



England and Gibraltar European Social Fund (ESF) Convergence, Competitiveness and Employment Programme 2007-2013

ESF Sustainable Development Mainstreaming - Progress Report 2013

**Report prepared by
ESF Division
DWP**

December 2013

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1. Aim of this report

This report aims to provide an update on the progress that has been made in mainstreaming sustainable development in the ESF programme since last year's report was produced (in late 2012).

This report has been agreed by the national ESF Sustainable Development sub committee and the main findings from the report will be made available to the national ESF Programme Monitoring Committee by ESF Division.

This progress report will be published on the sustainable development section of the ESF website so that all ESF stakeholders can see the progress that is being made in mainstreaming this theme.

2. Progress towards the ESF sustainable development mainstreaming plan aims and objectives

This section of the mainstreaming progress report highlights progress that has been made towards the ESF sustainable development mainstreaming plan's aims and objectives for the second half of the programme. It also highlights a number of amendments to the mainstreaming plan that have been made.

Aim 1: To provide stand-alone guidance for new and existing CFO contract monitoring and compliance monitoring officers on assessing sustainable development policies and plans to improve guidance for ESF providers as well.

Objectives:

- 1.1 To produce stand-alone guidance on ESF sustainable development policies and implementation plans, particularly on monitoring progress.
- 1.2 CFOs to tailor and pilot the guidance. The guidance to be reviewed in light of the pilot exercise.

Progress made

New draft guidance has been produced and has been included as an annex to the 'lessons learned' report (see Aim 4 objective 2). Most of the second round of contracting has already happened in the ESF programme so this draft guidance will be of more interest / use to procurement and contract management officers in the new programme period.

Future Action

ESFD will consult with CFOs and others on the draft guidance and consider any issues arising.

The ESF guidance annex will be published on the ESF website in 2014 and will be shared with partners involved in preparing and delivering the new ESF programme.

The mainstreaming Plan's Action Plan has been amended to reflect this new 'in-house' approach.

Aim 2 : To increase the 'specialist' ESF provision which supports green skills and jobs or has some other environmental focus (e.g. recycling) whilst helping disadvantaged people find work or learn basic skills.

Objectives:

- 2.1 To prepare and publish good practice guidance in delivering specialist / environmentally –focused ESF projects. The guide to draw upon examples of ESF projects, including, where possible, subcontractors who have an environmental focus and ESF Leader Awards winners.
- 2.2 To ensure that CFOs notify their providers of the guidance produced above and encourage their providers to consider the merits of working with local environmentally –focussed providers / organisations when delivering their projects.

Progress Made

The objectives for this aim have not been actioned because the CFOs have already contracted for the remainder of the current programme. However, this work is largely duplicated by Aim 4 objective 2 (which will inform the next programme).

Future Action

This work will be taken forward under Aim 4 objective 2.

Aim 3: To continue the high level of commitment to promoting and embedding the mainstreaming approach for the sustainable development theme in the second half of the programme.

Objectives:

- 3.1 To continue to report annually on the progress that is being made in mainstreaming sustainable development – with progress to be covered in the AIR and the annual ESF SD mainstreaming progress report.

The report will include indicators on policies and plans.

- 3.2 To identify, share and publicise good practice in mainstreaming sustainable development in ESF and to highlight specialist provision in publicity material and guidance material during the second half of the programme. Publicity material to include the ESF Leader awards to promote examples of projects delivering specialist provision.

Progress Made

The sustainable development sub-committee met on 9 December 2013 and the annual mainstreaming report and plan were presented to the sub committee by ESF Division.

The annual ESF sustainable development Leader awards were launched in June 2013 and two winners were identified:

- Green Futures Building Ltd (mainstreaming leader); and
- Reed in Partnership (Policy and Plan)

The awards were presented at the UK Skills Show, Birmingham N.E.C on 14 November 2013.

Aim 4: To identify lessons learned from mainstreaming sustainable development during 2007-2013 programme period and to ensure that these are used to inform proposals for mainstreaming sustainable development in the next ESF programme period (2014-2020).

Objectives:

- 4.1 The evaluation synthesis report, which is due to be prepared in 2013, to include a section reviewing the mainstreaming of sustainable development in ESF.
- 4.2 ESF to set up a working group to consider the lessons learned from mainstreaming sustainable development in the current programme and how these lessons can best be used to inform the ex-ante evaluation of the new ESF programme for 2014-2020. The working group should prepare a brief report for the national SD sub-committee.

Progress made

ESFD will ask the ESF Evaluation Team to ensure that ensure that sustainable development is covered in the synthesis report evaluation alongside equal opportunities and publicity cross-cutting themes.

ESFD set up a working group on 20 August which included representatives

from the Environment Agency, DCLG and CFOs. The draft report was presented to the sub committee by ESFD at the meeting on 9 December 2013.

3. Progress in promoting ESF sustainable development policies and plans (horizontal mainstreaming)

This section of the report provides an overview of the extent to which CFO providers are making use of sustainable development policies and plans. ESF Division asked CFOs to report on the extent to which their providers were using SD policies and plans using a reporting template which was integrated into the Annual Implementation Review (AIR) reporting process. This process was initiated via an Action Note issued to CFOs.

Table: Overview of CFO responses to the reporting exercise

CFO	Number 'in scope' for policy and plan	Number of policies and plans produced	Comments
DWP	8	8	
Skills Funding Agency	225	225	
NOMs	9	9	
Other CFOs	13 13 39 N/A	4 12 34 N/A	EMLAC Central Bedfordshire Council London Councils GLA
Total	307	292	

Policies and plans – CFOs

Table 1 shows that, for **DWP CFO**, all providers have policies and plans in place. These policies and plans are actively reviewed and contract-managed by contract monitoring officers who use ESF 8 checklists to ensure that adequate policies and plans are being used. This monitoring approach lasts the length of the contract.

Although all DWP policies and plans are in place, DWP CFO has reported that three of the providers implementation plans were felt to be 'too generic' and the DWP CFO contract managers have asked these providers to update the plans to ensure that they specify what action will be delivered that relates to the ESF activity being delivered.

Table 1 above shows that the Skills Funding Agency's providers all have policies and plans. The Skills Funding Agency relationship managers are required to monitor the delivery of the ESF contract on a regular basis and new quarterly monitoring arrangements ensure that the provider's sustainable development policies are in-place and meet the minimum requirements set out in the funding requirements document. Skills Funding Agency relationship managers / teams have participated in training on Sustainable development cross-cutting themes (earlier in the first half of the programme) and will review and work with providers in helping to develop their action plans. At the time of writing, 229 contracts have been engaged in the delivery of ESF funded activity during 2011.

Table 1 shows that all NOMS providers have policies and plans. NOMS CFO also provided the following information to update the sub-committee on the progress they are making in promoting sustainable development:

Leicester and Rutland Probation Trust are fully committed to the green skills agenda, all the LRPT staff receiving specific SD training and they have recently completed a tender process to specifically to deliver green employability skills. Contracts have been awarded to start in March.

Rhubarb Farm (an environmental Social Enterprise) to deliver various horticultural skills within an organic setting and selling produce locally. http://83.170.122.74/rhubarb_farm/

Ethos Cycles (an environmental Social Enterprise) that diverts bicycles from landfill. They have set up a workshop in HMP Stocken and their aim is to create jobs/self employment within Derbyshire. <http://lgn1346141657.site-fusion.co.uk/about-ethos-cycles>.

Action Build is an organisation that is partnered with a housing association to renovate empty houses using the Green Deal to make homes energy efficient and give offenders the opportunity to gain green construction skills.

Tribal have implemented a Sustainable Development Action Plan across their organisation and staff working within Tribal are all given a SD talk as part of their induction. They are working with a number of organisations with an SD focus such as the Restore Trust and other organisations on an ad hoc case by case basis such as training offenders to work on the railways or as a PSV driver. They are now in early conversation with “Green Futures” for placements in the centre of Bristol on a horticultural project.

Working Links as an organisation are working towards the Acorn accreditation. Two organisations within their supply chain are working towards achieving the “GreenMark” award. Citizen’s Trust has achieved this and Talented are working towards it. They do not work with any specific organisations. They are now working with a social enterprise originally set up by Gordon Ramsay producing cakes etc for the local population. They also work with Alpha Training supplying training for offenders to work on rail projects such as working on the tubes, the London cross rail project. They are also working with organisations on the Olympic Park legacy project, converting the athlete village into housing accommodation.

WYPT ensure all their employed staff receive a sustainable development talk on induction. They are currently working with a social enterprise called Carlshead Care Farm near Wetherby where the main focus is on producing biofuels and local micro enterprises whilst training offenders in rural skills, such as chainsaw operations. They are also working with a market garden in Leeds and are going to produce plants and produce for sale locally and are going to supply one of the wards within Leeds with plants. They have formed a partnership with

Merseyside Probation Trust is a proactive provider within the Sustainable Development arena. They work closely with the Elixir group delivering training and work experience to offenders. Elixir became a category winner in the ESF leaders awards during 2012. Their employed staff all receive a sustainable development talk on induction.

Pertemps as an organisation has a Sustainable Development lead that promotes and monitors SD across the organisation and ensures their internal staff receive induction training. <http://www.ppdg.co.uk/about-us/environmental-policy>

They have an environmental policy in place. They do not currently deliver any specific SD projects for their cohort but do during the summer work with horticultural organisations on a seasonal basis. They were working closely with Nissan for offenders to work on the Nissan Leaf project but only recently Nissan have taken the decision not to employ offenders.

London Councils has 39 providers in scope for sustainable development policies and plans and 35 of these are currently complying with this requirement. London Councils will be working with the remaining 4 providers to

ensure that they meet the minimum requirement.

The East Midlands Local Authorities consortium CFO has a sustainable development policy and plan which all the regional partners have signed up to – this was revised and updated in December 2011. It should be noted that regional partners have been working with their providers on ensuring that they develop their sustainability plans and policies. Key milestone objectives have been built into the contracts. It should be noted that 9 providers are still formulating their implementation plans.

Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Council have 12 ESF providers who have been running for a year or more – and the Council has reported that all of these providers have sustainable development policies and plans. One ESF provider is in scope for a policy and plan and the Council are working with this provider to ensure that it meets minimum requirements.

4. Conclusions

Good progress has been maintained in terms of promoting the use of sustainable development policies and plans across the three main CFOs in the programme that account for the bulk of ESF delivery.

Given that the contracting round for the second half of the programme has been completed, the scope for encouraging more specialist environmentally focused projects in the current programme is limited.

Taking forward the lesson learned from the current programme to the new ESF programme is now the most important aspect of mainstreaming sustainable development for the remainder of the programme period.

The lessons learned from the current programme need to be communicated to partners who are likely to be involved in the new programme. This will include staff involved in procurement and contract management as well as contract monitoring officers and, not least, provider staff themselves.

The new programme, with its range of overlapping environmental thematic objectives potentially offers a lot of scope for environmentally-focused ESF activities which could complement other EU programme activity. It is important that good practice and lessons learned in terms of mainstreaming sustainable development are shared across programmes to ensure that a common approach is taken as far as possible and help reduce the burden on individual providers.

The commitment to promoting sustainable development and the visibility of the theme has been maintained. The ESF 2013 Sustainable Development Leader awards were successfully launched in June 2013 and a successful award ceremony was held at the UK Skills Event in Birmingham on 14 November 2013.

ESFD published an ESF publicity booklet in September 2013 “ ESF in England – Improving People’s Lives 2013-2014 “ and this booklet contained a section devoted to sustainable development.

5. Recommendations

The main recommendations from this report are provided below and each one is cross-referenced to an appropriate aim/objective provided in the new and updated ESF Sustainable Development mainstreaming plan for England and Gibraltar.

Given the progress that has been made in promoting the use of sustainable development, policies and plans and the fact that most of the contracting has been completed for the current programme, the focus for future mainstreaming work should be on ensuring lessons learned and good practice are carried forward into the next programme as far as possible.

The sustainable development plan for the remainder of the programme period should have just two aims:

1. To continue promoting and embedding the mainstreaming approach for the sustainable development theme for the remainder of the second half of the programme in line with regulatory requirements; and
2. To ensure that lessons learned in mainstreaming sustainable development are carried forward into the new programming periods and shared with all relevant partners including those working on other EU structural funds such as ERDF.

The main objectives under aim one should be: (i) to produce a basic annual report on progress made by CFOs with their mainstreaming policies and plans and to send this report to the PNC and sub-committee on an annual basis; (ii) to continue promoting sustainable development with the annual ESF sustainable development Leader Awards and by publishing project case studies.

The main objectives under Aim two should be: (i) ESFD to finalise the ‘lessons learned’ report that was begun in August 2013; (ii) ESFD to share the findings with key partners involved in the new programme, highlighting key issues partners need to consider in a targeted summary document; (iii) the working group should consider whether a short workshop to discuss the report’s findings would be useful for partners (especially with partners involved in procurement and contract management as well as from other programmes / organisations)