

## **NORTHERN IRELAND EU STRUCTURAL FUNDS**

### **INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY**

#### **REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS**

1. Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, Article 69 requires that the Member State and Managing Authority shall provide information on and publicise operations. EU co-financed Programme Schemes should be transparent and publicised to the beneficiaries and the general public in order to highlight the role of the European Community.
2. Implementing Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 Chapter II Articles 2 to 10 inclusive, outlines the requirements in more detail.
3. DFP will retain responsibility for communication of the role of the EU in Structural Funds at the strategic level and in relation to the totality of the Funds available to Northern Ireland.

#### **COMMUNICATION PLAN**

4. In line with the regulations a Communication Plan must be drawn up within four months of the date of adoption of each operational programme and submitted to the European Commission. The Communication Plan was submitted to the Commission during May 2008 and subsequently approved in July 2008.
5. The Communication Plan complies with Article 2(2) and must be presented to, and its implementation monitored, by the programme Monitoring Committee.
6. DFP will co-ordinate high level information on all NI's Structural Funds Programmes. Managing Authorities and Accountable Departments may be asked for input. This function will include for example, answering PQs on overall Structural Funds receipts in NI and ensuring appropriate references in NI Strategic Policy and Strategy Documents such as Programme for Government and Budget. SEUPB will produce communication plans for the Cross Border Co-operation Programmes.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGING AUTHORITIES AND ACCOUNTABLE DEPARTMENTS**

7. Northern Ireland Managing Authorities and Accountable Departments will be responsible for communication at the Operational Programme level and/or for the totality of the operations in the Programme at the Department level. This includes the drawing up and implementation of Operational Programme Communication Plans and/or input to Operational Programme Communication Plans. In fulfilling this function they will ensure full recognition of the role of the European Union Structural Funds functions in all Departmental Planning,

Policy or Strategy documents, including those of any sponsored bodies. These processes are to be such that Articles 5, 6, 7 and 10 of Regulation 1828/2006 are fulfilled.

8. In accordance with the Communication Plan, the Managing Authority for each Programme must ensure that the operational programme is disseminated widely and made available to all interested parties. The Managing Authority will be responsible for organising:
- the launch of the programme;
  - at least one major information activity each year, as set out in the communication plan which sets out the achievements of the programme;
  - flying the flag of the European Union for one week starting 9<sup>th</sup> May; and
  - publishing the list of beneficiaries, the names of the operations and the amount of public funding allocated to the operations.<sup>1</sup>

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF IMPLEMENTING BODIES**

9. Managing Authorities and Accountable Departments will be responsible for ensuring that all Implementing Bodies are aware of information and publicity requirements for all operations at each stage in their delivery. Minimum requirements will include:
- (i) All publicity material, brochures, etc shall give first prominence to the fact that the operation is co-financed from Structural Funds. This will include as a minimum the material specified in Article 5(2) of Regulation 1828/2006. Planning for the implementation of these requirements applies with immediate effect for any of the expenditure areas that are proposed for inclusion in the 2007-13 Programmes. This should allow for immediate implementation of these requirements for all expenditure areas included in the Operational Programme eventually adopted by the Commission, so that, for example any existing material that does not recognise the role of the funds should be discarded.
  - (ii) Potential beneficiaries should be provided with clear information on at least the following:
    - The conditions of eligibility to be met in order to qualify for financing;
    - A description of the procedures for examining applications for funding and the time periods involved;
    - The selection criteria; and
    - Contact details of who can provide information on the programme.

<sup>1</sup> COCOF 07/0071/03

A) Amounts committed to the operation

B) Total amounts effectively paid at the end of the operation

- (iii) Potential beneficiaries must be informed that for any successful project funded, details of the name of the project and the amount of public funding will be publicly available. On awarding funding, Implementing Bodies must also inform beneficiaries in the Letter of Offer, that acceptance of funding is also acceptance of their inclusion in the list of published beneficiaries. Individual participants of ESF funded projects are exempt from this requirement.
- (iv) First prominence to the EU co-financing of all operations should be given during all meetings with potential and actual beneficiaries of the operations.
- (v) All correspondence with potential and actual beneficiaries should give first prominence to the role of the Structural Funds in co-financing the operation.
- (vi) All Letters of Offer or any other agreements should give first prominence to the role of Structural Funds in co-financing the operations and shall require beneficiaries to publicise the role of the Structural Funds in co-financing the operation. These arrangements should be sufficient to fulfil the requirements of Articles 8 and 9 of Regulation 1828/2006;
- Implementing Bodies **must** incorporate into the Letter of Offer the requirement for beneficiaries to inform the general public. For a project that consists in the purchase of a physical object over EUR 500,000 a visible permanent explanatory plaque must be erected no later than six months after completion.
  - For infrastructure or construction projects receiving public funding in excess of EUR 500,000 the beneficiary **must** put up a billboard at the site, and when completed, this should be replaced by a permanent explanatory plaque no later than six months after project completion.
- (vii) For other non-construction or infrastructure projects and those co-financed by ESF, the beneficiary must ensure that those taking part in the project have been informed that the project has been co-financed under EU Structural Funds.
- (viii) Implementing Bodies must provide clear notice by means of an advertisement that the scheme/project has been selected under the operational programme for co-financing under EU Structural Funds.

## **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS**

10. All information and publicity measures aimed at beneficiaries, potential beneficiaries and the public shall include the following:
  - EU flag - Instructions for creating the emblem and a definition of the standard colours is set out in Annex 1 of the Implementing Regulations 1828/2006;
  - Reference to the fund concerned:
    - for ERDF “European Regional Development Fund”
    - for ESF “European Social Fund”
  - The statement ‘Investing in your future’
11. This information should take up at least 25% of the billboard or plaque

## **MONITORING AND NON-COMPLIANCE**

12. Publicity requirements will be subject to the on the spot Article 13 (2) and Article 16 (1) check, non-compliance with Implementing Regulation 1828/2006, Chapter II will be deemed as an irregularity and could be subject to financial correction.

## **REPORTING**

13. Under General Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, Article 67 (2) (e), the Managing Authority will report annually to the Monitoring Committee the measures taken to provide information on the programme and how it was publicised. The annual implementation report and the final implementation report for the programme must include:
  - Examples of information and publicity measures for the operational programme carried out when implementing the communication plan;
  - Arrangements to comply with para 9 above;
  - The content of any major amendments to the communication plan.
14. In addition, the annual implementation report for 2010 and the final implementation report must contain a chapter on the results of an assessment of the programme’s visibility and the general public’s awareness of the role played by the European Commission.
15. To facilitate the reporting requirement, all Implementing Bodies must provide six monthly reports on their information and publicity measures to the Managing Authority.

## **NETWORK AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION**

16. The Managing Authority will designate and inform the Commission of details of a contact person to be responsible for information and publicity. The Commission may set up a network to exchange good practice, including the results of implementing the communication plan.

### **EUROPEAN DIVISION**

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