

EVALUATION WORKING GROUP MEETING

22 SEPTEMBER at 9.30 AM

LONGBRIDGE HOUSE

AGREED NOTE OF MEETING

PRESENT

Tom Gillen (Chair) -	ICTU	Maura Young	-	DFP	
Darren Colville (Sec)-	DFP	Owen Gillespie	-	DEL MA	
Damian Fitzpatrick -	DETI MA	John D'Arcy	-	Education	
Wesley Aston	-	UFU	Gerard Colgan	-	NISRA
Bob Collins	-	Equality Commission			

APOLOGY

Maurice Mulvenna - Research Sector

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting especially the new members who had agreed to join the group. Apologies were noted.

2. Previous Minutes & Action Points

Minutes of the meeting on 22 July 09 were agreed and all points actioned.

3&4. ESF/ERDF Evaluation Plans

For the benefit of the new members the DFP Rep provided the background to the Working Group and the Evaluation Plans. She also commented that, as the plans currently stood, it was unlikely there was sufficient information within the plans to pass the scrutiny of the Monitoring Committee.

The DEL Rep advised that the Managing Authority would be liaising with NISRA to ascertain if NISRA had the capacity to undertake a number of smaller 'desk-bound' evaluations. DEL also proposed to undertake a number of thematic evaluations e.g.

- 1) measurement of soft outcomes using the Richter Scale – this would be rolled out by their Support Structure partner;
- 2) evaluation based on transnational activity; and

However, DEL notified the group that it had previously been agreed that any perceived evaluations to be undertaken would be commissioned by the working group.

The DEL Rep reminded the Working Group that the ESF Annual Implementation Report (2008) for the ESF Programme had been deemed 'admissible' by the Commission, but not 'acceptable'. The Commission's remarks, which were previously copied to the Working Group by DEL, raised concerns regarding a lack of detail in the Evaluation Strategy for the Programme. DEL requested amendment to the Evaluation Strategy and an agreed form of words by the Working Group that would satisfy the Commission's concerns. The following was suggested: "Based on Monitoring Committee reports and evaluation exercises the group would develop future evaluations." The DEL Rep indicated that the suggested wording was unlikely to be sufficient, but agreed to liaise with the Secretariat to elaborate on the suggested wording of the response and to expand upon the details in the Strategy. In particular, the Evaluation Strategy should specify the intention to commence a major Mid-Term Evaluation in 2010 and to carry out two Leaver Surveys in 2010 and 2013. Other small-scale studies could also be added depending upon the availability of NISRA resources.

The NISRA Rep advised that he would look at their capacity to undertake small quick evaluations between now and the end of 2009 and advise. DEL and NISRA would meet and draft a TOR, to be agreed with the Working Group, depicting which evaluations it will be possible to undertake.

Action: NISRA/DEL MA

The UFU Rep asked if it was possible to reconstruct the ESF indicator table to show the current status of the indicators against the agreed target and if there will be any concerns in attaining the target. It was pointed out that, due to the nature of the ESF programmes their associated indicators were quite different to those of the ERDF Programme and it would take longer to evaluate the progress of individual participants. The DEL Rep indicated that the indicators and associated targets for the ESF Programme were set out in the Operational Programme document, and monitoring data has been collected to measure progress against these indicators. The first available monitoring data

for the indicators was set out in the 2008 AIR (Annual Implementation Report), which was approved by the Monitoring Committee in June 2009. An update of the monitoring data was being collated and would be presented to the next meeting of the C&E Monitoring Committee in October 2009.

Action: DEL MA

The DETI Rep advised that a number of the ERDF projects have a degree of evaluation built into them, which will provide information on lessons learnt, outcomes, etc. The DG Regio Desk Officer has confirmed that there should be on-going internal evaluation and that there should be a number of Lisbon ear-marked evaluations undertaken. An internal evaluation schedule will be added to Annex C of the evaluation plan prior to issue to the Monitoring Committee. The DFP Rep enquired if the priority indicators could be presented in a table format for ease of reference. The DEL Rep noted that the ESF Programme currently included only one Government Programme and agreed to ascertain if any relevant evaluation activity was scheduled for this Programme.

Action: DETI MA / DEL MA

Both Evaluation Plans mention gender equality and the Equality Rep enquired if it was necessary to include 'gender'. The NISRA Rep advised that the Commission was interested in gender equality however as it is not relevant to NI, 'gender' could be deleted from both plans. **Action: DEL MA/DETI MA**

5. C&E Monitoring Committee

The DFP Rep informed the group that the Evaluation Plans would be presented for comment/approval to the Monitoring Committee at the meeting on 22 October. EU Division will draft a summary of the plans, agreed with the working group, and issue with Monitoring Committee papers. An update on the progress of the group will also be included within the Working Groups report. It would also be useful to draft a work plan, for approval by the Monitoring Committee, inter-alia, to include:

- update on current position against initial targets;
- *timing for mid-term evaluations; and

- TOR for DEL/NISRA to commission and undertake evaluations

*it was agreed that a long lead-in time was required, taking into consideration procurement guidelines, information available to evaluate, etc.

Action: Working Group

6. Way Forward

- DEL & DETI would provide a verbal update at future meetings of the Working Group on how they are progressing to meeting the targets set out in the evaluation plans;
- NISRA has completed the ex-ante DPA baseline and this will be presented to the Environmental WG at their meeting on Monday 25 September.
- DEL & NISRA to draft a TOR on their evaluation strategy and forward to working group members for agreement.
- The central database (System 2007) has been created and Managing Authorities are currently testing the system with small claims and are beginning to populate the database.
- DFP to investigate if the UK ESF Strategy Group still meets.

ACTION POINTS

	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
1	Draft TOR to take forward evaluations by end of 2009	DEL MA/ NISRA
2	Amendment of priority indicators to table format	DEL MA/DETI MA
3	Delete 'gender' from plans	DEL MA/DETI MA
4	Draft summary of plans and working group report for MC	DFP
5	Draft work plan	Working Group

6	Verbal update at future meetings of the Working Group	DEL MA/DETI MA
7.	Ascertain if the UK ESF Strategy Group still meets	DFP