



Department for Business, Innovation & Skills

Equality Impact Assessment

UK Partnership Agreement

March 2014

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UK Partnership Agreement

Introduction

1. This Equality Impact Assessment accompanies the draft UK Partnership Agreement, which sets out the UK's strategy, priorities and arrangements for using the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds¹ in 2014-2020. The Partnership Agreement has been developed in partnership with a wide variety of domestic stakeholders. The Government plans to submit the draft Partnership Agreement to the European Commission for formal negotiation in early April 2014 and adoption in mid-2014.
2. During formal negotiations between the Government and the European Commission, the strategy, priorities and arrangements set out in the Partnership Agreement may need to be revised. The Government will update the analysis set out in this document should any of those changes be deemed to have significant impact on equality issues.
3. As described later in this document, the high-level strategy set out in the UK Partnership agreement will be underpinned by more detailed "Programmes". These Programmes will develop the Partnership Agreement's strategy; give more granular descriptions of funding priorities; and provide detailed arrangements for delivery. The Programmes will be accompanied by their own Equality Impact Assessments.
4. Any queries about this Equality Impact Assessment should be addressed to:

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Scope of this Equality Impact Assessment

5. Under the Equality Act 2010 (the 2010 Act), a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the 2010 Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share the relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

¹ The ESI Funds is the collective term for the European Regional Development fund (ERDF); the European Social fund (ESF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

6. This document therefore sets out BIS's due consideration of equalities in the above areas in the context of developing the UK Partnership Agreement document.
7. Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council (the 'Common Provisions Regulation') defines a 'Partnership Agreement' as "a document prepared by a Member State with the involvement of partners in line with the multi-level governance approach, which sets out that Member State's strategy, priorities and arrangements for using the ESI Funds in an effective and efficient way so as to pursue the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and which is approved by the Commission following assessment and dialogue with the Member State concerned". The Common Provisions Regulation sets out the elements that must be contained within the Partnership Agreement (see box below).

Extract from the 'Common Provisions Regulation'

Article 15

Content of the Partnership Agreement

1. The Partnership Agreement shall set out:

(a) arrangements to ensure alignment with the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as well as the Fund-specific missions pursuant to their Treaty-based objectives, including economic, social and territorial cohesion, including:

(i) an analysis of disparities, development needs and growth potential with reference to the thematic objectives and the territorial challenges, and taking account of the National Reform Programme, where appropriate, and relevant country-specific recommendations adopted in accordance with Article 121(2) TFEU and relevant Council recommendations adopted in accordance with Article 148(4) TFEU;

(ii) a summary of the ex ante evaluations of the programmes, or key findings of the ex ante evaluation of the Partnership Agreement, where the latter evaluation is undertaken by the Member State at its own initiative;

(iii) selected thematic objectives, and for each of the selected thematic objectives a summary of the main results expected for each of the ESI Funds;

(iv) the indicative allocation of support by the Union by thematic objective at national level for each of the ESI Funds, as well as the total indicative amount of support envisaged for climate change objectives;

(v) the application of the horizontal principles referred to in Articles 5, 7 and 8 and policy objectives for the implementation of the ESI Funds;

(vi) the list of the programmes under the ERDF, the ESF and the Cohesion Fund, except those under the European territorial cooperation goal, and of the programmes of the EAFRD and the EMFF, with the respective indicative allocations by ESI Fund and by year;

(vii) information on the allocation related to the performance reserve, broken down by ESI Fund and, where appropriate, by category of region, and on the amounts excluded for the purpose of calculating the performance reserve in accordance with Article 20;

(b) arrangements to ensure effective implementation of the ESI Funds, including:

(i) arrangements, in line with the institutional framework of the Member States, that ensure coordination between the ESI Funds and other Union and national funding instruments and with the EIB;

(ii) the information required for ex ante verification of compliance with the rules on additionality as they are defined in Part Three;

(iii) a summary of the assessment of the fulfilment of applicable ex ante conditionalities in accordance with Article 19 and Annex XI at national level and, in the event that the applicable ex ante conditionalities are not fulfilled, of the actions to be taken, the bodies responsible and the timetable for implementation of those actions;

(iv) the methodology and mechanisms to ensure consistency in the functioning of the performance framework in accordance with Article 21;

(v) an assessment of whether there is a need to reinforce the administrative capacity of the authorities involved in the management and control of the programmes and, where appropriate, of beneficiaries as well as, where necessary, a summary of actions to be taken for that purpose;

(vi) a summary of the actions planned in the programmes, including an indicative timetable for achievement of a reduction in the administrative burden on beneficiaries;

(c) arrangements for the partnership principle as referred in Article 5;

(d) an indicative list of the partners referred to in Article 5 and a summary of the actions taken to involve them in accordance with Article 5 and of their role in the preparation of the Partnership Agreement and the progress report as referred to in Article 52.

2. The Partnership Agreement shall also indicate:

(a) an integrated approach to territorial development supported by the ESI Funds or a summary of the integrated approaches to territorial development based on the content of the programmes, setting out:

(i) the arrangements to ensure an integrated approach to the use of the ESI Funds for the territorial development of specific subregional areas, in particular the implementation arrangements for Articles 32, 33 and 36 accompanied by the principles for identifying the urban areas where integrated actions for sustainable urban development are to be implemented;

(ii) the main priority areas for cooperation under the ESI Funds, taking account, where appropriate, of macro- regional strategies and sea basin strategies;

(iii) where appropriate, an integrated approach to addressing the specific needs of geographical areas most affected by poverty or of target groups at highest risk of discrimination or social exclusion, with special regard to marginalised communities, persons with disabilities, the long term unemployed and young people not in employment, education or training;

(iv) where appropriate, an integrated approach to address the demographic challenges of regions or specific needs of geographical areas which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps as referred to in Article 174 TFEU;

(b) arrangements to ensure efficient implementation of the ESI Funds, including an assessment of the existing systems for electronic data exchange, and a summary of the actions planned to gradually permit all exchanges of information between beneficiaries, and authorities responsible for management and control of programmes, to be carried out by electronic data exchange.

8. The UK Partnership Agreement is a high-level strategy. It sets the direction for use of the ESI Funds in the UK in 2014-2020, describing broad priorities and broad arrangements for delivery of the Funds. As such, much of the content of the Partnership Agreement leaves great flexibility for various types of specific interventions and arrangements to be selected later. Therefore, many of the policy positions set out in the Partnership Agreement will not themselves have a specific, measurable impact on individuals and groups with protected characteristics or the need to eliminate discrimination and foster good relations between groups.

9. The specific interventions to be funded using the ESI Funds will be described in detail in the ESI Funds Programmes that set out the more developed strategies, granular priorities and specific activities that will be delivered using the individual ESI Funds in individual UK nations in 2014-2020. These Programmes will be accompanied by separate Equality

Impact Assessments.

10. An initial screening exercise was conducted to determine which elements of the Partnership Agreement set out under Article 15 of the Common Provisions Regulation constitute policy decisions that set direction in a way that materially reduces flexibility for underpinning Programmes and therefore may have an impact in relation to the three pillars of the Equality Act. These policy decisions, despite being at high-level, have significant implications for the range of specific interventions that will be set out in Programmes:
 - selected thematic objectives, and for each of the selected thematic objectives a summary of the main results expected for each of the ESI Funds;
 - the indicative allocation of support by the Union by thematic objective at national level for each of the ESI Funds, as well as the total indicative amount of support envisaged for climate change objectives;
 - the application of the horizontal principles referred to in Articles 5, 7 and 8 and policy objectives for the implementation of the ESI Funds;
 - arrangements for the partnership principle as referred in Article 5;
 - the arrangements to ensure an integrated approach to the use of the ESI Funds for the territorial development of specific sub-regional areas, in particular the implementation arrangements for Articles 32, 33 and 36 accompanied by the principles for identifying the urban areas where integrated actions for sustainable urban development are to be implemented;
 - where appropriate, an integrated approach to addressing the specific needs of geographical areas most affected by poverty or of target groups at highest risk of discrimination or social exclusion, with special regard to marginalised communities, persons with disabilities, the long term unemployed and young people not in employment, education or training.
11. The initial screening exercise concluded that the elements of the Partnership Agreement set out under Article 15 of the Common Provisions Regulation but not listed at paragraph 10 above are either unlikely to have a significantly noticeable impact in relation to any of the three pillars of the Equality Act, or will not be defined in sufficient detail in the Partnership Agreement for a likely impact to be evaluated as part of this analysis.
12. This Equality Impact Assessment is therefore concerned with the elements listed at paragraph 10 above.
13. The Partnership Agreement document contains the details of the geographical allocations of the ESI Funds across the Devolved Administrations and to Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas in England. A summary of the equality impact of the Government allocations decisions is therefore included in this Equality Impact Assessment. However, the detailed equality analysis of the Government's allocation decisions is set out in a separate Equality Impact Assessment.

Description of the policy

14. The ESI Funds exist to support the Europe 2020 aims of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth across the European Union. The ESI Funds are programmed in seven-year cycles which coincide with the EU budget cycles. A breakdown of the ESI Funds allocated to the UK in 2014-2020 is as follows:

ESI Fund	2014-20 Allocation
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	€10.3billion
European Social Fund (ESF)	
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)	€3.5 billion
European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)	Tbc

15. In October 2011, the European Commission announced their proposals for the 2014-2020 ESI Funds. These proposals contained several new concepts that were not features of the ESI Funds in previous programming periods, including that each Member State should prepare a Partnership Agreement to set out how the ESI Funds will be coordinated to contribute to Europe 2020 and domestic goals. To allow the Funds to be coordinated across policy priorities, the European Commission's proposals included a 'Common Strategic Framework' of eleven thematic objectives covering all possible investment under the four ESI Funds. The Commission's proposals also included regulatory minimum levels of spending for some of these thematic objectives.
16. In December 2012, the European Commission published its 'UK Position Paper' which set out its views on the priorities for ESI Funds in the UK in 2014-2020. As Government has prepared the overall strategy set out in the draft Partnership Agreement it has had regard to the priorities identified by the Commission.
17. Government has prepared its draft Partnership Agreement with a wide range of stakeholders, engaged through a variety of mechanisms. The Partnership Agreement has been developed in parallel with the negotiations over the content of the European regulations governing use of the ESI Funds.
18. Responsibility for delivery of the ESI Funds in the UK is devolved. The structure of the Partnership Agreement document reflects this fact. The first chapter describes the challenges and priorities for the ESI Funds at high-level across the whole of the UK. Subsequent chapters set out how each devolved administration will focus on the UK funding priorities in the context of the specific challenges they face on their territories. The UK-wide and devolved administration chapters each follow the structure of the Partnership Agreement template provided by the European Commission.
19. The Common Provisions, ERDF, ESF and EAFRD Regulations were formally adopted on 22 December 2013. The EMFF Regulations will come into force in April 2014. The Common Provisions Regulation includes

requirement that the Partnership Agreement must be submitted to the Commission before 22 April 2014. The Commission will assess the Partnership Agreement and make observations within three months of the date of submission. The Member State will negotiate the Partnership Agreement before it is adopted formally by means of a Commission implementing act.

20. If a member state changes the Partnership Agreement after it has been formally adopted, then the revised Partnership Agreement will have to be renegotiated with and reapproved by the European Commission.
21. As mentioned above, the Partnership Agreement shall be implemented via the underpinning Programmes for the ESI Funds. The Programmes are developed and delivered by the Managing Authorities for the ESI funds. Managing Authorities manage the day-to-day administration of the Funds, including administering programmes and making payments to individual projects (payments are subsequently reimbursed to Managing Authorities from the European Commission).

The evidence base

22. The following characteristics are protected characteristics under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED):
 - age;
 - disability;
 - gender reassignment;
 - marriage and civil partnership (section 149 (1) (a) only);
 - pregnancy and maternity;
 - race;
 - religion or belief;
 - sex; and
 - sexual orientation.
23. This analysis considers in turn each of the elements/functions of the Partnership Agreement listed at paragraph 10 (those functions that may have an impact on equality issues). It considers whether decisions by Government in setting the overall strategy for these elements may have an overall positive or negative impact on groups with the protected characteristics listed at paragraph 22 above, or could have a significant impact on need to eliminate discrimination and foster good relations between groups.
24. The analysis is predominantly qualitative because the Partnership Agreement does not contain numerical data on estimated outputs/results from the ESI Funds Programmes in 2014-2020 and does not show how funding will be split between the various types of activity that could be supported under the main thematic objectives for the ESI Funds.
25. The analysis is high-level because the Partnership Agreement sets the

high-level strategy and direction for the Programmes – as described above, it leaves great flexibility for later decisions on specific types of intervention in the Programmes and therefore around the potential impact in relation to the three pillars of the Equality Act. The Programmes and projects beneath them will therefore be subject to further equality analysis.

26. This Equality Impact Assessment shows that BIS has had due regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act in the preparation of the Partnership Agreement. This is necessary so as to allow the Department to decide whether or not (and if so to what extent) modifications or amendments to the proposed Partnership Agreement ought to be made to address any potential adverse impact/s should the Assessment conclude that such impacts are likely to occur under the proposed policy framework...

Selection of thematic objectives and main results

27. The thematic objectives and underpinning investment priorities and measures for each Fund, as defined in the fund-specific regulations, are set out in full at Annex A.

28. The table below sets out the selection of thematic objectives in the UK's nations under which ESI Funds will be invested in 2014-2020.

Thematic objective from the ESI Funds “Common Strategic Framework”	England	Scotland	Wales	N. Ireland	Commission’s Position Paper	Country-specific recommendation
1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x
3. Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x
6. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
7. Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures	✓	x	✓	x	x	x
8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Thematic objective from the ESI Funds “Common Strategic Framework”	England	Scotland	Wales	N. Ireland	Commission’s Position Paper	Country-specific recommendation
9. Promoting social inclusion and, combating poverty and any discrimination	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10. Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and an efficient public administration	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

29. Qualitative analysis shows that investments under thematic objectives 8, 9 and 10 are most likely to have a positive or negative impact on groups with protected characteristics. Investments other than under thematic objectives may have an impact on protected groups, but the Partnership Agreement does not define specific funding objectives in sufficient detail for any clear positive or negative impacts on protected groups to be determined. This detail will be included in the Equality Impact Assessments in relation to the Programmes.

Specific target group for some interventions under employment, social inclusion and skills thematic objectives	Short description of needs
Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET	Employability and skills, especially numeracy and literacy skills; certain groups have particularly severe barriers such as care leavers, offenders and those with learning difficulties and disabilities
People aged 50 and over	Need to update skills to re-engage with or stay in labour market
Disabled people	Employability and skills, and support with the transition to work
Ethnic minority groups	Employability and skills; English language barriers in some groups
Women	Employability where women face specific barriers to participation, for example in entering sectors or occupation where they are under-represented

30. As all of the UK’s nations are planning to make investments under thematic objectives 8, 9 and 10 and the European Commission regard these as priority thematic objectives for the UK, the selection of thematic objectives in the Partnership Agreement should have a positive impact on groups with protected characteristics. (In theory, the draft Partnership Agreement could have been used to exclude some of these thematic objectives before development of the underpinning Programmes, resulting in neutral or even negative impact.)

31. The table below sets out the main results sought from investments under

thematic objectives 8, 9 and 10 at UK-level, as identified in the Partnership Agreement.

Thematic objective from the ESI Funds “Common Strategic Framework”	Main results across the UK
8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	Increase employment levels, with a particular focus on young people not in education, employment or training and those people at a disadvantage in the labour market.
9. Promoting social inclusion and, combating poverty and any discrimination	Increase employment levels with a particular focus on those people at a disadvantage in the labour market.
10. Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning	Increase the skills of those at a disadvantage in the labour market and increase the productivity of those in work through improving their skill levels

32. The main results for these three thematic objectives shows that within the range of possibilities for funding under each thematic objective the Government proposes to focus on those at a disadvantage in the labour market, advancing equality of opportunity and helping to eliminate discrimination between persons who share the protected characteristics listed in the table below paragraph 29 above and persons who do not share them.

33. In conclusion, the Partnership Agreement sets a permissive framework which does not limit the scope of the ESI Funds to contribute significantly to advancing equality of opportunity and antidiscrimination. Indeed, the high-level strategy in the Partnership Agreement has prominent objectives around promoting equality of opportunity and antidiscrimination.

Indicative allocations of ESI Funds across thematic objectives (and split between ESF and ERDF)

34. As described above, investments under thematic objectives 8, 9 and 10 are most likely to have a positive impact in relation to the pillars of the Equality Act. These three thematic objectives are primarily funded through the ESF. The ESI Funds regulations set a minimum level of ESF spending at Member State level. The Devolved Administrations and LEP areas in England were given combined allocations of ERDF and ESF and asked to consider how they would split those allocations between ERDF and ESF to best fit local priorities, having regard to the minimum proportion of ESF spend required for the UK to meet its minimum ESF spending requirement. The proposed ESF/ERDF split across the UK’s nations is set out in the table below.

	Proposed spending for 2014-20 (€, current prices)		% ESF
	ERDF	ESF	
England and Gibraltar	3,633,943,618	3,313,748,375	47.70%
Wales	1,406,822,701	1,005,652,552	41.69%
Scotland	476,788,330	417,839,673	46.71%
Northern Ireland	308,029,635	205,353,090	40.00%
Total	5,825,584,284	4,942,593,690	45.90%

35. ESF spending levels in 2007-2013 funding period were:

	Spending in 2007-13 (€, current prices)		% ESF
	ERDF	ESF	
England and Gibraltar	3,288,536,150	3,089,886,379	48.44%
Wales	1,322,829,910	897,542,912	40.42%
Scotland	497,820,236	322,071,137	39.28%
Northern Ireland	306,833,439	165,777,300	35.08%
Total	5,416,019,735	4,475,277,728	45.24%

36. The total ESF spend in the UK in 2007-2013 is likely to be €4.5 billion. The total ESF spend proposed in the UK in 2014-2020 is €4.9 billion. This overall increase relative to current spending levels signals a potential positive impact in relation to the three pillars of the Equality Act.

37. While the proposed total levels of ESF spending in 2014-2020 could have been higher, the Devolved Administrations and LEPs have had due regard to the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty when developing their spending proposals and resulting ESF/ERDF split (as set out in detail under the sections below).

38. The ESI Funds regulations set out requirements for 'thematic concentration' of funding in order to avoid the ESI funds being spread too thinly across too many priorities. These requirements take the form of minimum spending levels against certain thematic objectives (see below).

Thematic Objective	Earmarking requirements by region type		
	Less Developed	Transition Regions	More Developed
1. Innovation	At least 50% ERDF must be spent on these 4 objectives	At least 60% ERDF must be spent on these 4 objectives	At least 80% ERDF must be spent on these 4 objectives
2. ICT			
3. Small and medium sized enterprises Competitiveness			
4. Low Carbon			
5. Climate Change Adaptation	At least 12% ERDF on this objective.	At least 15% ERDF on this objective.	At least 20% ERDF on this objective.
6. Environmental Protection	No spending minimum		
7. Sustainable Transport	No spending minimum		
8. Employment	At least 60% of ESF allocation per programme ² on up to 4 investment priorities within these 4 thematic objectives.	At least 70 % of ESF allocation per programme on up to 4 investment priorities within these 4 thematic objectives.	At least 80 % of ESF allocation per programme on up to 4 investment priorities within these 4 thematic objectives.
10. Skills			
9. Social Inclusion (At least 20% of ESF allocation must be dedicated to this thematic objective but ERDF expenditure can count towards this total.)			
11. Institutional Capacity			

39. These regulatory requirements have the effect of immediately deprioritising some thematic objectives (Climate Change Adaptation, Environmental Protection and Sustainable Transport).

40. The total allocations across the thematic objectives for the UK are as follows:

² i.e. at the level of the England Growth Programme.

Thematic objective from the ESI Funds “Common Strategic Framework”	ERDF (€m)	ESF (€m)	EAFRD (€m)	EMFF (€m)	TOTAL
1.Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	1,304	0	14	TBC	1,481
2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies	280	0	7	TBC	311
3. Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises	1,904	0	231	TBC	2,397
4. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors	1,195	0	14	TBC	1,270
5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management	90	0	39	TBC	159
6. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	166	0	2,246	TBC	4,236
7. Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures	431	0	3	TBC	436
8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	167	1,480	0	TBC	1,820
9. Promoting social inclusion and, combating poverty and any discrimination	92	1,271	43	TBC	1,430
10. Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning	0	2,027	5	TBC	1,282
11. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and an efficient public administration	0	0	0	TBC	0

41. Across thematic objectives 8, 9 and 10, the highest priority for spending is skills, then employment and finally social inclusion. At the level of the Partnership Agreement it is not possible to determine which thematic objective might have the biggest potential positive impact in relation to the pillars of the Equality Act. This will be determined later in selection of specific interventions in the Programmes, which will be accompanied by more detailed Equality Impact Assessments.

42. In conclusion, the total amount of funding available for thematic objectives most likely to have a positive impact in relation to the pillars of the Equality Duty will be increased relative to 2007-2013 levels.

The application of the horizontal principles

43. Article 7 of the Common Provisions Regulation sets out the horizontal principle of promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination.

Article 7 of the Common Provision Regulation

Promotion of equality between men and women and non- discrimination

The Member States and the Commission shall ensure that equality between men and women and the integration of gender perspective are taken into account and promoted throughout the preparation and implementation of programmes, including in relation to monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

The Member States and the Commission shall take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation and implementation of programmes. In particular, accessibility for persons with disabilities shall be taken into account throughout the preparation and implementation of programmes.

44. The Partnership Agreement sets out the general approach at UK-level and within the UK's nations for ensuring that equality between men and women and non-discrimination will be promoted in the ESI Funds programmes in 2014-2020. This material is reproduced below.

UK-wide principles

45. When the Managing Authorities across the UK develop their Programmes for the ESI funds they will be undertaking regulatory functions and will therefore have to comply with the Equality Act and have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Partnership Agreement also sets out principles adopted by the UK Government and Devolved Administrations to further integrate promotion of equality into the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation actions of all the ESI Funds programmes for 2014-2020:

- no beneficiaries are excluded from participation in the programmes on the grounds of their protected characteristics;
- the needs of all potential beneficiaries are considered at project design stage in order that the service is appropriately delivered;
- all physical regeneration, i.e. construction of new buildings and upgrading of existing premises, meets minimum accessibility requirements (in line with the Equality Act, Part M of Building Regulations and recommended British Standards for accessibility);
- services are responsive to the needs of all communities and under-represented groups;
- support is targeted towards under-represented communities where relevant; and
- responsiveness to, and inclusiveness of, under-represented groups in delivery and management.

46. In practice, these principles will be embedded through the following actions:

- Managing Authorities will consider equality during the preparation of the new programmes, including the analysis underpinning the programmes and the ex-ante evaluations;
- During the implementation stage, ESI Funds Programme Monitoring Committees (PMCs) will include representatives from bodies responsible for promoting equality. Each PMC will have an equality champion;
- Managing Authorities will build on good practice in the 2007-2013 programme period in using the investment application and appraisal, investment management, progress reporting, monitoring and evaluation processes to monitor equality issues at project level;
- Managing Authorities will work with local partners and national representative bodies to bring forward specialist provision of targeted support for those facing multiple barriers to engagement with or progression in the labour market;
- Managing Authorities will give implementation staff appropriate equality training, with advice and guidance obtained where necessary from equality bodies or experts;
- Managing Authorities will provide equality guidance to projects, including lessons learnt from other projects;
- Managing Authorities will signpost beneficiaries and support providers to equality advice;
- Managing Authorities' data collection and monitoring systems will gather information, as set out in Fund specific regulations, in order to help monitor the extent to which ESI Funds programmes support men, women, the disabled and relevant disadvantaged groups participating in them.
- Draft Programmes will be subject to proportionate Equality Impact Assessments; and
- Managing Authorities, Programme Monitoring Committees and evaluation experts will embed equalities impact into the evaluation strategies for the ESI Funds programmes.

47. BIS will have a role in ensuring that the UK's Managing Authorities adhere to these principles and undertake these actions through coordination of UK-wide performance reporting.

England

48. The UK Chapter describes how domestic legislation in the UK will ensure ESI Funds will be delivered in way which promotes equality. It also sets out some specific actions which Managing Authorities will take in order to ensure the domestic legislation is transposed into ESI Funds delivery. This section provides further detail on additional considerations around equality in England.

49. DWP commissioned an evaluation of the mainstreaming of Gender Equality (EO) and Equal Opportunities (EO) within the ESF in England in

20103. The key findings of the final report [ref] were:

- GE and EO legislation are valuable tools in the promotion of equalities, placing equalities issues high on the agenda of publicly funded bodies;
- ESF stakeholders promote equality in line with their public duties but improvements in the quality of GE and EO policies should be encouraged;
- Training on GE and EO for staff at all levels is highly desirable so that they can support and advise providers in mainstreaming GE and EO;
- There were some concerns from niche providers that the dual approach was under threat from an increase in prime contracting;
- Outreach, especially via community organisations, to disadvantaged groups is an important tool for meeting targets.

50. The ESF Programme for 2014-2020 (and the related ex-ante evaluation for the programme) will consider the relevant lessons learned from the evaluation and the current ESF programme's dual mainstreaming approach (equalities are promoted as a cross-cutting theme at project level and through specific projects for target groups). The next ESF programme will operate through a number of funding mechanisms in addition to co-financing. This approach will still allow for niche projects and bottom-up interventions to be supported and it is hoped that this will strengthen the dual approach to promotion of equality between men and women, non-discrimination and accessibility.

51. The ERDF Programme for 2014-2020 will also promote equal opportunities and diversity, including through positive action where this is appropriate and meets legal conditions. The ERDF programme may support the following activities to promote equality between men and women, non-discrimination and accessibility:

- Ensuring that employment opportunities created as a result of investment in innovation are offered in an inclusive fashion;
- Encouraging and supporting employers to adopt and apply diversity and family-friendly policies;
- Stimulating greater interest in starting businesses among young people and communities where there is limited enterprise culture;
- Ensuring that promotion of enterprise and business support is relevant to all sections of the community and takes account of any language and cultural barriers;
- Engaging women, under-represented and excluded groups with enterprise;
- Engaging women, under-represented and excluded groups with business finance;
- Ensuring wide accessibility, including targeting of hard-to-reach groups, where the Programme supports training and other Human Resource Development actions.

3

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/194251/667sum.pdf

52. The integration of equality between men and women, non-discrimination and accessibility will be the subject of monitoring and thematic evaluation over the life of the next ERDF Programme.
53. The delivery of ERDF and ESF together through the Growth Programme in 2014-2020 will allow increased exploitation of synergies between the Funds. The delivery model should encourage some projects with a holistic approach at local level, with business development/creation facilitated by ERDF aligned closely with ESF provision of employment and skills programmes. This creation of effective labour market pathways is of particular relevance to those facing inequality on the basis of their protected characteristics.
54. The Rural Development Programme in England for 2014-2020 will support equality between men and women, non-discrimination and accessibility by promoting schemes amongst target groups. In particular, equality issues relating to access to the countryside will be explored as part of the criteria and design of environmental land management, Growth Programme and LEADER schemes. Equalities and distributional, as well as non-economic social impacts, will be considered as part of on-going monitoring and evaluation of the programme.
55. In order to inform selection of priorities within the next Rural Development Programme, Defra's conducted an assessment of the equality impact of potential spending decisions in the programme. The assessment shows that those with protected characteristics are impacted to the same extent as those without protected characteristics. This reflects the nature of the Rural Development Programme – it is open to everyone who meets the relevant criteria and focuses largely on public goods rather than delivery of citizen-targeted public services. Defra will update the Equality Assessment for the next Rural Development Programme prior to submission of programme to the Commission in 2014.

Scotland

56. The Scottish Programmes will have a “twin-track” or dual approach to promoting and mainstreaming equality, including gender equality, non-discrimination and accessibility by combining scope for *positive action* through discrete projects which have a focus on addressing inequalities; and *mainstreaming* – a requirement that all funded projects evidence they address equality, non-discrimination and accessibility in their project activity. Mainstreaming involves developing operating methods, procedures and practices to ensure funded activities promote equality.
57. In addition to the promotion of positive action projects which specifically tackle inequality, discrimination and accessibility in the labour market, entrepreneurship, R&D and training, an equality perspective will be mainstreamed into programme planning, preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

58. An equal opportunities working group is being established for the 2014-2020 programmes, and this group will bring together representatives of key equality organisations, project sponsors with experience in mainstreaming equality and tackling discrimination and accessibility issues and also staff from the Scottish Managing Authorities for structural funds and rural development. This group will help to develop a mainstreaming strategy and guidance for the 2014-2020 programmes, in conjunction with evidence from evaluations of mainstreaming equality in the current programmes.

Wales

59. The integration of equal opportunities, gender mainstreaming and the Welsh Language (which the Welsh Government also includes in the Equal Opportunities cross-cutting theme) is important not only for legal reasons, but also because overcoming inequalities between men and women in the labour market contributes to the overall effectiveness of the activity delivered by the ESI Funds. Also, tackling the barriers which many individuals experience in accessing and retaining employment are critical if the benefits of the ESI Funds are to be spread equitably across the people and communities within the region. This means equal opportunities (including Welsh Language) and gender mainstreaming will be important factors when designing programmes and selecting operations. This will be supported through several actions including:

- Equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming targets will be set at the level of activities to be supported by the Programmes, providing an important driver to encourage operations to address the Programmes equality objectives;
- Equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming assessment at all stages of development of operations;
- On-going specialist advice will be made available to operations by Welsh Government and through arrangements being developed for the implementation of operations. A key objective will be to provide the specialist input at an early stage in the process to maximise take-up of the opportunities to promote gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities;
- A programme of awareness raising and training will be provided to Welsh Government staff and beneficiaries on how to integrate gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities objectives;
- Activity level guidance will be prepared together with best practice case study examples that will provide specific information on how beneficiaries can address the gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities within their operation plans;
- Regular monitoring of progress, allowing for early intervention if necessary - Specialist CCT Advisers will attend inception and quarterly review meetings, where they will review CCT activity and support beneficiaries to meet their CCT commitments. This will also include the monitoring of CCT indicators and targets, including forecasts to ensure

operations are on track to meet commitments. Beneficiaries will be required to submit quarterly progress reports, detailing activity which is contributing to the CCTs;

- Update reports will be provided to a range of stakeholders on a regular basis. These will include an annual report on each of the CCTs presented to the PMC for scrutiny regarding progress; Annual Implementation Reports will contain sections detailing the CCT integration and progress. There is also a requirement to report annually as part of the Welsh Governments Strategic Equality Action Plan; Sustainable Development Plan; Tackling Poverty Action Plan; and Welsh Language Plan;
- Update reports to PMC and other stakeholders; and
- Welsh Government will encourage key gender mainstreaming, equality and social inclusion organisations to be involved in an attempt to establish an effective network of specialist support.

60. The Welsh Government has a legal duty to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment where the implementation of a plan or programme is likely to have a significant impact on people with protected characteristics identified under the 2010 Equality Act.

Northern Ireland

61. The principle of Equality is well embedded in Northern Ireland law and policy. Legislation outlawing discrimination in grounds of sex and religious belief and political opinion in the areas of employment and training has been in place since 1976. These provisions have been extended on a number of occasions since and have been added to in terms of legislation outlawing discrimination on grounds of race and ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation and age. The equality protections in Northern Ireland are more extensive than those in many European countries in that they not only require duty bearers (employers and service providers) to avoid discrimination but also require the positive promotion of equality – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act⁴ and the Fair Employment and Treatment Order⁵ require public authorities to promote equality of opportunity:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

62. This Act establishes an Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. All Northern Ireland departments are required to publish their Equality policies and to report annually to the Equality Commission on their implementation. For those departments which act as programme authorities, this report includes a section on the implementation of the programme concerned.

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/47/section/75>

⁵ <http://www.equalityni.org/archive/word/finalArt55270203.doc>

63. Representatives from the Equality Commission are represented on the Consultative Partnership Group advising on the preparations for ESI Funds Programmes 2014-2020 and are expected to be represented on the Monitoring Committees for the programmes, which shall establish working groups to further horizontal principles in the implementation of the Programme. It has not yet been decided whether there will be a single Working Group to cover Promotion of Equality, non-discrimination and accessibility across all programmes or liaison between discrete working groups to achieve the same result.
64. As part of the ex-ante Evaluation process, Programmes undergo screening for Equality Impact Assessment and where appropriate, full assessment. The outcome of screening and assessment will be reported when completed in the section summarising ex-ante evaluations of the Programme.
65. The Executive's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society was further articulated in the *Together: Building a United Community Strategy* published on 22 May 2013.
66. Building a united community based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and the promotion of reconciliation is not only important for a society moving from conflict and division but is vital to shaping a modern, diverse and sustainable community which is equipped for the future.
67. To reinforce the importance of this Strategy, good relations principles will be mainstreamed into everything that government does in Northern Ireland and this process will be constantly monitored by a ministerial panel. The delivery of European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 will contribute to *Together: Building a United Community* and be monitored for this purpose.
68. In the Northern Ireland Programme for Government (PfG) 2011-2015, the Northern Ireland Executive has reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring that no section of the community is left behind; equality of opportunity, fairness, inclusion and the promotion of good relations are cornerstones of our PfG priorities.
69. In addition, promoting gender equality is one of the Government's priorities and the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006-2016 provides a policy framework for our work to mainstream gender equality and tackle gender inequalities. More information on the Strategy can be found at the webpage⁶.
70. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is an independent public body established under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Equality

⁶ <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/equality-and-strategy/equality-human-rights-social-change/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy-2006-2016.htm>

Commission aims to advance equality, promote equality of opportunity, encourage good relations and challenge discrimination through promotion, advice and enforcement.

71. The Commission's duties and functions are set out in the legislation for which it has responsibility. All Northern Ireland employers with 11 or more employees, each working 16 or more hours per week in Northern Ireland must register with the Equality Commission and:

- Monitor the community background composition of applicants and employees;
- Conduct periodic reviews of the composition of the workforce and employment practices ("Article 55 Reviews");
- Have regard to the Fair Employment code of practice when conducting these reviews; and
- Take affirmative action, where it is reasonable and appropriate to do so, and consider setting goals and timetables.

72. Employers with less than 11 employees seeking project support through structural funds will be required to have an equality policy and sign up to the equality conditions within their Letter of Offer.

73. Under the umbrella of the EU Programme Monitoring Committee, an Equality Working Group covering the 2007 – 2013 Peace, Interreg, Competitiveness and Employment Programmes was set up. The Equality Working Group recently commissioned its advisor, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, to produce a paper on the current practices surrounding the embedding and monitoring of equality practices in the 2007-2013 Programmes. The aim of this exercise was to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the current procedures, and, through discussion with the group, identify lessons learned that could inform the next round of EU Programmes. Work has not as yet been finalised on this. If available it is intended to provide more detail on this work in our various programmes.

74. The Northern Ireland ESF Programme will adopt a dual approach to gender equality and promoting equal opportunities. The Programme may fund specific activities which target women and other disadvantaged groups and will integrate equal opportunities into every stage of the programme as a whole. Equality considerations will be integrated into:

- the programme design and development (for example, through support with childcare for programme participants);
- promotion of the programme;
- the application/procurement process;
- monitoring; and
- evaluation.

75. The Northern Ireland ESF programme will operate within the framework of EU and regional legislation on non-discrimination, gender equality and

equal opportunities. The programme will be compliant with and supportive of the Women's Charter (2010) and will contribute to a number of thematic priorities contained in the Strategy for Equality between Men and Women 2010-2015. This strategy builds on the experience of the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men (2006). Of particular relevance in the new strategy is priority 1 – equal economic independence. Through the ESF programme, we will help and support more women to access the labour market, thereby addressing this important priority.

76. The Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government (PfG) 2011-2015 sets out our intention to deliver a range of measures to tackle social exclusion through the Delivering Social Change Framework.

77. The Executive's responsibilities to deliver the commitments in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have been acknowledged and we committed to measuring the impact of our efforts on longer term trends.

78. The Executive is committed to addressing and removing those obstacles and to ensuring that people with disabilities have equality of opportunity and equality of treatment that those without a disability enjoy.

79. The Executive's "A strategy to improve the lives of people with disabilities 2012-2015"⁷ acknowledges that people with disabilities deserve to be treated equally alongside those without disabilities. This strategy acknowledges that women and children especially face particular challenges and have needs which have previously been overlooked.

80. The purpose of the strategy is to:

- Set out a high level policy framework to give coherence and guidance to Northern Ireland Department's activities across general and disability specific areas of policy;
- Drive improved performance of service delivery leading to improved outcomes for persons with a disability;
- Increase the understanding and importance of the needs of persons with a disability and ensure these needs are recognised when policy is developed or when implementing initiatives which impact on disable people; and
- Improve the opportunities for people with disabilities to contribute across all areas of society.

Arrangements for the partnership principle

81. The Common Provisions Regulation requires that the Government must organise a partnership with *inter alia* bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination and that these bodies shall be involved in the preparation of the Partnership Agreement and progress reports and throughout the preparation and implementation

⁷ <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/disability-strategy-2012-2015-revised-010313.doc>

of Operational Programmes.

82. As the specific priorities for the ESI Funds were identified by the UK Government for England and the Devolved Administrations for their territories, engagement of partners has taken place at national level rather than on a UK-wide basis. The UK Government and Devolved Administrations have consulted widely and deeply in development of their priorities and used a variety of different mechanisms. This partnership working is described in the chapters of the UK's nations in the Partnership Agreement. Material relevant to engagement of bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination is reproduced below.

England

83. In England, the majority of the ESI Funds have been delegated to LEP areas. LEPs and local partners have developed ESI Funds Strategies for use of their allocations in their areas. The guidance given to LEPs for development of their Strategies told LEPs to have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty in development of their Strategies as they are advising Managing Authorities (which are fully bound by these duties) on how best to exercise/implement public functions.

84. LEPs were told to include in their Strategies

- a commitment to promoting equality and combating discrimination in line with domestic legislation and European Regulations;
- proportionate evidence around equalities issues in the Local Enterprise Partnership area and how the Local Enterprise Partnerships' investment decisions will impact on those issues; and
- evidence that partners with expertise in equality have helped prepare the investment strategy and will continue to assist throughout the implementation and monitoring of programmes.

85. The ESI Funds Growth Programme Board for England was established in September 2013 to oversee development of the parts of the next ESI funds programmes which have been devolved to LEPs. The Board has representatives from Government, the European Commission, local government, LEPs, higher and further education establishments, environmental groups, the voluntary sector and equalities bodies. The involvement of communities and equalities bodies shows how arrangements set out in the Partnership agreement take account of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Scotland

86. In Scotland, the Partnership Agreement has been developed with direct involvement from a wide range of stakeholders ensuring input from those with interest and involvement in particular funds and those with a broader policy perspective.

87. A number of technical assistance projects were approved that fed directly into the development work which covered particular policy areas such as gender equality, third sector involvement, Roma Inclusion, lessons learned in the Highlands and Islands and Community Planning Partnership Management systems. These were all directly monitored by stakeholders.
88. The Scottish Government undertook a consultation on their chapter of the Partnership Agreement, in conjunction with the Programme consultations on each fund, during May to early July 2013 through roadshows and websites. 235 responses across both consultations were received, including some that called for the text to be more explicit about how youth employment, health, inequalities and active ageing issues will be tackled. These responses have been carefully considered and the text amended to reflect them.

Wales

89. In Wales, the 2014-20 Programmes have been developed through extensive engagement with external partners and stakeholders. This has involved a number of Advisory Groups and expert workstreams/working groups, reflecting a full range of stakeholder interests from the public, private and third sectors, together with appropriate gender and geographical balance and with equality and environmental interests represented.
90. Members of all these groups have advised on the development of the new programmes and have consulted and communicated with their constituencies, thus broadening discussion and sharing information. The interests of disadvantaged groups, including those with disabilities, are represented on the European Programmes Partnership Forum - the key external stakeholder group for the development of the new programmes - by the Wales Commissioner, Equality and Human Rights Commission.
91. A full public consultation - 'Wales and the EU: Partnership for Jobs and Growth' and "Rural Development Plan 2014 – 2020: Next Steps" - was launched in January 2013 to seek views from partners on the Welsh Governments proposals for Structural Funds and the RDP, and four joint consultation events were held across Wales to reflect the opportunities for closer integration and harmonisation of these Programmes. The consultation ran until 23 April 2013 with over 200 responses received across the sectors. Feedback was extremely positive with support for the proposed investment proposals leading to only relatively minor adjustments to the Structural Fund Programmes.

Northern Ireland

92. The Programmes and Northern Ireland's contribution to the UK Partnership Agreement are being developed in accordance with the principles of partnership.
93. At consultation stage, a Consultative Partnership Group was established

to help guide the preparation of the:

- Northern Ireland contribution to the UK Partnership Agreement; and
- ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes.

94. The decision was taken to invite organisations to nominate based on membership of the current Programme Monitoring Committee for Competitiveness and Employment 2007-2013 with representatives of local government, Environment Bodies, Equality Commission, Education, Higher Education, Voluntary and Community sector, Trades Unions, Business, the Agri-Rural sector and the Energy sector. This membership encompasses the partners listed in the draft regulation and covers sectors where representative nominating bodies are well-established.

95. Additional partnership through consultation has included a high-level informal consultation on priorities for European Funding organised in 2012⁸ and public consultations on the priorities to be addressed in the Northern Ireland ESI Funds programmes between July and October 2013⁹.

Arrangements to ensure an integrated approach to territorial development

96. ESI Funds have been allocated to Devolved Administrations and LEPs in England so that they might develop integrated approaches to territorial development on their respective territories. As mentioned above, the ESI Funds allocations decisions are subject of a separate Equalities Impact Assessment¹⁰. The key findings of this assessment are that:

- the proposed funding decision does not favour or negatively impact any particular group with protected characteristics covered by the Public Sector Equality Duty, except in the case of disability;
- in terms of disability, there is a small positive bias towards disabled people within 'More Developed' regions (areas with a GDP per capita above 90% of the EU27 average). However, this positive effect will potentially help to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and help to foster good relations between disabled and non-disabled persons;
- having had due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, as required by Section 149(1)(a) of the 2010 Act, generally any disparities between outcomes for particular protected groups are too small to be material; to the extent that a material correlation is identified in relation to disability in the More Developed category, this is a positive correlation and therefore not something that should alter the proposed funding decision;

⁸ http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/index/finance/european-funding/content_european_funding-future-funding/report_of_reflections_exercise.htm

⁹ http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/index/finance/european-funding/content_european_funding-future-funding/consultation_on_operational_programmes.htm

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-uk-proposals>

- in terms of Section 149(1)(b) of the 2010 Act, there is no adverse impact on any protected group, the proposed funding decision is neutral in advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share the relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

97. By taking proper account of the analysis contained in the Equality Impact Assessment for the allocations decisions, Government has demonstrated that it has shown due regard to its duties under all the relevant sections of the 2010 Act.

Addressing the specific needs of target groups at highest risk of discrimination or social exclusion

98. The Common Provisions Regulation requires the Partnership Agreement to set out a description of the approach to address the specific needs of target groups at highest risk of discrimination or social exclusion. This material, and tables summarising the roles and contributions of ESI Funds for specific target groups, is set out in the Partnership Agreement in the chapters of the UK's nations and is reproduced below.

England

99. The target groups who are at highest risk of discrimination or social exclusion include:

- People in households where no one works. Workless households are more likely to be in poverty and dependent on benefit;
- Long-term unemployed people;
- Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET. At age 16 4.6% are NEET, at age 17 6.0%, at age 18 13.8% and at age 19-24 18.2%. Young people who are particularly likely to be marginalised including care leavers, offenders and those learning difficulties or disabilities;
- Disabled people. They are more than twice as likely not to hold any formal qualifications as are non-disabled people. Around half of disabled people of working age are not in employment;
- Certain ethnic minority groups. People of Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic origin have the lowest employment rates;
- Offenders and ex-offenders. Almost half of prisoners have no qualifications and 13% have never had a job;
- Older people aged 50 and above who are unemployed or inactive and need to update their skills to re-engage in the labour market; and
- People with multiple disadvantages. About 11% of adults in England experience, at any one time, three or more of six areas of disadvantage (education, health, employment, income, social support, housing and local environment).

100. There are people in these groups across the whole of England. The highest concentrations are urban areas in the north and midlands of

England and in inner London.

101. The ESIF funds will aim to tackle the root causes of poverty and barriers that prevent these groups from entering the labour market and accessing employment opportunities. This will primarily be financed through the ESF which will support integrated packages of support tailored to the needs of disadvantaged people in local areas. Each person needs to be treated as an individual who may face a number of disadvantages or barriers. There is no single model for helping all people who face a particular disadvantage. The most effective interventions will often be designed at a local level.

102. Integrated approaches will be able to include: early intervention to tackle problems before they become entrenched; thorough needs assessment so that effective tailored support can be offered; outreach activities; employability support and skills training; and community-based provision. They will tackle a range of issues and barriers including: caring responsibilities; debt; digital exclusion; drug and alcohol dependency; poor basic skills; as well as life skills; lack of motivation and confidence; family, parenting and relationship problems; health and well-being problems; homelessness; learning difficulties and disabilities; offending; and access to transport, a key issue in rural areas. Activities should involve close coordination between local services and align with or enhance with other national or local provision.

Specific target group or geographical area	Short description of needs	ESIF Funds that will be used	Main types of planned actions which are part of the integrated approach	Programme
People in households where no one works.	Various barriers to work, especially employability and skills	ESF	Employment, skills and social inclusion actions.	ESF England
Long-term unemployed people.	Employability and skills.	ESF	Employment, skills and social inclusion actions.	ESF England
Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET.	Employability and skills, especially numeracy and literacy skills. Certain groups have particularly severe barriers such as care leavers, offenders and those with learning difficulties and disabilities.	ESF and YEI	Employment, skills and social inclusion actions.	ESF England
Disabled people.	Employability and skills, and support with the transition to work.	ESF	Employment, skills and social inclusion actions.	ESF England

Specific target group or geographical area	Short description of needs	ESIF Funds that will be used	Main types of planned actions which are part of the integrated approach	Programme
Ethnic minority groups.	Employability and skills. In some groups, English language barriers.	ESF	Employment, skills and social inclusion actions.	ESF England
Offenders and ex-offenders.	Employability and skills.	ESF	Employment, skills and social inclusion actions.	ESF England
Older people aged 50	Need to update skills to re-engage or stay in labour market.	ESF	Employment, skills and social inclusion actions.	ESF England
People with multiple disadvantages	Various barriers to work	ESF	Employment, skills and social inclusion actions.	ESF England

Scotland

103. An integrated approach will be taken to tackle poverty and social exclusion based on:

- a community centred approach focussed on sustainability, locally identified issues and solutions and targeted on fragile and disadvantaged communities; and
- people and household centred approach using the enhanced employability pipeline and strategic interventions to tackle financial inclusion

104. The Scottish Index for Multiple Deprivation will provide a basis on which areas will be identified and will be supplemented by other appropriate indices (such as the Highlands and Islands Enterprise fragile map) to identify target areas although people centred actions will not be exclusively geographically targeted but focussed on those that need support.

105. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive and will work together to form a coherent package of support at an individual, family, household and community level. Issues such as food and fuel poverty, social and childcare, financial inclusion and employment opportunity will be tackled

Specific target group or geographical area	Short description of the needs	ESI Funds that will be used (ERDF, ESF, CF, EAFRD, EMFF)	Main types of actions to be supported	Programme
Young people not in employment, education or training	Employability, education, skills, work experience	ESF	Training, apprenticeships, recruitment incentive programmes, development of vocational training opportunities - an intensive and territorial approach will be undertaken	Youth Employment Initiative Scotland
		ESF	Employability support through pipeline approach, recruitment incentives, apprenticeships, training	ESF Scotland
		ERDF	Support for companies with growth potential within growth sectors to align job opportunities with skills support	ERDF Scotland
Long Term Unemployed and individuals facing multiple disadvantage	Financial inclusion, skills, employability, childcare support	ESF	Tailored support through the employability pipeline focussed on removing barriers to active participation, increasing skills and job opportunities through access to training and work placements.	ESF Scotland
		ERDF	Support for companies with growth potential within growth sectors to align job opportunities with skills support	ERDF Scotland
Persons with Disabilities	Employability, access to skills training, social inclusion measures	ESF	Measures to support employability and social inclusion through a tailored approach using the enhanced and expanded employability pipeline focussing on removing barriers to active participation	ESF Scotland
		ERDF	Support for companies with growth potential within growth sectors to align job opportunities with skills support	ERDF Scotland
Workless Households	Financial inclusion, employability, childcare support, social inclusion measures	ESF	Intensive face-to-face support and financial inclusion measures, employability support through pipeline approach, alleviation of any barriers to employment including childcare through increased access and financial support	ESF Scotland

Specific target group or geographical area	Short description of the needs	ESI Funds that will be used (ERDF, ESF, CF, EAFRD, EMFF)	Main types of actions to be supported	Programme
Working households suffering from severe poverty		ESF	Intensive face-to-face support and financial inclusion measures, childcare through increased access and financial support	

Wales

107. In Wales, discrimination and social exclusion can be associated with specific groups or those with specific individual characteristics. These groups and their needs are set out in the table below and are explored in greater detail in the Welsh Programmes. The Socio Economic Analysis and the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) which underpin the Welsh Programmes demonstrate that those who are at greatest disadvantage include the unemployed, especially the long-term unemployed and those with complex issues; workless households or families, those with recognised protected characteristics and young people, especially those who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). The EIA also states that those who are more likely to be at risk of exclusion, poverty, disadvantage or discrimination are not confined to any particular area.

108. There is a strong correlation between exclusion or disadvantage and unemployment or economic inactivity. It is the Welsh Government's view that the best way out of poverty is through sustainable employment. However if the ESI funds are to achieve the key objectives around tackling poverty all ESI Funds Programmes will need to maximise the opportunities to tackle issues of poverty and disadvantage.

Specific target group or geographical area	Short description of the needs	ESI Funds that will be used (ERDF, ESF, CF, EAFRD, EMFF)	Main types of actions to be supported	Programme
Unemployed, especially the long-term unemployed and those with complex and multiple barriers to labour market mobility; workless households or families	Multiple and complex barriers to achieving and maintaining sustained employment and preventing labour mobility, including skills and qualifications, access to transport, care and childcare, alcohol dependency or substance misuse issues, financial and emotional barriers as well as attitudes to work and welfare dependence. Declines in the traditional low-skilled industries have left low skilled workers either at risk of long term unemployment or vulnerable to cycles of work and worklessness.	ESF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for access to sustainable employment addressing barriers to labour market mobility. • Targeted support to employers to employ disadvantaged individuals. • Address issues for those in work to prevent loss of employment and to address barriers to labour market mobility. • Support workforce development and workforce development skills, promote flexible working arrangements and address workforce health issues. • Apprenticeships and actions to improve access to basic and functional and vocational skills. 	West Wales and the Valleys – Less Developed region
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for access to sustainable employment addressing barriers to labour market mobility. • Targeted support to employers to employ disadvantaged individuals. • Apprenticeships and actions to improve access to basic and functional and vocational skills. 	East Wales – More Developed region

Specific target group or geographical area	Short description of the needs	ESI Funds that will be used (ERDF, ESF, CF, EAFRD, EMFF)	Main types of actions to be supported	Programme
		ERDF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to public transport to support urban and labour mobility, creating greater access to jobs and services • Address issues of peripherality through improved connectivity (ICT and transport) • Targeted employment growth in specific territorial areas will need to show clear links to nearby areas of deprivation and related ESF investment 	
		EAFRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulating growth and promoting environmental and socio-economic sustainability of rural areas via community-based energy actions, local basic services in rural areas and the renewal of villages and activities aimed at the restoration and upgrading of the cultural and natural heritage of villages and rural landscapes. 	

Specific target group or geographical area	Short description of the needs	ESI Funds that will be used (ERDF, ESF, CF, EAFRD, EMFF)	Main types of actions to be supported	Programme to be supported
<p>Those with recognised protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership pregnancy and maternity, race and ethnicity, religion or belief, sex / gender and sexual orientation)</p>	<p>Groups with protected characteristics can face specific issues that impact on their ability to access and progress within the labour market, and which place them at greater risk of poverty and exclusion.</p> <p>The Socio-Economic analysis shows that those with protected characteristics are far more likely to be underrepresented in employment, to be unemployed or economically inactive and are less likely to access in work skills provision. The evidence also shows continued gender imbalances in education attainment and participation and in non-traditional gender based employment</p>	<p>ESF</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for access to sustainable employment. • Targeted support to employers to employ disadvantaged individuals. • Address issues for those in work to prevent loss of employment and to address barriers to labour market mobility. • Support workforce development and workforce development skills, promote flexible working arrangements and address workforce health issues. • Apprenticeships and actions to improve access to basic and functional and vocational skills. • Challenge gender stereotypes, raise awareness among employers of gender disadvantage in the workforce and offer solutions to increase effectiveness and sustainability within the workplace. 	<p>West Wales and the Valleys – Less Developed Region</p>

Specific target group or geographical area	Short description of the needs	ESI Funds that will be used (ERDF, ESF, CF, EAFRD, EMFF)	Main types of actions to be supported	Programme
	opportunities.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for access to sustainable employment. • Targeted support to employers to employ disadvantaged individuals. • Apprenticeships and actions to improve access to basic and functional and vocational skills. • Challenge gender stereotypes, raise awareness among employers of gender disadvantage in the workforce and offer solutions to increase effectiveness and sustainability within the workplace. 	East Wales – More Developed region
		ERDF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of cross-cutting themes to ensure appropriate consideration of opportunities (e.g. in business support) and potential for tailored scheme if gap in provision evidenced. 	
		EAFRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of cross-cutting themes to ensure appropriate consideration of opportunities (e.g. in business support) and potential for tailored scheme if gap in provision evidenced. 	

Specific target group or geographical area	Short description of the needs	ESI Funds that will be used (ERDF, ESF, CF, EAFRD, EMFF)	Main types of actions to be supported	Programme to be supported
Young People, Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET) and those who are risk of becoming NEET	Relatively high levels of youth unemployment. NEET rate for 16-18 year olds in Wales has remained fairly constant, between 10-13% over the years 1996 to 2012. High levels of Early School leaving and comparatively low attainment levels.	ESF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to access and maintain sustained employment. • Early targeted action to combat disaffection and remove barriers to learning. • Action to challenge traditional assumptions and gender stereotypes. • Improve the quality of childcare and early years' provision. 	West Wales and the Valleys – Less Developed region
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to access and maintain sustained employment. • Actions to help those who are, or at risk of becoming, NEET to continue or re-engage with education. • Action to challenge traditional assumptions and gender stereotypes. 	East Wales – More Developed region
		ERDF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of cross-cutting themes to ensure appropriate consideration of opportunities (e.g. in business support) and potential for tailored scheme if gap in provision evidenced. 	
		EAFRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of cross-cutting themes to ensure appropriate consideration of opportunities (e.g. in business support) and potential for tailored scheme if gap in provision evidenced. 	

110. Since 2010 the official measure of spatial deprivation in Northern Ireland is the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2010¹¹. Maps of the Super Output Area (SOA) results and individual domains are available from the link and show high deprivation areas within the Belfast City Council area including Whiterock, Falls, New Lodge, Shankill and Crumlin. Other areas of high deprivation outside of Belfast are in the Strabane, Derry-Londonderry, Craigavon, Newry and Mourne and Lisburn Local Government Districts.
111. The Executive's anti-poverty strategy is set out in the document 'Lifetime Opportunities'¹². As stated in the UK National Reform Programme 2012, the 2011 – 2015 Programme for Government includes a Social Protection Fund to help individuals and families who are facing hardship and a £13 million fund to tackle rural poverty and social isolation.
112. The 2011-2015 Programme for Government also foresees the 'Delivering Social Change' framework, including strategic actions to reduce child poverty based on a poverty outcomes model and to address intergenerational poverty; implementation of a strategy for integrated and affordable childcare; and legislation to tackle age discrimination.

Involvement and Consultation

113. As set out in the section above on "Arrangements for the partnership principle", the specific priorities for the ESI Funds were identified by the UK Government for England and the Devolved Administrations for their territories. Therefore, engagement of partners has taken place at national level rather than on a UK-wide basis. The UK Government and Devolved Administrations have consulted widely and deeply in development of their priorities, including with bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination, and used a variety of different mechanisms to do so.
114. The Government will not consult specifically on the Partnership Agreement document as this effectively summarises the results of the extensive engagement to date across the UK's nations. Moreover, the Managing Authorities responsible for the Programmes that underpin the Partnership Agreement will consult formally on those Programmes in due course.

Key facts and findings

115. The analysis above shows the policy decisions around the overarching strategy and policy priorities in the Partnership Agreement do not have any adverse impact in relation to any of the three pillars of the Equality Act. In fact, the Partnership Agreement strategy proposes an increase in support for interventions that are likely to have a positive impact in relation to the

¹¹ http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/nimdm_2010.htm

¹² <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/antipovertyandsocialinclusion.pdf>

three pillars. (As the Partnership Agreement strategy is high-level, with specific interventions to be selected later during development of the Programmes that underpin the Partnership Agreement, it is difficult to quantify or be specific about potential impacts in relation to the three pillars.)

116. The Partnership Agreement sets out delivery arrangements and principles that demonstrate that Managing Authorities in the UK's nations will continue to have regard to the three pillars of the Equality Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty during delivery of the ESI Funds on their territories.

117. In relation to the specific elements of the Partnership Agreement defined in the Common Provisions Regulation that may have an impact in relation to the Equality Act, the analysis above indicates that:

- the thematic objectives most likely to have a positive impact in relation to the Equality Act have all be selected for support;
- the high-level strategy in the Partnership Agreement has prominent objectives around promoting equality of opportunity and antidiscrimination;
- the total amount of funding available for thematic objectives most likely to have a positive impact in relation to the pillars of the Equality Duty will be increased relative to 2007-2013 levels;
- the Partnership Agreement sets out comprehensive measures to promote equality between men and women and non-discrimination across the UK's nations. In general, a dual approach is proposed: specific interventions, programmes and projects designed to promote these objectives; and a set of arrangements and processes to ensure that these issues are considered as cross-cutting themes in all types of interventions supported using the ESI Funds;
- the Devolved Administrations and LEPs in England have formed partnerships with bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination. These bodies have been involved in developing the strategies for use of ESI Funds and will continue to be involved during implementation of these strategies;
- the decisions by Government in relation to ESI Funds allocations to the Devolved Administrations and LEP areas in England do not favour or negatively impact any particular group with protected characteristics covered by the Public Sector Equality Duty, except in the case of disability where there is a small positive bias;
- arrangements and plans are in place across the UK's nations for ESI Funds to address the specific needs of target groups at highest risk of discrimination or social exclusion.

Monitoring and review

118. As mentioned several times above, this Partnership Agreement will be implemented via Operational Programmes for each of the ESI Funds in the UK's nations. During implementation of these Programmes, Managing

Authorities will monitor the equalities impact of the programmes and underpinning projects. BIS will ensure that the Managing Authorities include material on equalities issues in their periodic reports on progress.

119. In addition, as also mentioned in this analysis, the Partnership Agreement (or parts of it) may need to be modified as a result of negotiations with the European Commission in the next few months before it is finally adopted by a Commission's implementing Act. BIS will continue to have due regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty when considering and giving effect to all the modifications to the Partnership Agreement before it is finally adopted, and will record such further consideration by, if appropriate, updating this Equalities Impact Assessment.

Responsibility

Responsible officer: Tim Courtney (completed 27 March 2014)

Senior Responsible Officer: Sue Baxter (endorsed 27 March 2014)

This Equality Impact Assessment is available electronically at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-uk-proposals>. Where possible, we will make other versions of this document in Braille, other languages, or audio-cassette available on request.

Annex A – the thematic objectives and underpinning investment priorities and measures for each Fund

Extract from REGULATION (EU) No 1301/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006

Article 5

Investment priorities

The ERDF shall support the following investment priorities within the thematic objectives set out in the first paragraph of Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, in accordance with the development needs and growth potential referred to in point (a)(i) of Article 15(1) of that Regulation and set out in the Partnership Agreement:

- (1) strengthening research, technological development and innovation by:
 - (a) enhancing research and innovation (R&I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest;
 - (b) promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies;
- (2) enhancing access to, and use and quality of, ICT by:
 - (a) extending broadband deployment and the roll-out of high-speed networks and supporting the adoption of emerging technologies and networks for the digital economy;
 - (b) developing ICT products and services, e-commerce, and enhancing demand for ICT;
 - (c) strengthening ICT applications for e-government, e-learning, e-inclusion, e-culture and e-health;
- (3) enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs by:
 - (a) promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators;
 - (b) developing and implementing new business models for SMEs, in particular with regard to internationalisation;
 - (c) supporting the creation and the extension of advanced capacities for product and service development;
 - (d) supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes;
- (4) supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors by:
 - (a) promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources;
 - (b) promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy use in enterprises;
 - (c) supporting energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructure, including in public buildings, and in the housing sector;
 - (d) developing and implementing smart distribution systems that operate at low and medium voltage levels;
 - (e) promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas, including the promotion of sustainable multimodal urban mobility and mitigation-relevant adaptation measures;
 - (f) promoting research and innovation in, and adoption of, low-carbon technologies;
 - (g) promoting the use of high-efficiency co-generation of heat and power based on useful heat demand;
- (5) promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management by:

- (a) supporting investment for adaptation to climate change, including ecosystem-based approaches;
- (b) promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems;
- (6) preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency by:
 - (a) investing in the waste sector to meet the requirements of the Union's environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements;
 - (b) investing in the water sector to meet the requirements of the Union's environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements;
 - (c) conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage;
 - (d) protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure;
 - (e) taking action to improve the urban environment, to revitalise cities, regenerate and decontaminate brownfield sites (including conversion areas), reduce air pollution and promote noise-reduction measures;
 - (f) promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution;
 - (g) supporting industrial transition towards a resource- efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors;
- (7) promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures by:
 - (a) supporting a multimodal Single European Transport Area by investing in the TEN-T;
 - (b) enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes;
 - (c) developing and improving environmentally-friendly (including low-noise) and low-carbon transport systems, including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility;
 - (d) developing and rehabilitating comprehensive, high quality and interoperable railway systems, and promoting noise-reduction measures;
 - (e) improving energy efficiency and security of supply through the development of smart energy distribution, storage and transmission systems and through the integration of distributed generation from renewable sources;
- (8) promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by:
 - (a) supporting the development of business incubators and investment support for self-employment, micro-enterprises and business creation;
 - (b) supporting employment-friendly growth through the development of endogenous potential as part of a territorial strategy for specific areas, including the conversion of declining industrial regions and enhancement of accessibility to, and development of, specific natural and cultural resources;
 - (c) supporting local development initiatives and aid for structures providing neighbourhood services to create jobs, where such actions are outside the scope of Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council (1);
 - (d) investing in infrastructure for employment services;
- (9) promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination, by:
 - (a) investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services;
 - (b) providing support for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas;
 - (c) providing support for social enterprises;
 - (d) undertaking investment in the context of community- led local development strategies;
- (10) investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning by developing education and training infrastructure;

(11) enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration through actions to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to the implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions under the ESF to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration.

Extract from REGULATION (EU) No 1304/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006

Article 3

Scope of support

1. Under the thematic objectives set out in points (8), (9), (10) and (11) of the first paragraph of Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, which correspond to points (a), (b), (c) and (d) of this paragraph, and in accordance with its missions, the ESF shall support the following investment priorities:

- (a) For the thematic objective 'promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility':
- (i) Access to employment for job-seekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility;
 - (ii) Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee;
 - (iii) Self-employment, entrepreneurship and business creation including innovative micro, small and medium sized enterprises;
 - (iv) Equality between men and women in all areas, including in access to employment, career progression, reconciliation of work and private life and promotion of equal pay for equal work;
 - (v) Adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change;
 - (vi) Active and healthy ageing;
 - (vii) Modernisation of labour market institutions, such as public and private employment services, and improving the matching of labour market needs, including through actions that enhance transnational labour mobility as well as through mobility schemes and better cooperation between institutions and relevant stakeholders;
- (b) For the thematic objective 'promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination':
- (i) Active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability;
 - (ii) Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma;
 - (iii) Combating all forms of discrimination and promoting equal opportunities;
 - (iv) Enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high- quality services, including health care and social services of general interest;
 - (v) Promoting social entrepreneurship and vocational integration in social enterprises and the social and solidarity economy in order to facilitate access to employment;
 - (vi) Community-led local development strategies;
- (c) For the thematic objective 'investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning':
- (i) Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for reintegrating into education and training;
 - (ii) Improving the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged groups;
 - (iii) Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences;
 - (iv) Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including

through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes;

(d) For the thematic objective 'enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration':

(i) Investment in institutional capacity and in the efficiency of public administrations and public services at the national, regional and local levels with a view to reforms, better regulation and good governance;

This investment priority is applicable only in Member States eligible for support from the Cohesion Fund, or in Member States that have one or more NUTS level 2 regions referred to in Article 90(2)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.

(ii) Capacity building for all stakeholders delivering education, lifelong learning, training and employment and social policies, including through sectoral and territorial pacts to mobilise for reform at the national, regional and local levels.

2. Through the investment priorities listed in paragraph 1, the ESF shall also contribute to the other thematic objectives listed in the first paragraph of Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, primarily by:

(a) Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient, resource-efficient and environmentally sustainable economy, through the improvement of education and training systems necessary for the adaptation of skills and qualifications, the up-skilling of the labour force, and the creation of new jobs in sectors related to the environment and energy;

(b) Enhancing the accessibility of, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies through the development of digital literacy and e-learning, and investment in e-inclusion, e-skills and related entrepreneurial skills;

(c) Strengthening research, technological development and innovation through the development of post-graduate studies and entrepreneurial skills, the training of researchers, networking activities and partnerships between higher education institutions, research and technological centres and enterprises;

(d) Enhancing the competitiveness and long-term sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises, through promoting the adaptability of enterprises, managers and workers, increased investment in human capital, and support for bodies providing practice-oriented vocational education and training.

Extract from the European Commission’s Partnership Agreement template on the link between EAFRD measures and the thematic objectives of the Common Strategic Framework

Annex: Guidance on the attribution of Union Priorities for Rural Development to thematic objectives set out in Article 9 of the CPR

The table below sets out the links between the Union priorities and focus areas of the EAFRD and the thematic objectives set out in Article 9 of the Common Provisions Regulation. This table provides guidance and does not form part of the Partnership Agreement.

Priority 1: Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry, and rural areas	
(a) Fostering innovation and the knowledge base in rural areas	1. Strengthening research, technological development, innovation
(b) Strengthening the links between agriculture and forestry and research and innovation	1. Strengthening research, technological development, innovation
(c) Fostering lifelong learning and vocational training in the agricultural and forestry sectors	10. Education, skills and lifelong learning
Priority 2: Enhancing competitiveness of all types of agriculture and enhancing farm viability	
(a) Facilitating restructuring of farms facing major structural problems, notably farms with a low degree of market participation, market-oriented farms in particular sectors and farms in need of agricultural diversification	3. Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, the agricultural sector and fisheries and aquaculture
(b) Facilitating generational renewal in the agricultural sector	3. Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, the agricultural sector and fisheries and aquaculture
Priority 3: Promoting food chain organisation and risk management in agriculture	
(a) Better integrating primary producers into the food chain through quality schemes, promotion in local markets and short supply circuits, producer groups and inter-branch organisations	3. Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, the agricultural sector and fisheries and aquaculture
(b) Supporting farm risk management	3. Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, the agricultural sector and fisheries and aquaculture
Priority 4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry	
(a) Restoring and preserving biodiversity, including in Natura 2000 areas and high nature value farming, and the state of European landscapes	5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management & 6. Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency
(b) Improving water management	5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management & 6. Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency
(c) Improving soil management	5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management & 6. Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency

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