

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING

Name of Programme:

South West Competitiveness and Employment Operational Programme

1. Screening undertaken by

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2. Brief description of Programme*Introduction*

The South West Competitiveness and Employment Operational Programme covers the South West of England, excluding Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (covered by a separate Convergence Programme). The Programme is supported by the European Regional Development Fund, with a total ERDF allocation of €124m between 2007 and 2013.

Objectives

The focus of the ERDF Programme is on improving competitiveness of the regions of the European Union, while taking account of the need to develop an inclusive society and protect and enhance our environment. The distinguishing features of the South West Operational Programme are:

- A focus on research and development, innovation and knowledge;
- An ambition to develop the environmental technologies and renewable energy sectors across the South West;
- The provision of dedicated resources to the most disadvantaged communities in Torbay, Plymouth and Bristol in a concerted attempt to promote economic and social inclusion; and
- An ambition to work towards a low carbon economy.

The Programme strategy has been developed after extensive consultation with stakeholders across the region, including a number of Task and Finish Groups, convened by the South West RDA, which helped to focus the limited resources available in the South West.

The programme has three Priorities. These are:

- Innovation and Knowledge

- Enterprise and Growth
- Urban Enterprise

These priorities fit closely with national policy and the Regional Economic Strategy. They address both the need to increase productivity and competitiveness in the South West and at the same time provide support to the most disadvantaged communities. In the latter case, a LEGL type approach of stimulating local enterprise has been developed.

Priorities and Actions

Priority Axis 1: Innovation and Knowledge

This Priority aims to improve the region's overall performance in innovation and close the intra-regional gap with the region. The priority will play a key role in maximising the contribution from the region's HE/FE institutions and helping companies exploit their own ideas and innovations.

| Strands |
|--|
| Supporting ideas, innovation and knowledge |
| Improving FE/HE interactions with SMEs |
| Developing specialist infrastructure for innovation and research and development |
| Environmental technologies and renewable energy |

Priority Axis 1 – Outputs and Results

| Indicators | Target Number |
|--|---------------|
| Outputs | |
| Number of businesses assisted to improve their performance | 3,990 |
| Number of new businesses assisted | 210 |
| Number of environmental technologies and renewable energy enterprises assisted | 350 |
| No of firms involved in collaborative research & development projects | 210 |
| Number of additional firms involved in business/cluster networks | 1,400 |
| Results | |
| Gross new jobs created | 3,200 |

Priority Axis 2: Enterprise and Growth

The aim of this priority is increase the contribution that new businesses make to the economy and reduce the intra-regional disparities in enterprise rates. This priority has a key role to play in addressing the low earnings, low skilled nature of the economy.

| Strands |
|--|
| Enterprise Culture |
| High Growth Businesses |
| Internationalisation |
| Accelerating business growth |
| Environmental performance in business and Environmental Efficiency |
| Environmental Technologies and Renewable Energy |

Priority Axis 2 - Outputs and Results

| Indicators | Target Number |
|--|---------------|
| Outputs | |
| Number of businesses assisted to improve their performance | 5,810 |
| Number of new enterprises assisted | 490 |
| Number of environmental technologies and renewable energy enterprises assisted | 350 |
| Number of additional firms involved in business/cluster networks | 1,200 |
| Number of SMEs assisted to improve their environmental performance | 1,400 |
| Number of businesses within the region engaged in new collaboration with UK knowledge base | 300 |

Priority Axis 3: Urban Enterprise

The aim of this priority is to find new approaches to addressing the problems in the region's most deprived neighbourhoods through enterprise creation. The most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Plymouth, Bristol and Torbay have been prioritised for support.

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| Strands |
| Small scale infrastructure and facilities |
| Promoting and encouraging the creation of new enterprises/social enterprises within under-represented groups |
| Access to targeted business support services in the community |
| Innovative models for access to employment, enterprise and training initiatives |

Priority Axis 3 - Outputs and Results

| Indicators | Target Number |
|--|---------------|
| Outputs | |
| Number of individuals assisted in starting business | 900 |
| Number of businesses assisted to improve their performance | 1200 |
| Number of social enterprises assisted | 80 |
| Square metres of new or upgraded floor space - non specialist | 1,000 |
| Square metres of new or upgraded floor space - specialist | 1,000 |
| Number of people assisted to get a job | 700 |
| No of SMEs assisted to improve their environmental performance | 100 |
| Results | |

Resources

The indicative financial allocations by Priority are set out below.

| Financial Allocations By Priority (€ millions) | | | |
|--|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| | ERDF | National Public | Total |
| Priority 1 | 45.000 | 45.000 | 90.000 |
| Priority 2 | 45.000 | 45.000 | 90.000 |
| Priority 3 | 30.000 | 30.000 | 60.000 |
| Technical Assistance | 4.658 | 4.658 | 9.316 |
| Total ERDF | 124.658 | 124.658 | 249.316 |

Delivery

Specific delivery mechanisms are now being developed in accordance with national transfer arrangements. One aspect which is already clear is that the South West Programme will move away from an open bidding approach. It will instead adopt a strategic commissioning approach to ensure investments are wholly aligned with Programme aims and objectives. This approach will also provide greater control to ensure cross cutting themes are fully reflected in all investment decisions. The involvement to date of regional equality networks, led by Equality South West, will be expanded upon to inform the shape and nature of Programme delivery.

Cross Cutting Themes

The programme has two cross cutting themes – Equal Opportunities and Environment. Both of these themes build upon the experience of the current South West Objective 2 Programme. The environment theme now incorporates a greater focus on reducing carbon emissions.

3. Relevance to Equality and Diversity Duties

The NSRF states that *'all structural fund programmes will respect the principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunities. Projects will be encouraged to take account of the needs of the local communities they serve, and where appropriate take account of good practice developed within the Equal Community Initiative.'*

The Operational Programme draws on the South West Integrated Regional Strategy aim *'to make sure that people are treated fairly and can participate fully in society'* and identifies a range of relevant legislation:

| Strand | Legislation |
|--------------------|--|
| Race | Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Race Regulations 2003 |
| Disability | Disability Discrimination Act 1995 |
| Gender | Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999 |
| Sexual Orientation | Sexual Orientation Regulation came into force in December 2003 |
| Age | Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 |
| Religion or Belief | Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 |

The Operational Programme acknowledges that 'Whilst legislation is in place to prevent discrimination within the workplace, inequalities remain. These inequalities mean that people are working below their full potential due to a number of barriers:

- Childcare and other logistical issues;
- Confidence and self esteem;
- Education and skills; and
- Awareness of opportunities.

The challenge for the Programme is to ensure that all members of society are able to benefit and access the support proposed under this Programme.'

Accordingly, the Operational Programme identifies a number of objectives:

- Increase the number of people from under-represented groups owning their own business.
- Increase the take-up of quality training and employment by under-represented target groups.
- Increase the number of people in under-represented groups accessing training and employment in higher skilled occupations and sectors where they are currently under-represented.
- Ensure that business support is inclusive and responsive to the needs of all communities and underrepresented groups.
- Increase the participation of people from under-represented groups in the management and implementation structures of the programme. It is important that partnerships, selection panels and other administrative groups are representative at all levels and positive steps are taken to gain the active involvement of under-represented groups.

4. Evidence base for screening

The primary source of baseline data supporting development of the Operational Programme is the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) Evidence Base, the South West Regional Observatory and ONS. Alongside other data this identifies the following evidence relevant to Equal Opportunities:

| | Key Facts |
|--------------|--|
| Gender | <p><i>Employment</i> – Women accounted for 46% of the total working age population, a slight increase since 2000, narrowing the employment gap regionally. However, in four local authorities the employment gap widened (N. Somerset, Devon, Torbay and Plymouth). Women are more likely to work in part-time jobs than their male counterparts.</p> <p><i>Unemployment</i> – Female unemployment was 3.1% in 2005, compared to 3.8% for men. Women have a lower average duration of unemployment.</p> <p><i>Economic Activity</i> – In 2005, women of working age had a lower economic activity rate (78%) than their male counterparts (86%);</p> <p><i>Average Earnings</i> – Female full time earnings are increasing faster than the male equivalent, however, they are still lagging in absolute terms.</p> |
| Age | <p><i>Employment</i> - The over-50's have lower rates of employment (38.5%) than other age groups, however, this has grown from a rate of 36.3% in 2000.</p> <p><i>Unemployment</i> – Unemployment is highest (9.6%) amongst the 16-24 age group. In rate terms, this compares well to 14.3% in 2000. however, in absolute terms, there has been an increase of 5,000 individuals.</p> <p><i>Economic activity</i> – The over 50's have the lowest economic activity rates at 39.4%, however this has increased significantly since 2000 (34.3%).</p> |
| Ethnicity | <p><i>Population</i> – 2.3% of the population of the South West are from BME backgrounds compared to 9.1% nationally. However, wide disparities exist between local authority areas ranging from 1% in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to 8.2% in Bristol. All local authorities with a concentration higher than the SW average are located in the North East Triangle Functional Zone.</p> <p><i>Employment</i> – The employment rate is 70% for BME individuals compared to 78% for all people. This performance is better than that of England, with 59% and 75% respectively. Only 51% of the region's Pakistani and Bangladeshi population are in employment</p> |
| Disabilities | <p><i>Population</i> – 18% of the working age population are classified as disabled and 14% have a disability that impacts on their ability to work.</p> <p><i>Employment and Economic Activity</i> – 61% of working age disabled people in the South West were classified as economically active, compared to 55% nationally and 80% for all people. There are sub-regional differences in economic activity rates ranging from 74% in South Gloucestershire to 49% in Torbay. In addition to Torbay the three local authorities with the lowest level of economic activity for working age disabled people are the urban areas of Plymouth (51%), Bournemouth (52%) and Bristol (53%).</p> |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| | Limited data is available outside of the Stonewall and Treasury nationally agreed estimate that 5% to 7% of the UK population is lesbian or gay (this figure doesn't include bisexual and trans gender people) |
| Religion/belief | Data collected by the 2001 Census indicates that the South West has a higher proportion of Christians than England (74% of all people compared to 72% for England) and a lower proportion of people from other religions (1.5% in the South compared to 6% across England). It is not possible to make a clear distinction between those identifying themselves as Christian and members of other religions. Against some indicators some religious groups outperform their Christian and non-religious counterparts (such as the proportion employed in senior positions). However there are a number of key issues, including the proportion of Muslims employed in lower value added sectors and elementary occupations, and the economic activity rate of Jewish people in the South West. |

The obvious gaps in this evidence base relate to Sexual Orientation and to a lesser degree Religion/Belief. It is apparent and appropriate that these issues will be explored in greater detail with support from relevant partners when establishing delivery mechanisms This should ensure that gaps in the known evidence are filled and that underrepresented groups are not discriminated against either directly or indirectly.

5. Risks and opportunities

The Programme is unlikely to have any negative impacts on any of the target groups; benefits are likely to be neutral or positive, with the focus of Priority 3 enterprise in disadvantaged communities likely to provide support to a number of groups identified in the earlier analysis. Positive benefits are not automatic in terms of Priority 1 and 2. To ensure the maximum benefits, steps are required to ensure the take up of key services, requiring a pro-active approach. While Priority 3 has considerable potential with regard to women and black and minority ethnic communities, concerted action will be needed to raise confidence, increase take up of services and provide on-going support. Barriers faced by groups included childcare and logistical issues of accessing services, low levels of confidence and self esteem amongst some groups; and lack of awareness of opportunities.

The Operational Programme identifies the following issues and proposed responses:

| Priority Axis | Issue | Response |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Innovation and Knowledge | There is a risk that 'Supporting ideas, innovation and knowledge' activity will be interpreted as only applying to the technical/engineering type companies which are traditionally male dominated. | Activities must encompass the whole intellectual property spectrum |
| | Inventors, entrepreneurs and other target groups have a lower proportion of women and other under-represented groups. | Need to ensure all marketing is inclusive |
| Enterprise and Growth | Women and disadvantaged groups are less likely to start their own business. | Ensure that services targeted at those interested in starting a business take account of barriers facing particular groups in the design and delivery of services. |
| | New starts in the knowledge intensive and high-growth areas are more likely to be male dominated | Monitoring and targeted activity at women and disadvantaged groups as required |

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|------------------|---|--|
| | Some of the environmental technologies sector are male dominated | Monitoring and targeted activity at women and disadvantaged groups as required |
| Urban Enterprise | Access to facilities | Facilities need to be in the right location, fully accessible and community driven |
| | Overcoming barriers to accessing business support by disadvantaged groups | Link up with ESF |

6. Proportionality

The Operational Programme sets a number of indicative targets for Equal Opportunities and Diversity, taking account of provisional indicators set out in the draft Quantification Framework for ERDF prepared by DCLG.

| ERDF Indicators | Target Number |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Number of persons from under represented groups ¹ assisted in starting a business | 20% of all persons assisted |
| Number of women assisted in starting a business ¹ | 40% of all persons assisted |
| Proportion of Programme Committee and sub committee members who are women | 50% of Committee members |
| ¹ Defined as people from a black and minority ethnic background, people with a disability, residents of disadvantaged communities. | |
| ² Women are under-represented in business ownership ² in terms of owning a majority of the business | |

7. Decision

The South West Operational Programme identifies an appropriate evidence base and targets, and is accompanied by a separate baseline report. It also identifies the expected actions necessary to ensure that equality issues are taken in to account at the Priority level, such as childcare and care support for those seeking to take up opportunities; and service provision outside of the working day, including early evenings and week-ends. Other actions to ensure that the Cross Cutting Theme is implemented effectively include:

- An Equality and Diversity Advisor in place at the beginning of the programme
- An Equalities Advisory group to provide specialist support
- A comprehensive and robust data collection system
- Specific equalities training for everyone involved with the management and implementation process, including partners and project appraisers

In addition the Operational Programme states that "stakeholders will work with the Regional Equalities Networks and Equality South West to continually improve the evidence base, identify best practice and where necessary introduce new actions to ensure that the Cross Cutting Theme is successfully intergraded in to the implementation of the Operational Programme." This is a significant commitment to continue to work throughout the life of the Programme to address issues of equality and diversity.

On this basis of this review the decision reached by carrying out the screening is that a full impact assessment is not required.