Annex A

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

Communications Annual Activity Plan for 2020

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Focus of 2020 communication activities

The 2020 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. It will also align, where possible/suitable, with communications for planned future funds in England which are currently in development and which will follow the current European Structural Fund programming period. 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 further developed 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. There will be an increased focus on delivering thematic communications, building on some of the activities delivered in 2019 such as June's 'ERDF Environment Month' and ERDF activities tying in with National Inclusion Week in September.

This activity plan is based on the expectation of a deal being reached surrounding the UK's exit from the EU (in which case the draft withdrawal agreement, which includes the continued delivery of the ERDF and ESF programmes in England to the end of the current programming period, would kick in). Should we exit the EU with no deal, this document would be reviewed at an appropriate time in the year.

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 over a period that is flexible to meet the Programme's needs. 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; Where possible, will also include local / partner and project activities at local LEP level. Could include new content on digital platforms,	Relevant external partners including national and local audiences, LEPs, public and private sector organisations, voluntary sectors, EC, general public, media (including sector specific) among others. Internal MA staff and other government bodies.	To promote the programme projects and their aims. Raise awareness of project achievements and impact from the current programmes. Highlight project investments across various local areas and the impact / added value of these ESIF interventions to local Growth. Encourage further applications for funding This will be the official annual 'major information activity' for the programme, as specifically required in ESIF communications regulation (1303/2013 – Annex XII, 2.1.2b)	Autumn 2020 (expected)	Any costs will be kept to a minimum. Direct ERDF/ESF MA costs likely to be time/ staffing only Production using in-house software Some measures at local level may involve ESIF TA project resource.	Growth Programme level – ESF and ERDF Appropriate linkages made across ERDF, ESF and EAFRD	Partners, potential applicants and general public alerted to fact that projects are focusing on local economies and 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 take-up / applications for funding	Survey using free online software and online monitoring tools to gauge engagement with annual information activity measures and (over time) interest in funding opportunities. Levels of local partner engagement / involvement. Social media hits. Media coverage

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	media activity, social media activity, joint promotion of certain projects; Likely to comprise a mix of some joint and some separate / unique ERDF and ESF measures.							
GOV.UK and national/local partner websites	Promotion of the ESI Funds pages on GOV.UK The structure, content and accessibility of ESI Funds website pages to be developed further, through a process of ongoing review, refinement and enhancements. Online presence / profile of programmes enhanced further by national and local partner sites / pages	External partners incorporating all European, national and local audiences, particularly potential applicants and those in receipt of ESI Funds funding. Internal MA staff and other government bodies.	To inform and raise awareness of the ESI Funds Programme and individual funding streams (including YEI linked with ESF); encourage funding applications, 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. Inform audiences about the achievements and impact of the	Ongoing update of content as and when required	Time / staffing costs only	Growth Programme level – ERDF and ESF Appropriate linkages made with EAFRD	Increased awareness of programmes, enhanced access to key programme documents and information. Maintain high numbers of hits and visits to ESI Funds website pages. Encourage further applications for funding	Analytics from GOV.UK detailing page views and average time on page Page views target – 360,000 for the year Inclusion in annual stakeholder survey

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	dedicated to ESIF activities. These will support national messages as well as providing local detail. Promote pages in all programme communications activities, including social media activities. Work with local partners and projects to ensure correct links to national portal are in place at a local / project level.		Programme through the use of the Beneficiary List, good news stories and case studies. National/local partner ESIF websites to complement the above MA website content					
ESIF Programme bulletin and other direct communication channels to core audiences	Electronic direct updates through various channels and forms e.g. newsletters and potentially new direct message measures.	Relevant external partners including national and local audiences, public and private sector organisations, voluntary sectors, EC, among others.	To keep external partners up to speed on key programme developments, lessons learned, effective practice, news, future events and messages.	Formal E-bulletin circulated regularly. Other updates and direct messages issued regularly as	Time / staffing costs only	Growth Programme level – ERDF and ESF Appropriate linkages made with EAFRD	Increased awareness of programme news and achievements, higher levels of timely engagement with programmes. Increase in the	Number of partners distributed to: Target – 1,000

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	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 social media) activities.	Internal MA staff and other government bodies – to keep informed.		necessary/ appropriate			number of people subscribing to receive the bulletin. Supporting the development of various Programme communications channels and networks	Inclusion in annual stakeholder survey
Media activities	Contribute to and help to deliver national and local partner and project media / press activities. Work with national partners, local partners and projects to secure good levels of positive media coverage around ERDF and ESF projects.	National, specialist and local media	- 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 the aims/achievements of some approved projects and how they support local growth;	On an ad hoc basis as and when required	Time / staffing costs only	Growth Programme level – ERDF and ESF Appropriate linkages made with EAFRD	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. Additional funding applications received	ERDF: Analysis through Brandwatch as to where the press releases appear ERDF and ESF: Regular media analysis for relevant press coverage

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			- promote significant milestones and occasions, including local project calls being published, contracts being signed, projects being launched and / or early achievements.					
Social media channels	Updates and news shared through: Established ESIF Twitter feed / You Tube channel New ERDF Instagram Work with national partners, local partners and projects to encourage / help to generate social media activity around ERDF/ESF funding in their areas. Produce / gather images and film of	External stakeholders and partners All European, national and local audiences	To reach existing and new audiences and raise awareness of Programme news, funding opportunities, developments, activities and achievements and messages - with immediate effect. To support/multiply ESI Funds partners social media messaging. To encourage audience to consider applying for funds / finding out more about the funds.	Two or three times per week (other than during 'periods of sensitivity')	Time / staffing costs only	Growth Programme level plus ERDF and ESF individually where appropriate Appropriate linkages made with EAFRD	Audience are kept informed of 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.). New followers for social media channels	Assessed through Twitter analytics: followers, retweets, views etc Inclusion in Annual Stakeholder Survey

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	projects to support social media and other publicity activities.						Additional funding applications	
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 2020	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. Audience encouraged to consider applying for funding	Inclusion in annual stakeholder survey
Visits / Events	Senior government officials visits to events / development Growth Programme projects to raise profile of projects / programme.	Local and national partners, public and private sector organisations, voluntary sectors, EC, among others.	To raise awareness of the purpose, priorities and role of projects and range of funding awarded To highlight and give profile to projects contracted.	In line with award of funding / launch of projects/ to mark milestones / in response to invites etc.	Time / staffing costs	Growth Programme level – ERDF and ESF Appropriate linkages made with EAFRD	Profile of Programmes and their impacts on local areas enhanced, likewise with the projects themselves being visited, relations improved as face	Feedback from officials and partners involved Media coverage received

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	Work with national partners, local partners and projects to facilitate local project visits and local events promoting ERDF and ESF funding / projects.						to face meetings increase familiarity with and between key officials	
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 details and activities of 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 awarded and for what	List updated and published on GOV.UK at least twice during the year Number of website page visits will be measured.
Reports and Papers	Progress reports on performance of the communication activities Committee updates Annual Implementation Report – Publicity content	Growth Programme Board members, Communications Sub-Committee members European Commission – including networks of practitioners	To inform members of Governance boards and EC partners of the developments and implementation of the communications strategy and annual activity plan To meet EU reporting requirements on delivery of publicity activities	In line with Committee meeting dates Annual progress report to GPB Annual summary of activities for Annual Implementation Report	Time / staffing costs	Growth Programme level – ERDF and ESF Appropriate linkages made with EAFRD	EU reporting requirements met, members of committees / EC are aware of the implementation of the communications strategy and activity plan	Feedback from EC and ESIF GPB committee /communications sub- committee members Targets: 1 AIR update annually 1 GPB update annually
Ongoing management of ERDF and ESF	Provide Chairperson, Vice Chair and		Support the delivery of the programme communications	Face to face meetings and telephone	Time / staffing costs	Growth Programme	Effective specialist communications support provided	Direct specialist communication input by and

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England Communications Sub-Committee	secretariat for this national sub-committee and feed into full GPB as appropriate		strategy and annual activity plans. Act as a specialist advisory committee for the programme's full GPB Members to specifically engage with and bring forward ideas / considerations from their respective sectors – and where appropriate engage/work with MAs on specific communication measures.	conferences as and when required. Information also to be shared and issues discussed via email on an ad hoc basis.		level – ERDF and ESF	in overseeing the delivery of the programme communications strategy and annual activity plans	feedback from committee members Feedback from full GPB Effective participation in and implementation of results of the national sub-committee review process
Engagement with European Commission, other member states and other UK ESI Funds communications specialists	Active participation in European Commission Informal Network of ESF Information officers (INIO) and ERDF INFORM networks Regular liaison with other UK ESI Funds communicators – to	EC, Europe-wide and UK ESIF communications practitioners	Feed in and share best practice in communications activities Retain a positive dialogue / engagement with target audiences	On-going on ad-hoc basis Joint INIO and INFORM meetings take place twice a year	Time and travel / staffing costs only	ERDF and ESF	Continued good relationships with EC communications contacts, improved impacts of communications activities following sharing of best practice	Feedback from EC and other target audiences

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	include acting as UK representatives /supporting other UK ESIF communication colleagues acting as representatives at above networks Maintaining relationships with other EC communications specialists, including at the UK Commission Representation 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	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	Regular bulletins, as well as any useful ad hoc e-alert messages Ongoing use of social media to reinforce messaging e.g. examples of	Time / staffing costs Bulletins to be produced using free online software	Growth Programme level - ERDF Appropriate linkages made with EAFRD	Successfully reinforced messages re. achievements, widening opportunities for sharing best practice, improving local performance. Increased number of people	Number of people distributed to: Target – 600 Practitioner Network specific survey

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	Will include targeted bulletins, social media channels and Yammer to reinforce/multiply messages and achievements.		and any other relevant activity.	effective publicity practice Helping to open up dialogue between projects / partners			subscribing to the database to be part of the network, increased level and improved quality of funding applications	
ESF Project Bulletin and related ongoing Communication channels to inform and engage with ESF funding recipients	Continue to issue and develop the ESF Project Bulletin, a regular communication going to all ESF Project contacts and others who have signed up. These targeted bulletins include news, events, effective practice and achievements In addition, ESF Action Notes communicate a range of ESF business to all funding recipients and stakeholder	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 compliantly through a mix of direct communications and any other relevant activity.	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/resources that encourage and share best practice.	Number of communications (by type) issued to all on circulation list. Inclusion in annual stakeholder survey. Bespoke survey sent to recipients of bulletin annually and results used to refine content.

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	groups - via GOV.UK and a mailing list. These 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.							

To note: amends may be made to this document through the March Growth Programme Board should the need be identified through the external communications surveys being carried out early in 2020