

STRUCTURAL FUNDS 2007-2013

EQUALITY WORKING GROUP

Terms of Reference

INTRODUCTION

The Equality Working Group was envisaged by the Northern Ireland Competitiveness and Employment Programmes for 2007-2013 as a method for taking forward the cross cutting theme of equality and good relations (ERDF Programme paras 2.51 to 2.56 and 4.16 and ESF Programmes 4.51 to 4.56 refers). The membership of the Working Group is drawn from the membership of the Competitiveness and Employment Monitoring Committee.

Equality is a cross-cutting theme for all four Northern Ireland Structural Funds Programmes for 2007- 2013. To avoid duplication and ensure a consistent approach across the programmes, the PEACE III and Interreg IV Monitoring Committees have also nominated members to this Working Group.

In accordance with Article 16 of the EU General Regulation 1083/2006 and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Programmes are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and person without;
- between persons with dependants and persons without; and

without prejudice to the above, to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group.

The Working Group will support the Competitiveness and Employment Monitoring Committee by making recommendations to and giving advice on equality of opportunity issues. For synergy, the PEACE III and Interreg IV

members of the Working Group may also take the recommendations and advice to their Monitoring Committees for consideration as appropriate.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The role of the Working Group is to support the Competitiveness and Employment Monitoring Committee and to contribute to the overall monitoring and co-ordination of its Operational Programmes and the planning of the actions arising from the review of those Programmes.

The Working Group should:-

- Review and provide recommendations for implementation by the Managing Authorities on the equality guidance note provided to Managing Authorities and review and, if appropriate, rewrite the Equality Guide for applicants, selection panels and implementing bodies;
- Access wider equality issues, including mainstreaming equality and issues relating to the policy of Lifetime Opportunities;
- To be mindful of the all relevant equality legislation of all regions represented in the programmes, and report to the Competitiveness and Employment Monitoring Committee on equality outcomes having due regard to the promotion of opportunity across all nine categories as required by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.;
- Consider the need for a full EQIA of the Competitiveness Programme and to commission, if necessary;
- Monitor and report on the gender balance of monitoring committees and working groups;
- Commission research and evaluations as appropriate;
- Provide verbal and written reports twice a year at Monitoring Committees;

- Encourage and facilitate networking arrangements both on a north/south and east/west basis involving the management and use of structural funds; and
- Liaise and share good practice through the offices of the EC.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the group will be drawn from the three main Monitoring Committees i.e. Competitiveness and Employment, Peace III and Interreg IV and the community representing urban, rural and the private sector. The final make-up of the Working Group should, as far as possible, reflect a gender balance taking cognisance of Human Rights and Equality legislation.

There may be occasions when the subject matter under discussion could benefit from input from other specialist representatives. When such occasions arise the Working Group may agree additional representation.

The Working Group will meet as often as necessary and not less than twice each calendar year, provided a quorum is present. A quorum is defined as 9 members of the Working Group, of whom 3 are also members of a Monitoring Committee. The Working Group meetings should be chaired by a member of the group who is also a member or deputy member of one of the three Monitoring Committees. In the absence of the appointed chairperson or vice-chair, those present shall elect a temporary chairperson.

WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The working arrangements for the Working Group are:-

- Secretariat duties will be performed by the Department of Finance & Personnel, European Division;

- Informed by the wishes of the Working Group the Secretariat will draw up agendas for meetings and the Chairperson will authorise them. The agenda and supporting documentation will normally be issued 15 days in advance of the meeting. Members can request the inclusion of agenda items by writing to the Secretariat for onward transmission to the Chairperson. This should normally be done at least 10 working days ahead of the scheduled meeting;
- AOB can be tabled at the discretion of the Chair;
- Draft minutes and summary action points of each meeting will be produced and sent to members and relevant advisors within 10 working days of each meeting;
- The Working Group will meet at least twice per calendar year and as often as necessary. It will also conduct its business in a transparent manner. Minutes will be placed on the Managing Authorities' websites;
- In order to facilitate members and with members agreement meetings should take places at various locations through out NI;
- The Working Group can form sub-committees to take forward particular issues;
- The Working Group will report formally to the Competitiveness and Employment Monitoring Committee twice per calendar year, and shall provide ongoing reports as required. It may also report to the Peace III and Interreg IV Monitoring Committees as appropriate and with the agreement of the Working Group nominated by those Committees.
- The Working Group will agree a work programme, including a budget and submit it to the Competitiveness and Employment Monitoring Committee for approval. Work to be undertaken specific to the Peace

III and Interreg IV Programmes and associated costs will also require the agreement of their respective Monitoring Committees; and

- The Terms of Reference for the Working Group, and any subsequent amendments, will be approved by the Programme Monitoring Committees.