

European Structural and Investment Funds
Growth Programme for England (2014-2020)

GROWTH PROGRAMME BOARD

National Sub-committee Review

<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To present the conclusions of the Managing Authorities (MAs) review of the role of national sub-committees (NSCs) for the remainder of the programme; and to share the revised NSC terms of reference for approval.</p>
<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>Members approve the revised national sub-committee terms of reference.</p>
<p>Summary:</p> <p>The MAs were commissioned by the Growth Programme Board (GPB) to review the role and terms of reference of the national sub-committees for the remainder of the ERDF and ESF Programmes.</p> <p>The MAs have concluded that the policy national sub-committees should be disbanded as their role advising during the design and investment stages of the Programmes has concluded. Of the remaining four operational delivery national sub-committees, it is recommended that only the performance and evaluation committees are retained given the substantive role for these committees in the final stages of the Programmes.</p> <p>The terms of reference for the national sub-committees have been revised to reflect the conclusions of the review.</p>

Context

1. The national sub-committees were established at the beginning of the England ERDF and ESF programmes to provide specialist advice and support to the Growth Programme Board (GPB) in its role to oversee that the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Growth Programme's policy and operational objectives are delivered successfully.

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2. The national sub-committees have an advisory role, and do not take on the tasks or functions of the GPB or the Managing Authorities (MAS). The NSC terms of reference state that GPB can close any sub-committees when their role providing advice has concluded.
3. There are currently five policy committees (Smart Specialisation; SME Competitiveness; Sustainable Growth & Development; Employment, Skills & Social Inclusion; and Sustainable Urban Development), and four operational delivery committees (Performance & Dispute Resolution; Evaluation; Equality & Diversity; and Communications) which are chaired and administered by the ESF and ERDF MAs, and BEIS, according to their policy specialisms.
4. In light of the recent review of local ESIF committees, GPB members requested at the 22 March 2022 meeting that the MAs also reviewed the national sub-committee's role and terms of reference.

Review conclusions

5. The MAs have considered the role of each committee, whether they have needed to meet recently, and the likelihood of specialist advice being needed in the future. These considerations are tabulated at Annex A.
6. It is recommended that all policy NSCs should be formally closed because they have now served their purpose and delivered against the expectations set out in the Terms of Reference. This included providing advice and expertise to GPB and the MAs to develop policies and processes which have supported delivery of the ERDF and ESF Programmes, as well as provide specialist advice to support the development of calls and investment decisions. The Programmes are now fully committed, and the MAs do not foresee any issues that NSCs would need to consider and bring their expertise to.
7. Of the operational delivery NSCs, it is recommended that the communications and equality and diversity committees are also closed. The rationale behind this is that the Equality & Diversity NSC has also served its purpose and delivered against the expectations set out in the Terms of Reference as articulated above, and there is not substantive business in addition to that already being seen by the GPB to warrant a separate meeting on communication activities.
8. If these changes are agreed, Growth Programme Board Members may be asked to provide advice on an annual basis to the ESF MA regarding its Equality Mainstreaming Progress Report before its submission to the European Commission (EC) in July in the absence of the Equality & Diversity Sub-committee.

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9. There is an ongoing and significant role for the national sub-committees in providing advice and holding the MAs to account regarding the performance and evaluation of the ERDF and ESF Programmes. The recommendation is that the Performance & Dispute Resolution (PDR) and Evaluation NSC continue to carry out this function. However, given that there is no longer a need for PDR to provide advice to the MAs about disputes over LEP area performance and allocations it is recommended that its name is changed to the Performance NSC.
10. The MAs recognise and value the expertise and insight that the NSC members have provided supporting the MAs to design and deliver the ERDF and ESF Programmes to date.
11. In summary, it is recommended that the policy and operational delivery national sub-committees, with the exception of the Performance and Evaluation sub-committees, are formally closed and that revised terms of reference are agreed.

Terms of Reference

12. The terms of reference for the national sub-committees have been amended to reflect the review conclusions above and are attached at Annex B.
13. The changes have included the removal of references to local ESIF committees to reflect the outcome of the recent local governance review; deleting any purposes or tasks that relate to activities that have now concluded such as the design of policy and processes or investment decisions; and the removal of specific reference to national sub-committees that have now served their purpose and closure has been recommended.
14. The name of the performance and dispute national sub-committee has also been amended to reflect its role at the current stage in the programme.

Recommendations and next steps

15. The Growth Programme Board is asked to approve the changes to the national sub-committee Terms of Reference and to the closure of the following national sub-committees:
 - Smart Specialisation
 - SME Competitiveness
 - Sustainable Growth & Development
 - Employment, Skills & Social Inclusion
 - Sustainable Urban Development
 - Equality & Diversity
 - Communications
16. Changes will then be communicated to stakeholders through a letter from the GPB Chair, and the revised terms of reference will be uploaded to GOV.UK.

Tina Collopy/Steve Spendlove
ERDF Managing Authority/ESF Managing Authority
09/06/2022

ANNEX A: Review Considerations by National Sub-committee

National Sub-Committee name	Key purpose	Last met	Proposal / reason and associated actions
<i>Policy National Sub-committees</i>			
Employment, Skills, and Social Inclusion (including Community Led Local Development)	Provides specialist advice and support to the GPB on related issues. Make recommendations on measures to improve the impact of Co-financing and Community Led Local Development (CLLD) provision.	10 th March 2022	<p>This National Sub-Committee should be formally closed.</p> <p>Has met regularly through the current programming period, including during the pandemic. However, it has served its purpose and delivered against the expectations set out in the Terms of Reference document. This includes providing advice and expertise to GPB and the ESF MA to develop and deliver against policies and processes which have supported delivery of objectives and reflect participant characteristics and requirements. The ESF programme is now fully committed, and we do not foresee any issues that we would look to members from this NSC to consider and bring their expertise to.</p>
Smart Specialisation	Provide specialist advice and expertise on Smart Specialisation and other Research, Development, and Innovation issues. Review implementation of the Smart Specialisation Strategy for England and advise the Managing Authority in overseeing the work of the Smart Specialisation Hub	11 th December 2018	<p>This National Sub-Committee should be formally closed.</p> <p>A substantial amount of time has passed (even significantly pre-dating Covid-19) since the last meeting. Given that the tasks it previously covered, around advice on Smart Specialisation and building synergies with other EU Funds, as well as advice around the development of calls and projects, are no longer required for our ESIF programmes, there is no longer a need for this NSC to meet.</p>

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Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Competitiveness (including Information Communication and Technology (ICT) and Financial Instruments (FIs))	Support the GPB through providing specialist advice and expertise on SME related issues, monitor and assess FI it expenditure and performance across ERDF programmes	14 th May 2018	<p>This National Sub-Committee should be formally closed.</p> <p>A substantial amount of time has passed (even significantly pre-dating Covid-19) since the last meeting. Its work was broadly based around supporting the development of the programme / calls / overseeing project development and funding awards etc. As these tasks are broadly at an end now, and the performance monitoring element is being picked up at PDR, there is no longer a need for this NSC to meet.</p>
Sustainable Growth and Development	Providing the GPB with specialist advice and expertise on Low Carbon, and Sustainability related issues	17 th October 2019	<p>This National Sub-Committee should be formally closed.</p> <p>The primary focus of this NSC, feeding into the development of project calls and project development is no longer required and updates around performance and evaluation can be provided through other NSCs.</p>
Sustainable Urban Development	Provide the MA and GPB with specialist advice and expertise on Sustainable Urban Development	28 th March 2019	<p>This National Sub-Committee should be formally closed.</p> <p>The primary focus of this NSC, feeding into the development of project calls and project development is no longer required and updates around performance and evaluation can be provided through other NSCs.</p>
<i>Operational Delivery National Sub-committees</i>			
Communications	Support and advise the ERDF and ESF MAs in delivering the Communications Activity Plan/Strategy,	October 2019 (with additional 'teams' meeting held in February 2020)	<p>This National Sub-Committee should be formally closed.</p> <p>The MAs are ensuring the EU comms regulations are met and many previous members of this small group have moved on. As we</p>

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	ensuring EU communications regulations are met		move towards the end of the programme, while key projects and final outputs of the programme are still profiled, communications activities should be proportionate and take into account the need for Government to publicise new funds. Key ESIF Stakeholders will be consulted in the Summer of 2022 around communications methods to be utilised for the remainder of the programme and MAs will report to GPB in December on activities undertaken. These stakeholders will include any previous members of the Communications NSC who remain in ESIF related posts.
Equal and Diversity Sub-Committee	Monitor the application and implementation of equalities principles across ERDF and ESF programmes, advise GPB MAs on risks and opportunities identified.	24 th March 2022	<p>This National Sub-Committee should be formally closed.</p> <p>Has met regularly through the current programming period, including during the pandemic. However, it has served its purpose and delivered against the expectations set out in the Terms of Reference document. This includes providing advice and expertise to GPB and the ESF MA to develop and deliver against policies and processes which have supported delivery of objectives and reflect participant characteristics and requirements. The ESF programme is now fully committed, and we do not foresee any issues that we would look to members from this NSC to consider and bring their expertise to.</p> <p>GPB may need to provide advice on the ESF Equality Mainstreaming Progress Report annually prior to its submission to the EC.</p>
Evaluation	Advise on ERDF and	25 th May 2022	Should continue through the

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	ESF evaluations undertaken as part of the Evaluation Strategy developed by the MAs		<p>remainder of 2022 and into 2023.</p> <p>This is a key time for the Evaluation of the ESIF programmes and this Sub-Committees engagement is an important part of the evaluation process. The membership has recently been refreshed and members met in May to.</p>
Performance and Dispute Resolution	Monitor and assess spend and performance across ERDF and ESF spend, including through Co-financing organisations, Undertaking, assess trends and risks and consider and assess programme/project related dispute cases.	19 th May 2022	<p>Should continue through the remainder of the programmes, but name should change to Performance National Sub-Committee to reflect the current and on-going functional purpose/needs.</p> <p>Has been meeting regularly throughout the recent period and provided useful support to the GPB in assessing and analysing programme performance. The need for this NSC remains and they should continue to meet.</p>