemised and in some cases specific to each programme

Ongoing development and promotion of ESIF pages on GOV.UK

www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding

- the official website portal for the programme, required by EC regulation
- built into the existing GOV.UK website structure - contains important programme documents, guidance and governance information
- also home to the bespoke, fully searchable 'funding finder' tool where project calls for the ESIF programme are located
- hosts programme list of beneficiaries as well as project case studies and (for ERDF projects) an interactive project map
- from January to end of October, has received over 400,000 page views (target for year – 360,000)

Continued development - publicity requirements document and programme communications toolkit (including logos, poster templates etc.)

- developed to support partners and projects in the delivery of compliant communications
- ESIF branding and publicity requirements [available on GOV.UK website](#)
- flagged with projects and publicised further in programme bulletins / ERDF practitioner network and ESF project bulletins and updated in light of further EC guidance during course of year.

ESIF monthly programme bulletins

- distributed monthly (other than during periods of sensitivity) to database / partner list of around 2,000
- carries latest news on ESIF programmes including latest government announcements, call updates, word on key events, project case studies and latest programme guidance.

Ministerial / senior government official project visits

- DCLG minister for ERDF presented at Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund launch event in Manchester in February. Minister also quoted in official press release which was picked up in local media across the North of England
- multiple senior government official visits to ERDF/ESF projects took place – including the Head of the European Social Fund at DWP at The Elms in Redruth, Cornwall.

Media activity

- supported stories publicising the benefits of EU funding in specific local areas, including provision of Ministerial quotes for Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund and Midlands Engine Investment fund launches.

- supported local and national delivery partners and projects in the production of localised press activity

Social media activity

- regular updates and news shared through Twitter
- tweeted around 180 times this year, currently have 1,111 followers (249 up on this time last year) and following 1,118
- continued use of images / graphics in tweets following sub-committee and survey feedback
- continued building of content on dedicated ESIF YouTube channel highlighting successful ERDF projects from the previous programme. Also supported EC in production of series of films across England and publicised ESIF partners YouTube content

Internal communications activities

- a broad range of internal communications activities took place in both managing authority departments
- staff spotlights, blogs, performance wall displays, presentations to other directorates/ Government Departments, case studies, upgrading and regular updating of intranet presence and 'talking heads' videos were among some of the tools / measures adopted to improve awareness of the ESIF programmes within departments and across Government
- within DCLG a Hub 'intranet' site was developed and launched for the use of staff working in the European Programmes and Local Growth Delivery Directorate.
- within DWP a new ESF Social intranet site was set up for staff across DWP interested in or involved with the Programme.

Formal communications partner survey

- carried out in January / February 2017
- used to further shape communications activities undertaken during 2017
- paper containing details of survey results and activities undertaken / changes made as a result detailed in a paper submitted to Growth Programme Board in the summer
- 2018 survey will contain same questions where possible / relevant in order to enable comparisons, assess progress and inform future activity.

List of beneficiaries / Interactive map

- two versions of the list of beneficiaries published on GOV.UK website in 2017, most recently in July
- full list covers both the ERDF and ESF programmes and is fully searchable
- ERDF beneficiaries can also be searched for via an interactive map

ERDF and ESF Communications Sub-Committee

- consists of communications practitioners from across broad range of programme partner groups
- chaired by DCLG external communications lead and has 13 members
- supports managing authorities in devising and delivery of annual communications activity plans

- met twice in 2017 – April and October – and were in regular contact throughout the year
- next meeting April 2018

Developing/participating in key partner communications networks

- the ERDF Practitioners network continued to be led by DCLG, with monthly bulletins - has growing membership, currently numbering just over 700
- evaluation of the network bulletins / communications to be undertaken in early 2018 with members
- other networks include ESIF UK Communications Network, INFORM and INIO (EC led communications groups spanning all member states for ERDF and ESF)
- continued to develop relationships with LEP communication leads and TA project leads across England, as well as the pan-department Cities and Local Growth Unit

New ESF Partner communication tools

- DWP launched two new communications tools in summer 2017
- a monthly ESF Project Bulletin, regularly distributed to subscribers – database is increasing steadily – currently around 300 subscribers.
- ESF Action Notes, formal structured communications issued by email to primary contacts in all CFOs, Intermediate Bodies and direct grant recipients; and published on an ESF Action Note page on GOV.UK
- ESF also published a new project case study booklet on GOV.UK in June 2017

ERDF and ESF major annual communications activity – Development and distribution / publicising of programme case study books ‘Supporting Local Growth 2017’

- two booklets published - one for ERDF and one for ESF - contained 50 2014 to 2020 project case studies / visuals, highlighting significant role ERDF and ESF funding plays in supporting local growth and local businesses
- published on GOV.UK and widely distributed / publicised in early November 2017 using social media and direct bulletins to partner databases
- will continue to be used as a publicity tool into 2018
- supported by heightened social media publicity activity throughout the annual information activity week (November 6-13)

Formal evaluation of Communications activities carried out in 2017 in support of ESIF 2014 to 2020 will take place in early 2018

Rob Martell, DCLG
22nd November 2017

Annex 1 – Communications annual activity plan for 2018



2014 to 2020 England European Regional
Development Fund and
European Social Fund Programme

Communications Annual Activity Plan for 2018

**2014 to 2020 England European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund Programme
Communications Annual Activity Plan for 2018**

Focus of 2018 communication activities

The 2018 communications activity will aim to build on communications delivered in the initial years of the programme and further publicise the opportunities around ERDF and ESF funding in England. It will continue to promote the purpose, priorities and availability of ERDF and ESF and how to access them. Lists of beneficiaries receiving funding will continue to be published on www.GOV.UK to ensure that details of ESIF investments are openly accessible. Communication channels and networks for projects and key partners will also be developed further to maximise opportunities for joint publicity and sharing best practice and positive news stories; and project case studies will be developed and used to further publicise the programme aims and achievements.

As some of the early projects from the programme reach maturity, there will be a slight shift in focus in some of our communications with an increased focus on what projects/ERDF and ESF funding has delivered. We will however also continue to promote new funding opportunities within the programme and new projects.

Activity Area	Activity Details	Target Audience	Purpose	Timescale	Cost	Funding Stream	Expected Results and Impacts	Evaluation Measures
ERDF and ESF Programme major annual information activity	National information activity campaign using a variety of offline and online materials and channels delivered	Relevant external partners including national and local audiences, LEPs, public and private sector organisations	To promote the programme projects and their aims. Raise awareness of project achievements and impact from the current	Autumn 2018 (expected)	Any costs will be kept to a minimum. Direct ERDF/ESF MA costs likely to be time/	Growth Programme level – ESF and ERDF Appropriate linkages made across	Partners, potential applicants and general public alerted to fact that projects are focusing on local economies	Survey using free online software and online monitoring tools to gauge engagement with annual information activity

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	<p>over a period that is flexible to meet the Programme's needs.</p> <p>Activities are likely to include the publication and distribution of a programme case study book, social media activity / promotion, coverage through the programme bulletin and communication channels with partners;</p> <p>Will also include local /</p>	<p>, voluntary sectors, EC, general public, media (including sector specific) among others.</p> <p>Internal MA staff and other government bodies.</p>	<p>programmes. Highlight project investments across various local areas and the impact / added value of these ESIF interventions to local Growth.</p> <p>This will be the official annual 'major information activity' for the programme, as specifically required in ESIF communication s regulation (1303/2013 – Annex XII, 2.1.2b)</p>		<p>staffing only</p> <p>Producti on using in-house software</p> <p>Some measure s at local level may involve ESIF TA project resource</p> <p>.</p>	ERDF, ESF and EAFRD	<p>and already delivering some positive outcomes in support of growth; Increased awareness of local project impacts; Increased number of followers on social media channels; Media coverage gained on the Projects; to raise profile and awareness; enhance levels of</p>	<p>measures and (over time) interest in funding opportunities.</p> <p>Levels of local partner engagement / involvement.</p> <p>Social media hits. Media coverage</p>

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	<p>partner and project activities at local LEP level. Could include new content on digital platforms, media activity, social media activity, joint promotion of certain projects;</p> <p>Would potentially comprise of some joint and some separate/ unique ERDF and ESF measures.</p>						take-up	

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GOV.UK and national/local partner websites	<p>Promotion of the ESI Funds pages on GOV.UK</p> <p>The structure, content and accessibility of ESI Funds website pages to be developed further, through a process of ongoing review, refinement and enhancements.</p> <p>Online presence / profile of programmes enhanced</p>	<p>External partners incorporating all European, national and local audiences, particularly potential applicants and those in receipt of ESI Funds funding.</p> <p>Internal MA staff and other government bodies.</p> <p>Promote pages in all programme communications activities, including</p>	<p>To inform and raise awareness of the ESI Funds Programme and individual funding streams (including YEI linked with ESF); ensure potential applicants are equipped with the knowledge to apply for funding (and once approved deliver activity); and assess whether they have the potential to qualify.</p> <p>Inform</p>	Ongoing update of content as and when required	Time / staffing costs only	<p>Growth Programme level – ERDF and ESF</p> <p>Appropriate linkages made with EAFRD</p>	<p>Increased awareness of programmes, enhanced access to key programme documents and information. Maintain high numbers of hits and visits to ESI Funds website pages</p>	<p>Analytics from GOV.UK detailing page views and average time on page</p> <p>Page views target – 360,000 for the year</p> <p>Inclusion in annual stakeholder survey</p>

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	further by national and local partner sites / pages dedicated to ESIF activities. These will support national messages as well as providing local detail.	social media activities.	audiences about the achievements and impact of the Programme through the use of the Beneficiary List, good news stories and case studies and press releases/latest news. National/local partner ESIF websites to complement the above MA website content					
ESIF Programme bulletin and other direct communicati	Electronic direct updates through various	Relevant external partners including national and	To keep external partners up to speed on key programme	Formal E-bulletin circulated regularly.	Time / staffing costs only	Growth Programme level – ERDF	Increased awareness of programme news and	Number of partners distributed to: Target –

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on channels to core audiences	<p>channels and forms e.g. newsletters and potentially new direct message measures.</p> <p>This activity includes ensuring an up-to-date, relevant and targeted database of partners is developed and maintained. Programme bulletin also made available via communications (including</p>	<p>local audiences, public and private sector organisations, voluntary sectors, EC, among others.</p> <p>Internal MA staff and other government bodies – to keep informed.</p>	developments, lessons learned, effective practice, news, future events and messages.	Other updates and direct messages issued regularly as necessary/ appropriate		and ESF Appropriate linkages made with EAFRD	<p>achievement s, higher levels of timely engagement with programmes. Increase in the number of people subscribing to receive the bulletin. Supporting the development of various Programme communications channels and networks</p>	<p>2,000</p> <p>Inclusion in annual stakeholder survey</p>

Activity Area	Activity Details	Target Audience	Purpose	Timescale	Cost	Funding Stream	Expected Results and Impacts	Evaluation Measures
	social media) activities.							
Media activities	<p>Contribute to and help to deliver national and local partner and project media / press activities.</p> <p>Work with national partners, local partners and projects to secure good levels of positive media coverage around ERDF and ESF projects.</p>	National, specialist and local media	<p>To:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inform potential applicants at a local level about the availability of funding and how to access it. - raise awareness of the role played by the funds (including ESF YEI) in contributing to local growth in England. - raise awareness of 	On an ad hoc basis as and when required	Time / staffing costs only	<p>Growth Programme level – ERDF and ESF</p> <p>Appropriate linkages made with EAFRD</p>	<p>Audience are kept informed of latest programme and project news, particularly around significant landmarks in the programme (e.g. significant projects contracted). Coverage gained in appropriate media titles</p>	<p>Analysis through likes of Google and online media as to where the press releases appear</p> <p>Regular production of press cuttings document, containing relevant press coverage</p>

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			<p>the aims/achievements of some approved projects and how they support local growth;</p> <p>- promote significant milestones and occasions, including local project calls being published, contracts being signed, projects being launched and / or early achievements.</p>					
Social media channels	Updates and news shared	External stakeholders	To reach existing and new audiences	Two or three times per week	Time / staffing costs	Growth Programme level	Audience are kept informed of	Assessed through followers,

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	<p>through:</p> <p>ESIF Twitter feed / You Tube.</p> <p>Work with national partners, local partners and projects to encourage / help to generate social media activity around ERDF/ESF funding in their areas.</p> <p>Produce / gather images and film of projects to support social</p>	<p>and partners</p> <p>All European, national and local audiences</p>	<p>and raise awareness of Programme news, funding opportunities, developments, activities and achievements and messages - with immediate effect.</p> <p>To support/multiply ESI Funds partners social media messaging.</p>	(other than during 'periods of sensitivity')	only	<p>plus ERDF and ESF individual ly where appropriate</p> <p>Appropriate linkages made with EAFRD</p>	<p>latest programme news both around significant landmarks in the programme (e.g. first projects contracted, significant projects contracted), outcomes or general updates (new calls available online, deadlines approaching etc.).</p> <p>Increased number of followers for</p>	<p>retweets, views</p> <p>Inclusion in Annual Stakeholder Survey</p>

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	media and other publicity activities.						social media channels	
Online Publications	Developed for various uses including as a core component of the annual information activity; and to annually report progress and celebrate achievements .	Relevant external partners including national and local audiences, public and private sector organisations , voluntary sectors, EC, among others. Internal MA staff and other government bodies.	To promote the purpose, targeting, activities, cross-cutting themes, achievements and impact of funding awarded through the Programme and set out the focus for the forthcoming year.	Autumn 2018	Time / staffing costs – including potentially at local TA project level Production using in-house software	Growth Programme level – ERDF and ESF Appropriate linkages made with EAFRD	Broad range of partners and general public engaged in and aware of key programme achievements and the impact of funding awarded	Inclusion in annual stakeholder survey

Activity Area	Activity Details	Target Audience	Purpose	Timescale	Cost	Funding Stream	Expected Results and Impacts	Evaluation Measures
Visits / Events	<p>Selection of senior government officials visits to events / development Growth Programme projects to raise profile of projects / programme.</p> <p>Work with national partners, local partners and projects to facilitate local project visits and local events promoting ERDF and ESF funding /</p>	Local and national partners, public and private sector organisations , voluntary sectors, EC, among others.	<p>To raise awareness of the purpose, priorities and role of projects and range of funding awarded</p> <p>To highlight and give profile to projects contracted.</p>	In line with award of funding / launch of projects/ to mark milestones / in response to invites etc.	Time / staffing costs	<p>Growth Programme level – ERDF and ESF</p> <p>Appropriate linkages made with EAFRD</p>	<p>Profile of Programmes and their impacts on local areas enhanced, likewise with the projects themselves being visited, relations improved as face to face meetings increase familiarity between key figures</p>	<p>Feedback from officials and partners involved</p> <p>Media coverage received</p>

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	projects.							
Internal communication activities	Various methods including regular staff briefings, staff training, meetings, specific intranet pages to reach wider audiences in our Departments) and use, contributions to internal MA staff bulletins and updates from colleagues / senior managers	Internal MA staff – and wider Departmental staff	To ensure staff are informed and kept up to date on Programme developments and news	In line with Programme developments	Time / staffing costs	Growth Programme level – ERDF and ESF Appropriate linkages made with EAFRD	Staff are well informed and kept up to date on programme developments and news (helping them to perform their roles within the programme more effectively) Increased awareness amongst Departmental staff	Feedback from staff

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List of Beneficiaries	Maintain the electronic list providing searchable details of supported projects against set EU criteria Displayed on GOV.UK	Relevant external partners including national and local audiences, public and private sector organisations, media organisations, voluntary sectors, EC, among others.	To officially record and publicise the projects awarded funding through the Programme	Updated every 6 months – in line with regulatory requirements	Time / staffing costs	Growth Programme level – ERDF and ESF	Transparency around who has been funded through the programmes, how much funding has been received and for what	n/a – specific EC requirement Number of website page visits will be measured.
Reports and Papers	Progress reports on performance of the communication activities Committee	Growth Programme Board members, Communications Sub-Committee members European	To inform members of the developments and implementation of the communications strategy and annual activity	In line with Committee meeting dates Annual progress report to GPB	Time / staffing costs	Growth Programme level – ERDF and ESF Appropriate linkages made	EU reporting requirements met, members of committees / EC are aware of the implementation of the	Feedback from EC and ESIF GPB committee / communications sub-committee members

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	updates Annual Implementation Report – Publicity content	Commission – including networks of practitioners	plan To meet EU reporting requirements on delivery of publicity activities	Annual summary of activities for Annual Implementation Report		with EAFRD	communications strategy and activity plan	Targets: 1 AIR update annually 1 GPB update annually
Ongoing management of ERDF and ESF England Communications Sub-Committee	Provide Chairperson and secretariat for this national sub-committee and feed into full GPB as appropriate		Support the delivery of the programme communications strategy and annual activity plans. Act as a specialist advisory committee for the programme's full GPB Members to	Face to face meetings and telephone conferences as and when required. Information also to be shared and issues discussed via email on an ad hoc	Time / staffing costs	Growth Programme level – ERDF and ESF	Effective specialist communications support provided in overseeing the delivery of the programme communications strategy and annual activity plans	Direct specialist communication input by and feedback from committee members Feedback from full GPB Effective participation in and implementation of results

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			specifically engage with and bring forward ideas / considerations from their respective sectors – and where appropriate engage/work with MAs on specific communication measures.	basis.				of the national sub-committee review process
Engagement with European Commission, other member state and other UK ESI Funds communication	Active participation in European Commission Informal Network of ESF Information officers (INIO) and	EC, Europe-wide and UK ESIF communications practitioners	Feed in and share best practice in communications activities Retain a positive dialogue / engagement with target	On-going through telekits, Yammer INIO meetings tend to take place three times a year,	Time and travel / staffing costs only	ERDF and ESF	Continued good relationships with EC communications contacts, improved impacts of communications activities	Feedback from EC and other target audiences

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ons specialists	<p>ERDF INFORM networks</p> <p>Regular liaison with other UK ESI Funds communicato rs – to include acting as UK representativ es at above networks</p> <p>Developing on-going relationships with other EC communicatio ns specialists, including at the UK Commission Representati</p>		audiences	INFORM meetings twice a year			following sharing of best practice	

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	on Office based in London							
Ongoing development and management of an ERDF Practitioner contacts network	Continue to build a targeted database hosting relevant people associated with ESI Funds projects that would benefit from receiving targeted bulletins about news, events, achievements Will include targeted bulletins,	Project beneficiaries and potential applicants as well as local partners	To provide accurate and clear up to date information to stakeholders and project beneficiaries to help ensure ESI Funds activity (including individual projects) is delivered effectively and compliantly through a mix of bulletins, social media and any other relevant activity.	Regular bulletins, as well as any useful ad hoc e-alert messages Ongoing use of social media to reinforce messaging e.g. examples of effective publicity practice Helping to open up dialogue between projects /	Time / staffing costs Bulletins to be produced using free online software	Growth Programme level - ERDF Appropriate linkages made with EAFRD	Successfully reinforced messages re. achievement s, widening opportunities for sharing best practice, improving local performance. Increased number of people subscribing to the database to be part of the network	Number of people distributed to: Target – 1,000 Inclusion in annual stakeholder survey

Activity Area	Activity Details	Target Audience	Purpose	Timescale	Cost	Funding Stream	Expected Results and Impacts	Evaluation Measures
	social media channels and potentially online forums to reinforce/multiply messages and achievements .			partners				
Ongoing Communication channels to inform and engage with ESF funding recipients	ESF Action Notes communicate a range of ESF business to all funding recipients and stakeholder groups - via publishing on GOV.UK and a mailing list. These	Project beneficiaries and potential applicants as well as national or LEP level local partners including TA projects	To provide accurate and clear up to date information for stakeholders - including TA and mainstream project beneficiaries - to help ensure activity is delivered effectively and	Ongoing	Time/ staffing costs	Growth Programme level -ESF	Improving capacity of funding recipients to deliver against their contracts / help ensure compliance – benefiting local delivery; promote tools/resourc	Number of communications (by type) issued to all on circulation list. Inclusion in annual stakeholder survey. Bespoke survey sent to recipients

Activity Area	Activity Details	Target Audience	Purpose	Timescale	Cost	Funding Stream	Expected Results and Impacts	Evaluation Measures
	communications cover specific actions for recipients; linked to supporting effective delivery arrangements including ongoing collaborative communications work with local LEP area partners and ESF /ESIF TA projects to enhance activities /reach wider audiences. Continue to issue and		compliantly through a mix of direct communications and any other relevant activity.				es that encourage and share best practice.	of bulletin twice annually and results used to refine content.

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	<p>develop the ESF Project Bulletin, a regular communication going to all ESF Project Contacts and others who have signed up.</p> <p>These targeted bulletins include news, events, effective practice and achievements</p>							