



European Union

European Structural
and Investment Funds

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

Growth Programme for England

ESI Funds Growth Programme Board

Paper for Information:

Partner Survey / Evaluation on 2016 ERDF and ESF Communications Activities – Results Summary and Resulting Actions

Purpose:

1. To provide the Board with an overview of the results of the communications survey for the England ERDF and ESF 2014 to 2020 programmes conducted in January / February 2017 (relating to communications activities delivered in the 2016 calendar year). The results include comparisons, where appropriate, with the equivalent survey conducted 12 months earlier.
2. A summary of actions taken (or planned) by MAs as a result of the survey is also provided for information.

Recommendations:

That the Growth Programme Board notes the paper.

Rob Martell
DCLG, Chair of the Communications National Sub-Committee
26 May 2017

Partner Survey / Evaluation on 2016 ERDF and ESF Communications Activities – Results Summary and Resulting Actions

Survey Conducted – 24 January to 8 February 2017

The results of the survey were broadly positive and showed improvements in almost all areas against the equivalent survey conducted in early 2016. More people are receiving and reading the programme bulletin, more have accessed the programme web pages and find the information provided useful and helpful and more are engaged in our social media activities. Additionally, new products such as the list of beneficiaries and the practitioner network have been well received.

Through the survey results and comments though, we have identified key areas where further improvements can be made. We have already taken action against many of the points raised including the reorganising of guidance documents on the GOV.UK web page and the addition of a priority area column on the list of beneficiaries. Further action is set to be taken in the coming weeks and months to further address points raised in the survey responses (see below for a more detailed summary of results / actions).

Total Responses – 176 (up 40 on previous survey)

Breakdown of Respondents (last year's breakdown in brackets)

Local Authority	34% (32%);	Local Enterprise Partnership	19% (15%);
Education / FE	12% (10%);	Small / medium sized enterprise	9% (7%);
Third sector	9% (10%);	Other private sector	6% (9%);
Other public sector	4% (5%);	Government department	3% (6%);
ESF opt-in / CFO	2% (4%);	Other social partner	1% (0%);
Rural / environmental	1% (2%)		

Programme Bulletin

86% of respondents receive the bulletin (11% more than in previous survey)

82% who receive it find the bulletin informative and interesting (4% down on previous survey)

82% felt the length and frequency was about right (the same as the previous survey)

Comments –bulletin was broadly well received, areas highlighted for potential improvement included additional use of case studies, reducing jargon and including more graphics / visuals

ESI Fund Web Pages - www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding

83% had seen our web pages (up 2% on previous survey)

Of these:

60% felt the website pages were easy to locate and access (up 1% on last survey)
55% found the website content easy to use and navigate (4% up on last survey)
43% can find information easily and quickly (3% up on last survey)
79% found the information provided useful / helpful (2% higher than last survey)
21% didn't feel the Funding Finder was easy to use / navigate (same as previous survey)
Comments – recurring comment was difficulty in finding and navigating between pages.
Requests were also made to organise guidance documents into suitable groupings, to make it clear what changes have been made to guidance documents and to minimise use of jargon / unexplained acronyms.

ERDF / ESF List of Beneficiaries (first version published in April 2016)

52% of respondents had seen list of beneficiaries
Of these, 63% of those who had seen it found the list easy to use / read; and 58% found information provided useful / helpful
Comments – need updating frequently, would like to see column added for priority axis.

Online Documents

75% had seen the Guide to ERDF and ESF document (up 30% on previous survey)
Of these, 74% found the guide easy to use and read (down 2% on previous survey); and
72% found the information provided useful and helpful (down 2% on previous survey)
37% had seen the new ERDF case study booklet (published in December 2016 so not featured in previous survey)
Of these, 75% found the booklet informative, useful and helpful; and
78% would like to see more of this type of document
Comments – send out more alerts to say these documents are available, promote the useful resources page (where these two documents sit) more widely

Social Media

56% of respondents access twitter (7% up on previous survey)
Of these, 36% have seen or subscribed to ESI Fund twitter feed (3% up on previous survey)
51% find our tweets useful and informative (3% down on previous survey)
27% have re-tweeted one or more of our tweets (same as previous survey)
35% have noticed the #growthprogramme we use in all our tweets (up 6% on previous survey) and 8% have used this # in their tweets
16% of respondents had visited our YouTube channel (4% up on previous survey)

Comments – broadly positive, with improvements in social media outputs noticed / commented on. Some asked for us to try and make tweets less dry and more regular

ERDF Practitioner Network

52% of respondents had joined this network (24% up on previous survey)

Of these, 80% said they found the network bulletins informative, interesting and useful (first bulletins circulated in 2016 so no figures from previous survey)

81% felt it was about right in terms of content and length

Comments – seen as very useful, keen to see more sharing of good practice, clarity on amendments to guidance. An ESF equivalent of this network would be welcomed.

Action taken / to be taken as a result of responses in this survey include;

- more tweets and promotion through bulletins about case study book, Guide to ERDF and ESF document and key web content, including our useful resources page
- Priority Area column added to list of beneficiaries
- more visuals added to Programme and ERDF practitioner bulletins
- pushed harder to engage / link up with partners and projects through social media
- made an effort to make tweets more engaging, interesting, eye-catching and regular (daily when possible)
- re-organised guidance documents on GOV.UK to make them easier to find
- promoted our 'useful resources' page on GOV.UK more widely
- developed and introduced a style guide within DCLG for staff to use in order to standardise language used and help minimise jargon etc.
- made increased effort to develop and share project case studies via various platforms
- devised plans for major information activities in 2017 to incorporate localised promotional activity

Note: In line with survey findings and the 2017 Communications Activity Plan DWP:

- have developed and are set to publish an ESF case study booklet
- are planning to launch their own ESF project/practitioner bulletin in the early summer