



European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme for England (2014-2020)

## **ESIF Growth Programme Board**

### **ESIF Growth Programme Board Terms of Reference: Role of the ESIF Growth Programme Board**

1. The European Structural and Investment Funds ESIF Growth Programme Board (henceforth the 'Board') will be a national partnership to take decisions by consensus on the development of the ESIF Growth Programme (henceforth the 'Growth Programme').
2. As such the Board will also oversee the final stages of development and related key policy decisions taken within the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) and the relevant part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development<sup>1</sup> (EAFRD) as part of that overall Growth Programme. It will also promote co-ordination with the European Fisheries Fund, as well as alignment with other local growth programmes.
3. The outcomes of the Board's work will therefore be focussed on shaping the development of the England chapter of the UK Partnership Agreement, Operational Programmes that sit within the Growth Programme and Local Enterprise Partnership ESIF Strategies that will set the local direction and priorities of the Growth Programme, as well as advising Government on optimum strategic alignment with other local growth initiatives.
4. Following formal adoption by the European Commission in 2014 of the UK Partnership Agreement and the Operational Programmes within the Growth Programme, the Terms of Reference of the Board will be reviewed and revised to reflect its role as the formal Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) for the Growth Programme from this point.
5. An important aspect of the Board's role will be to maximise strategic and operational impact and alignment with complementary growth measures, at national and local level. This will include ensuring alignment with the Growth Deals process; other initiatives that promote the devolution of economic competencies and finances to localities; and early stage influence of national economic growth policies to 'design in' alignment with

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<sup>1</sup> There will be a separate Programme Monitoring Committee for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development Programme, which will remain responsible for the entirety of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development fund in England, including that part delivered via the Growth Programme. This reflects the primary focus of EAFRD on land-based activities and the farming and forestry sector. The National Growth Board will, however, provide influential and important advice to that EAFRD Programme Monitoring Committee.

the European Growth Programme. It will also seek to ensure strategic alignment with other complementary EU Programmes, such as Horizon 2020.

6. The scope of the Board covers ESIF in England only. The decisions taken by the Board for England will be adopted by the UK-wide Structural & Investment Funds UK Programme Board. The UK Programme Board (The Managing Authorities in the UK and BIS) will ensure the alignment of decisions taken in England and in each of the Devolved Administrations in accordance with the priorities and targets set out in the UK Partnership Agreement in a way which incorporates and supports the decisions of the ESIF Board for England.
7. With the exception of “Major Projects”<sup>2</sup>, the Board will not approve individual projects; this will be done at the local level through LEP-organised partner groups and Local Managing Authority teams, on the basis of selection criteria agreed by the Board. Managing Authority Departments will retain final accountability for the ESIF Programmes and projects supported through them and establish and be responsible for appropriate management and control regimes agreed with national Audit Authorities and the European Commission.

### **Terms of Reference of the ESIF Growth Programme Board**

8. In advance of the formal adoption by the European Commission of the UK Partnership Agreement and Operational Programmes within the Growth Programme, the Board will guide the final stages of development of the ESIF Growth Programme. During this phase, Ministers with responsibility for the ESIF in England will introduce meetings and discuss agenda priorities with Board members. The proposed Terms of Reference for the Board during this period (Sept 2013 – approximately Sept 2014) are:
  - a. To act as a precursor to the formal England PMC for ERDF and ESF prior to the formal adoption of the UK Partnership Agreement and Operational Programmes and to steer the development of those programmes with the aims of addressing partners’ priorities and securing early adoption by the European Commission.
  - b. To ensure the final stages in the development of EAFRD within the Growth Programme are managed in a co-ordinated and coherent way with both ERDF and ESF - as well as the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, where possible.
  - c. To promote to Government opportunities to maximise the impact and alignment with complementary growth measures at national and local

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<sup>2</sup> European Regulations set out a role for the European Commission in appraising and approving “Major Projects”. They define a major project as ‘a series of works, activities or services intended in itself to accomplish an indivisible task of a precise economic or technical nature, which has clearly identified goals and whose total eligible cost (i.e. European Regional Development Fund and match funding excluding VAT) exceeds €50 million’.

level. This will include alignment with the Local Growth Fund; other initiatives that promote the devolution of economic competencies and finances to localities; and early stage influence of national economic growth policies to ensure their alignment with the ESIF Growth Programme.

- d. To promote strategic alignment with complementary EU Programmes, such as Horizon 2020
  - e. To examine and approve selection criteria and procedures for steering local strategies in the Growth Programme proposed by Programme Managing Authorities and BIS.
  - f. To recommend by consensus the approval of draft and final LEP ESIF Strategies in the light of assessment and advice by HMG officials.
  - g. To steer Government on the relevant parts of the chapter of the UK Partnership Agreement relating to England and the England Operational Programmes before they are submitted formally to the EU Commission for agreement.
  - h. To commission appropriate sub-committees to support the work of the main Board, agreeing their membership, terms of reference, scope of their activity, decision-making and reporting arrangements. (See Paragraph 12 for an explanation of interim arrangements to support the process of assessing draft and final LEP ESI Fund Strategies)
  - i. To approve draft strategies for the Evaluation, Communications; these strategies will all require formal agreement by the full PMC when it is constituted following the adoption by the European Commission of the UK Partnership Agreement and Operational Programmes within the Growth Programme.
  - j. To agree the proposed Terms of Reference and membership of the Board for the period after the Board is designated as the PMC for the ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes.
  - k. To promote the use of ESIF to promote sustainable development and to ensure greater equality between men and women, equal opportunities, and non-discrimination.
9. Board members should note that:
- The Board's decisions will be made consensus.
  - The Board will meet quarterly (exceptional meetings may be called on an *ad hoc* basis to tackle any critical issues arising).
  - Managing Authority Departments remain accountable for their respective ESIF.

- Existing PMCs/LMCs for the 2007-2013 Operational Programmes will remain responsible for those Operational Programmes until they are closed.

### **Membership of the ESIF Growth Programme Board**

10. Ministers have agreed the following membership for the ESIF Growth Programme Board:

Chair (BIS)  
 BIS \*1 (Member)  
 DCLG Managing Authority \*1 (Member)  
 DWP Managing Authority \*1 (Member)  
 Defra Managing Authority \*1 (Member)  
 European Commission DG Regio \* 1 (Advisory member)  
 European Commission DG Emploi \*1 (Advisory member)  
 European Commission DG Agri \* 1 (Advisory member)  
 LEP representatives \*4 (Members)  
 Local Government Association and local council representatives \*3 (Members)  
 National Council for Voluntary Organisations \*1 (Member)  
 Federation of Small Businesses \*1 (Member)  
 Higher Education Institutions representatives \*1 (Member)  
 Leader/Community Led Local Development \*1 (Member)  
 Greater London Authority \*1 (Member)  
 British Chambers of Commerce \*1 (Member)  
 Trades Union Congress \*1 (Member)  
 Further Education Institutions representative \*1 (Member)  
 Local Nature Partnerships representative \*1 (Member)  
 Rural and Farming Networks representative \*1 (Member)  
 Representative of equalities organisations \*1 (Member)  
 Secretariat: DCLG

11. The Board will review its membership and terms of reference once formally designated as PMC for the ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes (expected to be in the second half of 2014).