

**DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL**

**EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING**

The purpose of the screening for an Equality Impact Assessment is for the Department to assess whether new options or options for change are likely to impact on equality of opportunity or good relations, and seeking to identify which Section 75 groups, if any, would be adversely affected. The Department must record the outcome of the Preliminary Section 75 Assessment and will make this available on request.

It is essential that before completing this preliminary assessment you should satisfy yourself that you are familiar with the commitments outlined in the Department's Equality Scheme.

This form should be completed when:

- (a) considering options for a **new** policy, service or programme, or
- (b) **changing** an existing policy, service or programme.

The form will help you to record the evidence for the decisions you have made and the final outcome of the screening for the Equality Impact Assessment for new and / or changes to policies.

## Equality Impact Assessment Screening

### GENERAL DETAILS

**Business Area**

European Division

**Title of policy. Date policy or change to policy introduced:**

**Northern Ireland ERDF Competitiveness Programme: 2007-2013**

**Programme to run from January 2007 to December 2013**

For purposes of this document evidence used to complete this screening exercise has been based on the high-level equality impact assessment proformas completed by Government Departments who proposed the expenditure.

**Brief summary of policy**

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is one of two funds under the EU Competitiveness and Employment Objective. The ERDF programme will have some £211m EU funding to help create a more competitive and sustainable Northern Ireland and in particular contribute to the closing of the productivity gap with the UK. It follows on from the 2000 – 2006 BSP EU programme worth some £370 million ERDF EU funding.

DFP as Member State will coordinate the management of the programme but expenditure will be delivered through other government departments and intermediary bodies. The vast majority of the expenditure will be delivered by DETI. All Government departments in Northern Ireland operate Equality Schemes and all expenditure schemes are designed in line with Section 75 requirements.

The whole of Northern Ireland will be eligible for funding in the 2007-2013 funding period. As the programme and each departmental scheme will be widely advertised all citizens of NI, if eligible, has the opportunity to apply.

The programme has been developed in line with the UK National Strategy Reference Framework which was subject to public consultation in early 2006. One response to that was concerned that S75(2) requirements were given greater prominence than S75(1) requirements. This concern has been taken on board and addressed in the programme document where it is clear that the requirements of both paragraphs of section 75 must be adhered to in the operation of the Programme.

## **Aims of the Policy**

The main aim of Northern Ireland's ERDF Programme is to close the productivity gap with the UK and increase Northern Ireland's GVA per hour worked compared with international averages.

It will make businesses aware of the need to innovate and will encourage better links between companies and research bodies. It will improve overall climate for business creation and expansion and stimulate entrepreneurship and risk taking. In addition small-scale investments will be made to improve accessibility, to reduce costs and to maintain and protect the local environment.

The Programme will be delivered through 4 priorities:

1. Increasing investment in research and development and promoting innovation.

The objective is to assist the development and maintenance of a world class innovation system in NI by delivering a range of programmes that will increase the capability of businesses to utilize knowledge, skills and innovation to create unique competitive advantage.

Target groups for this priority

- NI industry, especially SMEs
- Higher Education and research bodies

2. Promoting enterprise and entrepreneurship

The objective is to encourage more people from all backgrounds to consider starting a new business or grow an existing business. Also it will strengthen the support infrastructure, ensuring appropriate services are accessible, particularly for those in groups currently under-represented amongst the entrepreneurial population (eg women, young people, ethnic minorities, disabled people and those from disadvantaged communities). Investment will develop the tourism infrastructure and industry competitiveness in some of the NTSN areas of the western region.

Target groups for this priority

- Entrepreneurs,
- Local Industry, SMEs
- Local authorities
- Tourism
- Voluntary and Community sector

### 3. Improving accessibility and protecting and enhancing the Environment.

One objective is to bring the next generation broadband services plus competition in the delivery of services throughout NI up to the level in major urban areas in the UK and other parts of Europe, this will lead to an increase in both take up and productivity by SMEs. It is envisaged that these services will provide opportunities for new businesses to emerge and new opportunities for new jobs for all areas of Northern Ireland.

Target groups for this priority

- NI Businesses, particularly SMEs
- Public Authorities
- Environmental, Voluntary and Community Groups

### 4 Technical Assistance

- Technical assistance will support the management, monitoring, evaluation and publicity for the programme.

As all PE in Northern Ireland is subject to statutory equality and good relations legislation, spend must also be consistent with the anti poverty and sustainable development strategies. EU Programmes are required to meet exactly the same requirements.

### **Stimulus for change; e.g economic reasons, legislation**

Northern Ireland is eligible for ERDF in the [new 2007-2013 programming period](#). The Northern Ireland ERDF Programme has been subject to an ex-ante evaluation carried out by Northern Ireland Statistical and Research Agency to ensure that the programme strategy responds to identified Socio-Economic needs of Northern Ireland and is aligned with the Lisbon growth agenda.

The ERDF competitiveness Programme will support existing national initiatives pursuing the same aims and objectives.

EU funding should be prioritised towards promoting R&TD expenditure by local businesses, improving enterprise performance to catch up with the best performing countries in Europe, raising the skills of the current workforce and encouraging take-up of recent advances in technological infrastructure.

The ERDF Programme will adhere to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Article 16 of Council Regulation 1083/2006.

## **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING**

Using your knowledge of the policy area and any relevant monitoring data, evaluation findings and external research data for each option being considered answer the following questions as best you can. Please note that absence of relevant data for any of the questions may lead to a full Equality Impact Assessment.

### **1. Would this option promote equality of opportunity between people of different religious beliefs?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme are available to all those who meet the criteria for funding. Therefore funding will be available to applicants irrespective of religious belief. For those individuals, groups or areas of social disadvantage that are successful in securing funding there will be a positive benefit to them.

### **2. Could this option adversely affect equality of opportunity between people of different religious beliefs?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to applicants irrespective of religious belief.

### **3. Would this option promote equality of opportunity between people of different political opinion?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme are available to all those who meet the criteria for funding. Therefore funding will be available to applicants irrespective of political opinion. For those individuals, groups or areas of social disadvantage that are successful in securing funding there will be a positive benefit to them.

**4. Could this option adversely affect equality of opportunity between people of different political opinion?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to applicants irrespective of political opinion.

**5. Would this option promote equality of opportunity between people of different racial groups?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to applicants irrespective of racial group. There will be particular activities in Priority 2 that will incorporate initiatives that specifically target ethnic minorities groups.

**6. Could this option adversely affect equality of opportunity between people of different racial groups?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to applicants irrespective of racial group. There will be particular activities in Priority 2 that will incorporate initiatives that specifically target ethnic minorities groups.

**7. Could this option promote equality of opportunity between people of different ages?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme are available to all those who meet the criteria for funding. Therefore funding will be available to applicants irrespective of age.

**8. Could this option adversely affect equality of opportunity between people of different ages?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to applicants irrespective of age.

**9. Would this option promote equality of opportunity between people of different marital status?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme are available to all those who meet the criteria for funding. Therefore funding will be available to applicants irrespective of marital status.

**10. Could this option adversely affect equality of opportunity between people of different marital status?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to applicants irrespective of marital status.

**11. Would this option promote equality of opportunity between people of different sexual orientation?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme are available to all those who meet the criteria for funding. Therefore funding will be available to applicants irrespective of sexual orientation.

**12. Could this option adversely affect equality of opportunity between people of different sexual orientation?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to applicants irrespective of sexual orientation.

**13. Would this option promote equality of opportunity between men and women?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to male and female applicants. The Programme will adhere to Article 16 of Council Regulation 1083/2006 ensuring that equality between men and women and the integration of the gender perspective is promoted during the various stages of implementation.

Strands within the programme are aimed at encouraging more females to participate where they are underrepresented, in particular in considering entrepreneurship as a viable career option.

**14. Could this option adversely affect equality of opportunity between men and women?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to male and female applicants.

**15. Would this option promote equality of opportunity between persons with a disability and persons without?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to persons with a disability and persons without.

Elements within the programme may have a positive impact on persons with a disability ie some activities are designed to encourage those with disabilities to consider innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship.

**16. Could this option adversely affect equality of opportunity between persons with a disability and persons without?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

The activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to persons with a disability and persons without.

**17. Would this option promote equality of opportunity between persons with dependants and persons without?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to persons with dependants and persons without.

**18. Could this option adversely affect equality of opportunity between persons with dependants and persons without?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to persons with dependants and persons without.

**19. Would this option promote good relations between people of different religious beliefs?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to people of different religious beliefs.

Improved access will improve opportunities for all groups to engage in social, educational and work activities within Northern Ireland.

**20. Could this option adversely affect good relations between people of different religious beliefs?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to people of different religious beliefs.

**21. Would this option promote good relations between people of different political opinion?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to people of different political opinion.

Improved access will improve opportunities for all groups to engage in social, educational and work activities within Northern Ireland.

**22. Could this option adversely affect good relations between people of different political opinion?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to people of different political opinion.

**23. Would this option promote good relations between people of different racial groups?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to people of different racial groups. In fact the programme will contribute to greater social inclusion among different ethnic groups

Improved access will improve opportunities for all groups to engage in social, educational and work activities within Northern Ireland.

**24. Could this option adversely affect good relations between people of different racial groups?**

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme will be available to people of different racial groups.

**25. Would this option challenge or strengthen stereotypes?**

Please explain:

The ERDF Programme will support activities to promote a knowledge-based economy, characterised by higher levels of innovation, creativity, and research and development. It will also focus on stimulating higher levels of entrepreneurship in the private sector in order to improve competitiveness and productivity. The programme will protect and enhance the natural environment and promote sustainable development and create sustainable communities.

The Programme should help to challenge any stereotypes associated with the target groups listed above and impact positively across all the Section 75 groups.

**OPTIONS**

If you are considering a range of new options or a range of options for change you must answer questions 1-25 for each option.

**Please note -**

If any of the options under consideration have greater potential than the others for promoting equality of opportunity then this should be taken into account when reaching a decision.

## **FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT DECISION**

If an option for change is likely to have an **adverse** impact on equality of opportunity, then the Department is committed to consulting publicly as part of a **full impact assessment** before deciding to adopt or recommend that change.

Do you consider therefore taking account of your analysis of questions 1 –25 that this new policy or policy change needs to be subjected to a Full Equality Impact Assessment?

YES / NO please underline

### **Reason for decision**

The aim of the new Northern Ireland ERDF programme is to close the productivity gap with the UK and increase Northern Ireland's GVA per hour worked compared with international averages. The ERDF programme activities are based on other Departmental programme spend and subject to the statutory EQIA. The EU programme will be realised through the 4 Priorities:

1. Increasing investment in research and development and promoting innovation.

It is envisaged that those successful in securing funding there will be a positive benefit to them in R&TD terms.

2. Promoting enterprise and entrepreneurship.

There is potential to promote equality of opportunity in groups currently under-represented amongst the entrepreneurial population (eg women, young people, ethnic minorities, disabled people and those from disadvantaged communities). Also investment will develop the tourism infrastructure and industry competitiveness in some of the NTSN areas of the western region.

3. Improving accessibility and protecting and enhancing the Environment.

It is envisaged that opportunities for new businesses will emerge and there will be new opportunities for new jobs for all areas of Northern Ireland.

4. Technical Assistance

All priorities are implemented by Government Departments with separate requirements to submit their policies to Equality Impact Assessments. These Assessments will continue throughout the Programming period including for the EU expenditure.

These requirements will be integrated within:

- the promotion of the programme;
- the application form;
- the project selection process; and
- monitoring and evaluation.

From the information provided by Government Departments the Northern Ireland ERDF Programme has been screened against all the criteria in the Assessment of Impacts and it is evident that there is no adverse impact on equality of opportunity or good community relations in fact the programme will have a positive or neutral effect. The new Programme does not need to be subjected to a full Equality Impact Assessment.

Please complete authorisation section below.

**AUTHORISATION**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Branch \_\_\_\_\_ / Division \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please forward a copy of this document to DFP Equality Diversity Unit

## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

ASHE	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
BSP	Building Sustainable Prosperity
C & E	Competitiveness & Employment
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DCMNR	Department of Communication, Marine & Natural Resources
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
DETI	Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment
DFP	Department of Finance and Personnel
DOE	Department of Environment
DPA	Development Path Analysis
DRD	Department for Regional Development
DSD	Department for Social Development
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Community
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIF	European Investment Fund
EQIA	Equality Impact Assessment
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ERINI	Economic Research Institute NI
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EU15	15 Member States which joined the EU before 2004
EU25	The 25 member states of the European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FE	Further Education
GB	Great Britain
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added
HE	Higher Education
HERD	Higher Education Research & Development
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDB	Intermediate Delivery Body
IT	Information Technology
JEREMIE	Joint European Resources for Micro to Medium Enterprises
JESSICA	Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas
LTU	Long Term Unemployed
NISIP	NI Science-Industry Panel
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NITB	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
NTHSPs	Niche Technology Horizon Scanning Panels
NTSN	New Targeting Social Needs
ONS	Office of National Statistics
PE	Public Expenditure

PMC	Programme Monitoring Committee
R&D	Research and Development
R&TD	Research & Technology Development
RIS	Regional Innovation Strategy
Rol	Republic of Ireland
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SME	Small and Medium Sized Enterprise
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TENS	Trans European Networks
UK	United Kingdom