



EUROPEAN FUNDING

a funding information leaflet from *funderfinder*

The European Union provides financial support to promote economic development and social inclusion through a series of inter-related funds known as Structural Funds. They account for over one third of the European Union budget and are used to tackle regional disparities and support regional development through actions including developing infrastructure and telecommunications, developing human resources and supporting research and development.

The European Union has been a major funder of voluntary and community groups through two of the Structural Funds - the European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) - although many groups have found European funding bureaucratic and difficult to access.

ESF seeks to reduce differences in prosperity across the EU and enhance economic and social cohesion. So although ESF funding is spread across the EU, most money goes to those countries and regions where economic development is less advanced.

ERDF is a vehicle for promoting the economic development and regeneration of defined areas within the Member States of the European Union.

The delivery of the structural funds is the responsibility of the country governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In England the Communities and Local Government (CLG) department and Regional Development Agencies are responsible for ERDF funds; and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and regional agencies such as the Learning and Skills Council are responsible for ESF funds. These agencies are known as 'Co-financing Organisations' and they contract with the organisations or 'providers' that deliver ESF projects on the ground.

ESF funds

A current round of ESF programmes for 2007-2013 will invest £4.6 billion of which £2.3 billion will come from the ESF and £2.3 billion will be national funding. The aims of ESF is to respond to the economic downturn by providing additional support to disadvantaged jobseekers, people who have recently been made redundant, and people facing redundancy; and to support economic recovery by addressing weaknesses in low and intermediate skills, and up-skilling people for new jobs.

The 2007-2013 ESF programme has two primary objectives:

Convergence Objective

This replaces Objective 1 and aims to develop areas where the economy is lagging behind the rest of the European Union. The UK only Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, West Wales and the Valleys and the Highlands and Islands receive funding under the Convergence Objective.

Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective

This covers all areas outside of the 'Convergence' objective. South Yorkshire and Merseyside qualify for ring-fenced 'phasing-in' funding because they previously received Objective 1 funding in 2000-2006, but no longer qualify because their economies have grown.

The priorities in the 2007-2013 ESF programme are designed to focus spending on specific activities and to ensure that it reaches people in most need of support. For example, in England priorities are:

- extending employment opportunities and
- developing a skilled and adaptable workforce.

Each region has an allocation of ESF money to fund projects. Allocations are based on regional employment and skills needs - for example, the numbers of people not in work and who do not have good qualifications. There are similar priorities in the Convergence areas.

Organisations can apply for ESF funding to a Co-financing Organisation (CFO). The CFOs make ESF available through a process of open and competitive tendering. You do not have to find your own 'match funding' as CFOs are responsible for both the ESF and match funding.

Small grants programmes

In England, there is a small grants programme called Community Grants, which gives grants of up to £12,000 for voluntary and community organisations to help them reach disadvantaged people who are not working. Application arrangements are simplified and the grants are managed in each of the English regions by a co-ordinating body - sometimes a Community Foundation or CVS. However, the 2007-2010 round has closed and it is not currently clear whether there will be further grants available.

More information on ESF:

England

Third Sector European Network (TSEN), Bromley Hall, 43 Gillender Street, London E14 6RN, tel: 020 7987 0035, website: www.tsen.org.uk

Their website contains contacts for local organisations concerned with European funding in each of the English regions.

Wales

Wales Council for Voluntary Action, Baltic House, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FH, tel: 029 2043170, website: www.wcva.org.uk

Scotland

Lowlands and Uplands Scotland:

East of Scotland European Partnership (ESEP), Suite 3, Forth House, Burnside Business Court, North Road, Inverkeithing, Fife KY11 1NZ, tel: 01383 413141, and Centrum Building, 38 Queen Street, Glasgow, G1 3DX, tel: 0141 241 6150, website: www.esep.co.uk

Highlands and Islands:

Highlands and Islands Partnership Programme (HIPP), Jubilee Lodge, 12c Ness Walk, Inverness IV3 5SQ, tel: 01463 279500, *and* 23 Keith Street, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis HS1 2JA, tel: 01851 703581 *and* Solarhus, 3 North Ness Business Park, Lerwick ZE1 0LZ, tel: 01595 744929, website: www.hipp.org.uk

Northern Ireland

NICVA, 61 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast BT15 2GB, tel: 028 9087 7777, website: www.nicva.org

ERDF funds

Funding is targeted to meet three objectives set down by the European Commission (EC):

- Convergence
- Regional Competitiveness
- European Territorial Co-operation

Since 2000, England has benefited from more than £5bn of ERDF funding, with a further 3.2bn Euros being invested in projects for the new round of programmes (2007-13). These programmes are designed to meet current needs by targeting employment, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), innovation, high-tech business investment, among other key priorities identified by each region. Primarily aimed at economic regeneration projects promoted by the public sector this can involve:

- government departments
- Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)
- local authorities
- further and higher education establishments
- other public bodies
- volunteer sector organisations

To apply for ERDF see the websites listed below for the relevant agencies.

More information on European Funds generally:

Books

A Guide to European Union Funding, pub. ECAS, 15th ed., 2009, £35, ISBN 2 87451 011 4, available from Directory of Social Change (www.dsc.org.uk)

The EU Grants Directory, published annually by European Consultancy Services. CD (£30) or internet download (£20) from www.europeangrants.com

Websites

www.ec.europa.eu/unitedkingdom/ - the European Commission Representation in the UK website.

www.europa.eu/index_en.htm - EU website.

www.esf.gov.uk/ - the official ESF website for England,
and

www.communities.gov.uk/citiesandregions/european/europeanregionaldevelopment -
for information on ERDF funding in England.

www.delni.gov.uk/index/niesfprog0713.htm - the official ESF website for Northern Ireland,

and

www.eugrants.org - for information on ERDF funding in Northern Ireland.

www.wefo.wales.gov.uk - the Welsh European Funding Office website.

In Scotland the official sites for ESF and ERDF are those listed above.

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