

## **COMPETITIVENESS & EMPLOYMENT MONITORING COMMITTEE INNOVATION AND MAINSTREAMING WORKING GROUP**

### **Note of Meeting held on 9 June 2009 at University of Ulster Jordanstown**

In Attendance:        John Doran, Chair (Belfast International Airport)  
                             Alderman Arnold Hatch (Craigavon Borough Council)  
                             Maurice Mulvenna (University of Ulster Jordanstown)  
                             Jonathan Wallace (University of Ulster Jordanstown)  
                             Councillor Cathal Mullaghan (Belfast City Council)  
                             Pat Donnelly (Proteus (NI) Ltd.)  
                             Ian Getgood (ESF Managing Authority, DEL)  
                             Ian McCollam (European Division, DFP)

Not in Attendance:  Councillor Robin Newton MLA (Belfast City Council)

Apologies:            Richard Millen (Queen's University Belfast)  
                             Malachy McAleer (South West College)  
                             Gerard Colgan (NISRA)  
                             Declan Reilly (ESF Managing Authority, DEL)

Secretariat:           Colm Friel (ESF Certifying Authority, DEL)

#### **1.0    Welcome**

1.1    John Doran opened the meeting and thanked all for their attendance.

#### **2.0    Notes & Action Points from the Previous Meeting**

2.1    The group approved the notes of the meeting held on 30 September 2008. Action point 1 from the previous meeting in relation to a draft work programme was included on the Agenda (Item 4) for this meeting.

### **3.0 Assessment of Project Innovative Activity (Agenda Item 2)**

- 3.1 Pat Donnelly presented a report (embedded in these minutes) detailing the proposed innovative activity to be undertaken by each of the six projects opting for dedicated innovation, highlighting the fact that a formal evaluation was a requirement for each project.



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- 3.2 John Doran asked about the process of appointing evaluators and Maurice Mulvenna asked if it was important to appoint evaluators at an early stage. Pat Donnelly explained that work is progressing on appointments and that an early appointment was necessary for formative evaluations, otherwise all the evaluations would be summative. Women's Tec are the only project to have made an appointment so far and as a result theirs will be the only formative evaluation. Pat also commented that the idea of a group evaluation had been raised when consulting with the projects, and that he felt a common template for the evaluations would be helpful.
- 3.3 Cathal Mullaghan asked if the current economic climate had led to changes from the project's original applications. Pat Donnelly replied that the current climate may give the projects more scope to access trainees due to increased unemployment. Ian Getgood added there had been an event in January 2009 at which the projects were advised that the Department may re-evaluate bids for additional funding due to the possibility of more trainees. He also commented that the economic conditions had led to issues for projects with regard to accessing match-funding.
- 3.4 Cathal Mullaghan raised the issue of "repeat trainees" and asked if there were any safeguards against this happening following the highlighting of the issue by a recent Northern Ireland Audit Office report in relation to a DEL programme. Ian Getgood informed the group that this had been New Deal and was due to the

mandatory nature of programme. It was intended that the Steps to Work programme would address this through a more tailored approach. Pat Donnelly added that there was nothing to prevent trainees re-enrolling on ESF courses if eligible and that in many cases a course could be a progression from a lower level course. He also added that monitoring of trainees does take place.

- 3.5 Maurice Mulvenna enquired if there were any plans to network best practice among the six projects. Pat Donnelly explained that some communication between the projects was happening already and that the projects felt a link to the working group would be helpful.

#### **4.0 Assessment of Project Transnational Activity (Agenda Item 3)**

- 4.1 Pat Donnelly provided an assessment of transnational activity, copy embedded in these minutes.



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- 4.2 Projects interested in transnational activity were brought together, with 27 out of 72 projects initially interested at application stage. At the meeting it was discovered that few had formal work plan objectives and some had cut the transnational aspect from their budget. There will be another meeting of the projects before the end of June 2009, where it is hoped that those with previous transnational experience e.g. Gingerbread will offer advice to others and pool good practice from previous programmes.
- 4.3 Proteus will assist projects to find transnational partners. While there will be no central organisation from Brussels to manage the transnational aspect of this programme, a meeting of the transnational contact points for each member state is taking place where it is hoped member states will form relationships to facilitate transnational co-operation.

4.4 John Doran asked how many projects still intended to incorporate transnationality into their planned activity. Pat Donnelly explained that approximately 30 planned some level of transnational activity, and that Proteus had provisionally assigned them to groups based on the degree of activity planned:

- T1 to refer to those intending to travel to European conferences and events.
- T2 to refer to those who would seek transnational partners to communicate with on best practice.
- T3 to refer to those who would seek transnational partners and agree a workplan with them involving for example staff or trainee exchanges.

At this time there are approximately 10 projects in the T3 group.

4.5 Maurice Mulvenna asked if projects are seeking other sources of funding for the transnational work. Pat Donnelly replied that projects may look at schemes such as Grundtvig and Leonardo, and that Gingerbread for example currently had 7 or 8 other applications for funding to complement that being provided.

4.6 Referring to online brokering websites previously encountered, Maurice Mulvenna asked if anything similar was available for this programme to provide a platform for projects to find transnational partners or share information and learn from other member states. Pat Donnelly explained that as transnationality was not compulsory, there was no provision of a database for this purpose by the European Commission as there had been for the Equal programme. There is however a website for the transnationality Community of Practice [www.transnationality.eu](http://www.transnationality.eu) where projects can upload ideas etc. In addition Proteus will perform the role of matching projects with transnational partners if required.

## **5 European Learning Network on Empowerment and Inclusion (Agenda Item 5)**

5.1 Pat Donnelly presented a report on the proposal for a European Learning Network on Empowerment and Inclusion submitted by the Department of Employment & Learning to the European Commission (copy embedded).



- 5.2 He informed the group that the application had been provisionally approved and there would be a meeting of the member states involved in Brussels on 11/06/09 to discuss a budget and workplan.
- 5.3 Maurice Mulvenna asked if the tools or indicators involved could be used by social economy projects to measure social capital with respect to applying for innovation grants from Invest NI. Pat Donnelly replied that the Rickter tool may be appropriate in terms of providing evidence to funders.
- 5.4 Cathal Mullaghan questioned the impact of staff turnover at projects in terms of continuity and loss of experience. Pat Donnelly responded that the tools developed should help in this respect by providing a framework for new staff. Ian Getgood added that the call for applications for the programme was deliberately timed to facilitate existing projects to plan for continuity of staff and resources, however, delays in securing match funding had not helped in this regard.
- 5.5 John Doran asked when the tools to promote empowerment and inclusion would be developed. Pat Donnelly indicated that once European Commission approval was confirmed, there would be a six month preparatory phase to identify baseline positions and targets. This period should begin in September 2009.
- 5.6 Arnold Hatch requested a demonstration of the Rickter Scale tool. Ian Getgood offered to provide a copy of the presentation made to the previous meeting on Rickter by Amanda McAuley, however, it was felt that more detail would be useful. Pat Donnelly informed the group that there were a number of training days planned for projects using Rickter, and invited any interested members to observe.

**Action Point 1 – Pat Donnelly to circulate dates of upcoming Rickter training**

## 6.0 Draft Work Plan for Group (Agenda Item 4)

- 6.1 A report outlining the collective suggestions for the working group from the six projects was presented by Pat Donnelly (copy embedded).



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- 6.2 With regard to the constitution of the working group, Pat Donnelly asked if the group had the power to co-opt new members with a view to having representation from the North West area. Ian Getgood informed the group that it was possible to co-opt from the Monitoring Committee or from outside the committee for a specific piece of work.
- 6.3 John Doran invited suggestions on how the group could practically engage with the six projects. Maurice Mulvenna proposed that a North West representative should be co-opted to the group. This was agreed.

### **Action Point 2 – Ian Getgood to request a member of the Monitoring Committee based North West to join the Working Group**

- 6.4 Pat Donnelly suggested a representative from each of the projects should attend the next meeting to help inform the draft work plan. John Doran agreed that there should be representation and suggested one representative to speak for all six projects. This was agreed, with Pat Donnelly agreeing to meet with the projects to determine a representative and formulate suggestions to be presented to the next meeting.
- 6.5 Referring to point no.3 in Pat Donnelly's report, Maurice Mulvenna asked if there was scope in the group's Terms of Reference to recommend a strategic focus for the next call in 2010. Ian Getgood informed the group that this would require a change to the Operational Programme which would entail a Commission decision to approve any such change.

6.6 Arnold Hatch asked if it was possible for the ESF programme to engage with people currently losing their jobs rather than a wider approach. Ian Getgood referred to Priority 2 of the NIESF programme and specifically the ApprenticeshipsNI Skillsafe scheme which has been introduced to fund training for people that would otherwise be made redundant.

6.7 Cathal Mullaghan asked if best practice from elsewhere in Europe could be applied here for the next call, particularly in relation to adult numeracy and literacy. Pat Donnelly replied that import and export of ideas already exists and provided examples of Gingerbread NI importing an Equal Opportunities tool from Spain and NIACRO exporting their practices to Latvia. In addition several European Learning Networks exist to facilitate exchange of good practice. In respect of numeracy and literacy Ian Getgood added that the numbers of participants gaining basic skills would be reported on and that targets for Priority 2 were 18,000 participants, with 8,000 leaving with essential skills. Pat Donnelly commented that an essential skills element was built into many ESF projects and that Belfast City Council have refined the application forms for their ESF courses to make them more accessible to trainees lacking in numeracy and literacy.

## **7.0 Any Other Business**

7.1 Cathal Mullaghan asked if there was any conflict of interest in him being on the Innovation and Mainstreaming Working Group while being on the board of North Belfast Employment Partnership – an innovative project. Ian Getgood advised that he would check the Terms of Reference for the Group and the Monitoring Committee and advise accordingly.

**AP3: Ian Getgood to determine if there is a conflict of interest and advise Cathal Mullaghan.**

7.1 The chair thanked UJJ for the facilities and hospitality.

## **8.0 Next Meeting**

- 8.1 It was agreed that the next meeting would take place in September or October 2009, before the next Monitoring Committee meeting if possible. It was agreed that a North West venue would be preferable. Jonathan Wallace offered to check availability at Magee College.