



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 2019 and Activity Plan for 2020

Purpose:

To provide the Board with an overview of the communications activities carried out by MHCLG and DWP during 2019 and to share with the Board the 2020 Communications Activity Plan, as required by EC regulation.

Recommendation(s):

That the board:

- (i) note the communications activities undertaken in 2019; and**
- (ii) note the 2020 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 2019. It also provides the Board with the proposed communications activity plan for 2020 (Annex A) for information / comments. This mirrors the structure and core communication channels/activities of the 2019 plan.

Through 2019 communications were delivered on a number of fronts, ensuring the managing authorities met regulatory requirements. As encouraged by the GPB in December 2018 and in the 2019 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 2019

Programme communications are delivered, wherever possible, on shared platforms and 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 fully searchable 'funding finder' tool where project calls for the ESIF programme are located, the programme list of beneficiaries and project case studies
- landing page layout refined during 2019 to improve access to guidance by programme - in response to feedback from the 2019 communications partner survey
- January to end of October, has received 404,000 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 compliant communications

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.
- enjoys substantially higher open and click rates than comparable government bulletins

ERDF themed promotional campaigns

- themed campaigns delivered to promote funding / relevant projects during an Environment Month in June (coinciding with World Environment Day and National Clean Air Day) and throughout National Inclusion Week
- provided opportunity to increase profile and reach fresh audiences

Ministerial / senior government official project visits

- MHCLG minister for ERDF attended project launches and took part in visits including a launch event for an ERDF funded research centre at the Tees Advanced Manufacturing Park in Middlesbrough
- multiple senior government official visits to ERDF/ESF projects took place, including a visit by Head of the ESF Programme to the Salvation Army's Employment Plus project in Birmingham in early October.

Media activity

- supported local and national delivery partners in the production of localised press activity
- ongoing and regular press monitoring undertaken with some stories promoted further via communications platforms

Social media activity

- regular updates and news shared through @esif1420england twitter account
- tweeted around 150 times this year, currently have 1,504 followers (179 up on this time last year) and following 1,270
- continued management and development of twitter ambassadors programme in MHCLG for ERDF – 6 local/national twitter accounts still regularly tweeting on local projects / programme news across all areas of England with a combined total of 1,582 followers
- continued use of images / graphics in tweets following sub-committee and survey feedback
- continued building of content on dedicated ESIF YouTube channel highlighting successful projects from the programmes. Topped the 100 videos mark in November
- ERDF Instagram account in development and will be promoted / utilised more widely in 2020
- increased promotion of project case studies through social media and bulletins

Internal communications activities

- a broad range of internal communications activities took place in both MA departments
- staff spotlights, blogs, performance wall displays, case studies, upgrading / updating of intranet presence and posters 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 articles have 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 2019
- used to further shape communications activities undertaken during 2019
- 2020 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 2019, 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 2019 – April and October – and were in regular contact throughout the year
- next meeting April 2020

Developing/participating in key partner communications networks

- the ERDF Practitioners network continued to be led by MHCLG, with monthly bulletins and a Yammer forum - has membership of just over 500
- evaluation of the network bulletins / communications was undertaken in early 2019 with members – results were very positive with recommendations acted upon
- other networks include INFORM and INIO (EC led communications groups spanning member states for ERDF and ESF). We sent representatives to the May meeting. The November meeting was represented at UK level by an ESIF communications colleague from Scotland.
- presented at the LEP Communications Network meeting in April

ESF Partner communication tools

- DWP continue to produce two communications tools – a regular ESF Project Bulletin primarily for grant recipients (mailing list of c. 350); 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 2019’

- two booklets published - one for ERDF and one for ESF - contained 78 2014 to 2020 project case studies highlighting significant role ERDF and ESF funding plays in supporting local growth, communities in general, with local businesses and with individuals
- published on GOV.UK and widely distributed / publicised in early October using social media and direct bulletins to partner databases
- will continue to be used as a publicity tool into 2020
- supported by heightened social media publicity activity throughout the annual information activity week (October 7-11) and project launches / visits

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

21 November 2019

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