

DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

PRELIMINARY EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The purpose of a Preliminary 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 Preliminary Equality Impact Assessment for new and / or changes to policies.

Please contact DEL Equality Unit if you have any queries.

Guidance on completion of Preliminary Equality Impact Assessments (DEL Equality Unit)

GENERAL DETAILS

Business Area

Finance and European Division: European Policy Unit

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

Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme: 2007- 2013

Brief summary of policy

The European Social Fund (ESF) is one of the EU's four Structural Funds, which were set up to reduce differences in prosperity and living standards across Europe. ESF helps Member States to combat unemployment, exclusion from the labour market and promote training to increase workforce skills. Seven-year ESF programmes are planned by Member States together with the European Commission and then implemented through a wide range of organisations in the public, private and Voluntary and Community sectors.

A new ESF programming period will begin in 2007. Northern Ireland is eligible for ESF in the new period. Northern Ireland will operate a single ESF programme for the entire region.

Aims of the Policy

The aim of the new Northern Ireland ESF programme is to reduce economic inactivity and increase workforce skills in support of relevant EU, UK and Northern Ireland employment and skills policy.

The ESF Programme will contribute to employment policies to make progress towards increasing the overall employment rate and reducing inactivity in Northern Ireland (subject to economic conditions) by extending employment opportunities in particular for those groups at a disadvantage in the labour market. It will also contribute to skills policies to increase productivity, enterprise and competitiveness by raising the skills levels and adaptability of workers and new entrants to the labour force through lifelong learning and ensure the right workforce skills for future employment opportunities.

The Programme's objectives will be realised by two inter-related Sub Priorities: Sub-Priority 1: Helping people into employment; and Sub- Priority 2: Improving workforce skills and adaptability. The Programme's cross cutting themes are promoting Equality and Good Relations and promoting Sustainable Development and the creation of Sustainable Communities. Technical Assistance funds will be available to finance the specific responsibilities associated with the management and implementation of the Programme.

Stimulus for change; e.g economic reasons, legislation

Northern Ireland is eligible for ESF in the new 2007-2013 programming period. The Northern Ireland ESF Programme has been subject to an ex-ante evaluation carried out by Northern Ireland Statistical and Research Agency to ensure that it responds to identified Socio-Economic and Labour Market needs and reflects national and European employment and skills priorities and policies.

The Socio-Economic Analysis concluded that the challenges for the Government in Northern Ireland are to increase the employment rate for all groups in the labour market, reduce the high numbers of economically inactive and improve the skill and qualifications levels of existing employees as well as those seeking to enter employment, whether young people or those who are unemployed.

To improve the key drivers of productivity the ESF Programme must therefore concentrate on addressing the relatively high long-term unemployment rate and the persistent problem of economic inactivity as well as a number of employment gaps for people with disabilities and health conditions, lone parents, older workers, young people, women and those with low qualifications. The Programme must also address the high percentage of economically active adults with no qualifications.

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

PRELIMINARY EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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. Consult DEL Equality Unit or Research & Evaluation Branch as necessary.

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 ESF Programme will be available to applicants irrespective of religious belief.

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 ESF 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 ESF Programme will be available to applicants irrespective of political opinion.

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 ESF 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 ESF Programme will be available to applicants irrespective of racial group.

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 ESF Programme will be available to applicants irrespective of racial group.

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

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the ESF Programme will be available to applicants in line with the age requirements of the Department's existing provision, i.e. ranging from 14 years and over as designated by the Professional and Technical Training provision. In response to the Socio-Economic Analysis and Labour Market Assessment there will be a focus on the employment gaps experienced by young people and older workers (50+).

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

YES / NO please underline

Please explain:

Activities funded under the ESF Programme will be available to applicants in line with the age requirements of the Department's existing provision, i.e. ranging from 14 years and over as designated by the Professional and Technical Training provision.

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 ESF Programme 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 ESF 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 ESF Programme 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 ESF 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 ESF 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.

In response to the Socio-Economic Analysis and Labour Market Assessment there will be a focus on the employment gaps experienced by women.

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 ESF 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 ESF Programme will be available to persons with a disability and persons without.

In response to the Socio-Economic Analysis and Labour Market Assessment there will be a focus on the employment gaps experienced persons with a disability.

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 ESF 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 ESF 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 ESF 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 ESF Programme will be available to people of different religious beliefs.

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 ESF 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 ESF Programme will be available to people of different political opinion.

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 ESF 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 ESF Programme will be available to people of different racial groups.

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 ESF Programme will be available to people of different racial groups.

25. Would this option challenge or strengthen stereotypes?

Please explain:

The ESF Programme will support activities to extend the employment opportunities of unemployed, long-term unemployed and inactive people by helping them to enter, remain and make progress in sustained employment. There will be a focus on people with disabilities and health conditions, lone parents, older workers, young people, women and people with low qualifications. It will also support activities to raise the skills levels and adaptability of workers and new entrants to the labour force through lifelong learning and ensure the right workforce skills for future employment opportunities.

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 ESF programme is to reduce economic inactivity and increase workforce skills in support of relevant EU, UK national and NI regional, employment and skills policy. The Programme will extend employment opportunities in particular for those groups at a disadvantage in the labour market and improve the skills levels and adaptability of workers and new entrants to the labour force. The Programme's objectives will be realised by two inter-related Sub Priorities: Helping people into employment; and Improving workforce skills and adaptability. Underpinning the two Sub-Priorities are the cross-cutting themes of Equality and Good Relations, and, promoting Sustainable Development and the Creation of Sustainable Communities.

To establish Equal Opportunities as an integral part of the Programme, equal opportunities will be built into:

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

The Northern Ireland ESF programme will have a number of overall performance indicators (broken down by gender), including:

- Participants who are jobless lone parents;
- Participants who are 50+;
- Participants from ethnic minorities;
- Participants receiving inactive benefits;
- Participants with disabilities or health conditions;
- Female participants;
- Young participants (NEET Group)

The Northern Ireland ESF Programme has been screened against all the criteria in the Assessment of Impacts and it is evident that there are no implications for equality of opportunity or good community relations. The new Programme does not need to be subjected to a full Equality Impact Assessment.

Please complete authorisation section below.

AUTHORISATION

Signed: Rosemary Mulholland
Print Name: Rosemary Mulholland
Branch / Division European Policy Unit, Finance and European Division
Date: 24 November 2006

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