



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 2018 and Activity Plan for 2019

Purpose:

To provide the Board with an overview of the communications activities carried out by MHCLG and DWP during 2018 and to share with the Board the 2019 Communications Activity Plan, as required by EC regulation.

Recommendation(s):

That the board:

- (i) **note the communications activities undertaken in 2018; and**
- (ii) **note the 2019 Communications Activity Plan.**

Summary:

MHCLG 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 2018. It also provides the Board with the proposed communications activity plan for 2019 (Annex 1) for information / comments.

Through 2018 communications were delivered on a number of fronts, ensuring the managing authorities met regulatory requirements. As encouraged by the GPB in December 2017 and in the 2018 partner survey, project case studies were used widely across all platforms to promote our programmes. A summary of these activities can be found in the main body of this paper.

Programme communications activities 2018

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 November, has received 405,000 page views (target for year – 360,000)

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

- ESIF branding and publicity requirements [available on GOV.UK website](#)
- flagged with projects and publicised to support delivery of communications compliant with EC regulations.

ESIF monthly programme bulletins

- distributed monthly to database / partner list of around 1,000
- carries latest news on ESIF programmes including latest government announcements, call updates, word on key events, project case studies and latest programme guidance.
- a review carried out on the database in the spring to ensure compliance with GDPR saw a fall in the size of the database – programme of activities underway to boost numbers.

Ministerial / senior government official project visits

- MHCLG minister for ERDF conducted the official opening of ERDF funded facilities in Sheffield and for an ERDF project launch event in the Houses of Parliament.
- multiple senior government official visits to ERDF/ESF projects took place including a joint visit to ERDF and ESF projects in Coventry in November.

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 events/funding allocations.

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

Social media activity

- regular updates and news shared through @esif1420england twitter account
- tweeted around 160 times this year, currently have 1,335 followers (225 up on this time last year) and following 1,225
- twitter ambassadors programme launched in MHCLG for ERDF – 6 new local/national twitter accounts activated and regularly tweeting on local projects / programme news across all areas of England
- 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
- increased promotion of project case studies through social media

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 MHCLG a Hub ‘intranet’ site continued to be operated for the use of staff working in the European Programmes and Local Growth Delivery Directorate.
- within DWP, a wide range of articles have significantly raised the profile of the ESF Programme and work of ESF Division within Finance Group, the Directorate the work sits within.

Formal communications partner survey

- carried out in January / February 2018
- used to further shape communications activities undertaken during 2018
- 2019 survey, which is already in development, 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 2018, 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 broad range of programme partner groups
- chaired by MHCLG external communications lead and has 11 members
- supports managing authorities in devising / delivering annual communications activity plans
- met twice in 2018 – April and October – and were in regular contact throughout the year
- next meeting April 2019

Developing/participating in key partner communications networks

- the ERDF Practitioners network continued to be led by MHCLG, with monthly bulletins - has membership of just over 700 (GDPR assurance work also carried out on this database)
- evaluation of the network bulletins / communications was undertaken in early 2018 with members – results were very positive with recommendations acted upon
- other networks include ESIF UK Communications Network, INFORM and INIO (EC led communications groups spanning all member states for ERDF and ESF). We have sent representatives to both meetings this year. The ESF MA is currently providing the Commission with case studies to assist the updating of the Commission's portal of European ESF projects, located on the Europa website.
- 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

ESF Partner communication tools

- DWP continue to produce two communications tools launched in 2017– a regular ESF Project Bulletin and 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 Notes page on GOV.UK)

ERDF and ESF major annual communications activity – Development and distribution / publicising of programme case study books 'Supporting Local Growth 2018'

- two booklets published - one for ERDF and one for ESF - contained 98 2014 to 2020 project case studies, covering all 38 LEP areas and 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 using social media and direct bulletins to partner databases – downloaded 950 times in November
- will continue to be used as a publicity tool into 2019
- supported by heightened social media publicity activity throughout the annual information activity week (November 6-13) and project launches / visits

Formal evaluation of Communications activities carried out in 2018 in support of ESIF 2014 to 2020 will take place in early 2019

4th December 2018

Rob Martell

Annex A – Communications annual activity plan for 2019 (attached as separate document)