

TEXT FOR REGIONAL COMMITTEE PAPERS

Regional Managing Authority teams and the LDA may wish to use this text in papers to consult regional committees. The text should be customised – in particular the parts in square brackets.

REGIONAL SELECTION OF THEMES FOR INNOVATION

Introduction

1. This paper invites the committee to select the regional themes for innovative and transnational activity for 2007-2010 at its meeting on [DATE] or by written procedure by [DATE].

Background

2. The ESF Operational Programme (paragraphs 380-382) states that within Priorities 1, 2, 4 and 5, there will be a limited amount of funding available to support a small range of dedicated innovative activities. Priorities 1 and 4 will include support for developing and delivering innovative ways of helping unemployed and inactive people make the transition from unemployment and inactivity to sustainable employment. Priorities 2 and 5 will include support for developing and delivering innovative activities to raise skills levels. There will also be a limited amount of funding available to support transnational or inter-regional activities.

3. Following discussions in the innovation, transnationality and mainstreaming sub-committee and with the European Commission, it has been agreed that:

- all dedicated innovative projects will have a transnational or inter-regional dimension (i.e. at least one partner from another EU Member State);
- innovative and transnational activity will be delivered through direct bidding outside of Co-financing;
- up to 2% of regional Priority 1, 2, 4 and 5 allocations for 2007-2010 will be available for innovative and transnational activity; and
- there will be up to three innovative and transnational projects per region [four in London] or Convergence/phasing-in area in 2007-2010.

4. ESF funding will contribute up to 50% of the costs of each project [75% in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly]. It is expected that up to around £1 million ESF funding will be available per project. Applicants must provide at least 50% match funding [25% in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly].

5. The innovation, transnationality and mainstreaming sub-committee has developed a menu of six themes for innovative and transnational activity in 2007-2010. The sub-committee's discussions were informed by the innovation sections of regional ESF frameworks.
6. The six themes are annexed to this paper as follows:
- A. Active Inclusion (Priorities 1 and 2)
 - B. Engaging with Employers (Priorities 1, 2, 4 and 5)
 - C. ICT and the Digital Divide (Priorities 1, 2, 4 and 5)
 - D. Meeting New Challenges – Demographic Change (Older Workers and Migration) (Priorities 1, 2, 4 and 5)
 - E. Meeting New Challenges – Skills for Climate Change and Sustainable Development (Priorities 2 and 5)
 - F. Social Enterprise (Priorities 1, 2, 4 and 5)
7. Regions are invited to select themes from this menu. The Operational Programme priorities in which the themes may operate are shown in brackets.
8. The central Managing Authority in ESF Division plans to launch the call for proposals for innovative and transnational projects at the end of October. Projects will be regional and each project must address one of the themes for the region within which it is submitted. Regional Managing Authority teams (and the London Development Agency (LDA) in London) will appraise applications and regional committees will be invited to endorse the selection of projects.
9. The central Managing Authority is in the process of selecting a Co-ordinating Body to assist with the co-ordination of innovative and transnational activity. The tasks of the Co-ordinating Body will include:
- developing guidance for innovative and transnational activity;
 - supporting the call for proposals including organising information meetings, responding to queries from potential applicants and receiving applications;
 - co-ordinating the appraisal process by sending applications to regional Managing Authority teams (and the LDA) for appraisal, identifying overlaps in applications across regions and providing advice to appraisers on transnational aspects of applications, collating a list of selected projects;
 - setting up cross-regional thematic networks of projects, which will also involve the Managing Authority, LDA, sub-committee members, regional committee members and decision makers as appropriate;
 - advising, supporting and monitoring selected projects (but not undertaking contracting and Article 13 activity which will be the responsibility of the Managing Authority and LDA).

Action for regions

10. Each region has been asked to select at least one theme within Priority 1/4, and at least one within Priority 2/5. There is no limit to the number of themes that a region can select from the menu. However, we need to bear in mind:

- the maximum amount of ESF funding available for innovative and transnational activity in 2007-2010 in [NAME OF REGION] is £[AMOUNT AT ANNEX H] in Priority [1/4] and £[AMOUNT AT ANNEX H] in Priority [2/5]; [NW/Y&H only: and in Merseyside/South Yorkshire is £[AMOUNT AT ANNEX H] in Priority 1 and £[AMOUNT AT ANNEX H] in Priority 2];
- there will be no more than three projects per region [four in London] in 2007-2010; [NW/Y&H only: and in Merseyside/South Yorkshire no more than three for the phasing-in area; and
- there will usually be up to around £1 million ESF funding per project.

11. We have the flexibility either (a) to specify a small number of themes, or (b) to select a larger number of themes but with the proviso that it will not be possible to support projects within all of those themes. The choice of themes from the menu is a matter for the region. The central Managing Authority and the Co-ordinating Body will not intervene in the regional decision.

12. Please note that four of the themes are available in both Priorities 1/4 and Priorities 2/5. It is possible to select the same theme within both priorities. For example, we could select engaging with employers as a theme in both Priority 1 and Priority 2. In this case, it would count as one theme in Priority 1 and one in Priority 2. On the other hand we could select it as a theme in Priority 2 only, in which case applications under the engaging with employers theme in our region could be submitted only in Priority 2.

13. We also have the option to give:

- a steer on the amount of funding available per theme in our region;
- some brief regional context for the theme which might set out specific regional issues and needs drawn from our regional ESF framework.

If we opt to provide these steers, they will be included in the call for proposals.

Recommendation

[OPTION A – DELETE IF NOT APPROPRIATE]

14. We propose that the themes for innovation and transnationality for [NAME OF REGION] should be:

Priority [1/4]:

[LIST THEMES SELECTED]

Priority [2/5]:

[LIST THEMES SELECTED]

15. [MERSEYSIDE/SOUTH YORKSHIRE ONLY:] In the phasing-in area of [MERSEYSIDE/SOUTH YORKSHIRE] we propose that the themes should be:

Priority 1:

[LIST THEMES SELECTED]

Priority 2:

[LIST THEMES SELECTED]

16. This selection is based on the innovation section of the regional ESF framework (annex G), and will add value to CFO provision in the region. [ADD FURTHER TEXT AS APPROPRIATE JUSTIFYING THE SELECTION OF THEMES ON THE BASIS OF THE REGIONAL ESF FRAMEWORK.]

17. We propose the following indicative financial allocations for the themes, reflecting the relative importance of the theme to the regional ESF framework:

Priority [1/4]:

[THEME AND FINANCIAL ALLOCATION]

Priority [2/5]:

[THEME AND FINANCIAL ALLOCATION]

[ALSO ADD PHASING-IN REGIONS IF APPROPRIATE]

[OR] We do not propose to make indicative financial allocations to the themes, but instead give the steer that maximum available per project will be around £1 million ESF.

18. We also propose to insert the following regional steers into the call for proposals, based on the regional ESF framework:

Priority [1/4]:

[THEME AND REGIONAL CONTEXT TEXT]

Priority [2/5]:

[THEME AND REGIONAL CONTEXT TEXT]

[ALSO ADD PHASING-IN REGIONS AS APPROPRIATE]

19. The [regional Managing Authority team/LDA] must inform the central Managing Authority of the selection of themes no later than 15 October so that they can be included in the call for proposals.

[OPTION B – DELETE IF NOT APPROPRIATE]

14. The committee is invited to consider and agree the selection of regional themes from the menu. In doing so, the committee will want to take account of the regional ESF framework's section on innovation (at annex G of this paper).

15. The committee is also invited to give a steer on whether indicative financial allocations should be set for each theme, and on whether information on the regional context, drawn from the regional ESF framework, should be included in the call for proposals.

16. The [regional Managing Authority team/LDA] must inform the central Managing Authority of the selection of themes no later than 15 October so that they can be included in the call for proposals.

[OPTION C – DELETE IF NOT APPROPRIATE]

14. The sub-committee/working group is invited to consider and agree the selection of regional themes from the menu, on behalf of the regional committee. In doing so, the sub-committee/working group will want to take account of the regional ESF framework's section on innovation (at annex G of this paper).

15. The sub-committee/working group is also invited to give a steer on whether indicative financial allocations should be set for each theme, and on whether information on the regional context, drawn from the regional ESF framework, should be included in the call for proposals.

16. The [regional Managing Authority team/LDA] must inform the central Managing Authority of the selection of themes no later than 15 October so that they can be included in the call for proposals.

[ANNEXES]

Annexes A to F: use the annexes in the action note

Annex G: extract section on innovation from regional ESF framework]