

EQUALITY WORKING GROUP

MEETING

9TH JANUARY 2008

NOTE OF MEETING

ATTENDEES:

Maeve McLaughlin, Local Government

Pamela Dooley, UNISON

Lynsey Moore, DFP

Bernie Traill, DFP

Sarah Reid, SEUPB

Damien Fitzpatrick, DETI

Melanie Morrow, NISRA

Jim Jewhurst, DEL

Dale Heaney, OFMDFM

Anne Baker, DFP, Secretariat

1. Welcome

DFP opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking them for their attendance. It was explained that the purpose of the group is to monitor equality across all the Programmes and report to the Monitoring Committees.

The papers presented are a starting point for discussions and are based on papers from the Mainstreaming Equality Working Group (MEWG) under the 2000-2006 Structural Funds Programmes.

2. Appointment of Chair

The Working Group is required to elect a Chair who should be a Member or Deputy Member of one of the Monitoring Committees. It is also proposed to elect a vice-chair to cover the unavailability of the chair. Their role will be to drive the work of the group. DFP will provide secretariat.

Due to there only being two full members present at the meeting it was decided to postpone the appointment of the Chair to the next meeting.

3. Terms of Reference (TOR)

DFP explained that the TOR sent to members was that of the previous Equality Working Group (MEWG). A revised TOR was tabled at the meeting which DFP had updated to take account of information in the new Programmes. The Working Group must agree its Terms of Reference before presenting it to the Monitoring Committee for approval.

DFP stressed the importance of the work to be carried out by the EWG. It was explained that the previous MEWG had introduced the anonymous questionnaire as a means of gathering final beneficiary data to monitor equality. This worked well with projects where final beneficiaries were easily identified e.g. training, but there were difficulties for other large infrastructure projects. The MEWG commissioned a consultant to look at different ways of gathering the equality data. Recommendations were incorporated into the development of the programmes and the production of equality guidance issued to the Managing Authority.

DEL, as Managing Authority for the ESF Programme, will continue to use the anonymous questionnaire. DETI, as Managing Authority for the Competitiveness Programme, will create their own system.

DFP also advised the group that the Equality Guide produced by the previous MEWG and issued to advise applicants, selection panels and Implementing Bodies, would have to be reviewed by the group and updated as necessary. DFP will issue the Guide by e-mail.

Action: Secretariat

DEL also highlighted an EU Equality publication which they will forward to the secretariat for distribution.

Action: DEL

In reviewing the TOR the following comments were made:

- Reference to 'equal opportunities' (para 4) could cause confusion and should be deleted;
- The working group should report to the Monitoring Committees twice a year.
- The group should be mindful of the relevant legislation of all Regions represented in the Programmes should also be added;
- The need to clarify that the EQIA refers to the Competitiveness Programme only.

A question arose in discussions regarding networking. The Trade Union representative asked if there was a North/South equality group. The OFMDFM representative advised that there was no cross-border groups as the legislation would differ in both regions. The Trade Union representative

stated that she had been involved in work with Denmark and that sharing and drawing on best practice was useful.

The SEUPB representative advised that the EC would welcome the group visiting other EU regions to share best practice.

The Local Government representative voiced concern that recommendations suggested by the group may be rejected because legislation in either RoI or Scotland would not support them. The DFP advisor noted that the Departmental advisors would keep the group appropriately informed.

The Trade Union representative asked if there was something in the Good Friday Agreement which stated that the Section 75 legislation in the North and South would have to get to the same point. The OFMDFM representative will check and advise.

Action: OFMDFM

The Secretariat will forward web-links for Equality legislation in Republic of Ireland and Scotland and relevant EU regulations.

Action: DFP

Details of the working arrangements for the Working Group will be included in the TOR re-draft to be issued for discussion and agreement at the next meeting.

The OFMDFM representative queried the statement regarding the EQIA study. The DETI representative will follow up on the commitment of the EQIA.

Action: DETI

The SEUPB representative will forward the PEACE III and INTERREG IV EQIAs to the secretariat for distribution to members.

Action: SEUPB

The members agreed to forward any further comments on the TOR to the secretariat (anne.baker@dfpni.gov.uk).

4. Equality Guidance Note

DFP advised that the Equality Guidance Note had been circulated to all Departments including OFMDFM Equality Unit for comment, before it was issued to the Managing Authorities as a basis for producing their own specific guidance/manuals.

It is for the working group to review and make recommendations for implementation to the Managing Authorities.

Members are asked to read the guidance for discussion at the next meeting.

5. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 5th March 2008. This will give the group time to discuss and agree the final TOR for the Spring Monitoring Committee approval.

The Local Government representative has kindly offer to host the meeting in Derry City Council offices. Further details to be sent in due course.