European Structural and Investment Funds

Terms of Reference
for the
Growth Programme Board’s
National Sub-committees

December 2015
Terms of Reference for the Growth Programme Board’s National Sub-committees
(European Structural and Investment Funds 2014 -2020)

National Sub-committees

These Terms of Reference (ToR) set out the core elements for how a National Sub-committee should function. The Chair of the Sub-committee, and its members, should adapt their specific ToR to include any role and responsibility that the Growth Programme Board has agreed should be undertaken by that Sub-committee. The Sub-committee can also develop and agree supplementary working practices, specific to their Sub-committee, where it is agreed it will support the work of the Growth Programme Board, conforms to these overarching guidelines and where the Managing Authority (MA) Secretariat can support these. These terms of reference will be subject to approval and reviewed annually by the Growth Programme Board. A National Sub-committee may be closed by the Growth Programme Board where it is no longer felt to be needed.

A. Governance and Purpose

The Growth Programme Board (GPB) is the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) for both the ERDF and the ESF Operational Programmes in England.

The National Sub-committees are responsible for providing specialist advice and support to the GPB in its role to oversee that the European Growth Programme’s policy and operational objectives are delivered successfully. The GPB can require certain advisory roles and responsibilities from the National Sub-committees so that it (the GPB) is able to give regular consideration to managing trends, risks and issues as and when necessary.

National Sub-committees report directly to the GPB. The GPB will also be supported by a number of local sub-committees (LEP area ESI Funds Sub-committees); these local sub-committees will also report directly to the GPB but, where relevant, may be asked to report via the National Sub-committees as remitted by the GPB.

National sub-committees will not substitute for or take on the tasks and functions of the GPB or Managing Authorities. The GPB is responsible for all decisions on its own advice, approvals or opinions given according to its functions set out in Regulations¹, whether or not advice was given by its sub-committees.

¹ Regulations refer to the relevant Articles within the European Commission’s Common Provision Regulations (EU) No 1303/2013 and the specific regulations for ERDF and ESF. Also to any update on these Regulations.

GPB National Sub-Committees TOR
ESIF-GN-2-011, Version 1
Date published 17 December 2015
B. Purpose

National Sub-committees will be responsible for providing advice to the GPB. They are divided into a series of policy themed sub-committees and operational themed sub-committees. They will be responsible for considering evolving national policy, the operational context and their interaction with the ESI Funds depending on their individual remit, and in terms of their relationship with other ESI Funds sub-committees.

The purpose of all national level GPB sub-committees is, according to their remit, to:

- Review relevant national policy or operational circumstances, particularly Government policies, socio-economic factors and EU regulatory practice in relation to ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes and local investments and provide advice to the GPB within agreed remits.
- Seek to influence relevant national policy to ‘design in’ alignment with the ESI Funds Growth Programme where appropriate and particularly seeking to design-in relevant match funding opportunities. Policy sub-committees will feed back to central policy colleagues on lessons learnt and good practice from implementation of the Growth Programme at local level.
- Advise the GPB and thereby LEP area ESI Funds Sub-committees, helping them to exploit synergies with wider national polices and funding opportunities, and to ensure alignment with national policy and avoid conflict with and duplication of existing policies and initiatives.
- Other National Sub-committees might be pointed towards particular issues by the Performance and Dispute Resolution sub-committee. National Sub-committees will use their expertise to try to work out the reasons behind any performance issues, advising the Performance and Dispute Resolution sub-committee (which is responsible for overall performance monitoring and management advice) or GPB directly as requested.
- Consider, advise and, as appropriate, broker opportunities for working across LEP areas, factoring in trends, commonalities and alignment with national policies.
- Consider and advise the Growth Programme Board on outline business cases for ERDF “major” projects (as defined in the EU Regulations).
- Consider and advise on any systemic issues relating to implementation of the ESI Funds Growth Programme for the relevant thematic objectives.
- Identify and promote examples of good and potential best practice
- Consider and advise on EU Regulations practice, precedent and decisions which have wider application.
- Take account of policy and/or operational issues identified through members’ networks and stakeholders, or issues referred to it by the GPB or other National Sub-committees.
- Provide reports as commissioned by the GPB and/or according to an agreed schedule and focus in relation to specific Growth Programme priorities, targets and milestones.
- Bring risks and issues to the attention of the relevant National Sub-committee or full GPB as appropriate, and in a timely way; these should be brought to the attention of the GPB Secretariat in their first instance.

**GPB National Sub-Committees TOR**

ESIF-GN-2-011, Version 1

Date published 17 December 2015
National Sub-committees will not scrutinise individual projects. Managing Authorities or the Growth Programme Board may ask the Sub-committee for expert advice on a specific national policy or programme.

C. Role of each National Sub-committee

Bullet points setting out the specific role of each sub-committee will be developed by the sub-committee concerned, according to the remit given to them by the Growth Programme Board. These will be shared with and agreed by the GPB who may make additions and changes as needed to better reflect the remit envisaged. Once agreed these will be published as an annex to these overarching Terms of Reference.

D. Membership

National Sub-committees will be chaired by the most relevant lead. For policy sub-committees, this may be the lead government official for the policy area. The deputy chair will be from the relevant Managing Authority, except where such Managing Authority is the sub-committee chair. A relevant Managing Authority or BIS will provide the Secretariat, working closely with the GPB secretariat to understand the protocols and procedures the Sub-committee must adhere to in supporting the GPB.

Membership must include relevant HM Government and Managing Authority nominated leads, but does not have to follow the proportions of representation at the full GPB, nor does it have to be drawn from the full GPB. Organisations not represented on the GPB can therefore be represented on the National Sub-committees (e.g. Innovate UK should be represented on the Smart Specialisation related Sub-committee). Papers will be shared with the European Commission, who will be invited to attend sub-group meetings, as relevant. Members should be experts rather than senior figureheads.

A list of members for the Sub-committee should be listed as annex 1 to the bullet points about the National Sub-committee’s remit mentioned at section C of this document.

E. Meeting Arrangements

- National Sub-committees should meet as regularly as needed (and at least twice a year) to review progress and discuss issues arising.
- Meeting dates for each calendar year will be agreed in advance although the Chair may ask for extra-ordinary meetings where the matter is more urgent.
- Sub-committees should generally meet at least 6 weeks before the full GPB, or in an appropriate timeframe that allows time for agreement to and preparation of any papers for the GPB.
- Sub-committees will need to deal with some issues quickly by correspondence, in particular requests for the thematic subcommittees to advise on questions about individual projects/ issues.
- The relevance and timing of the Sub-committee should be reviewed by it after the first year. Any changes proposed to its remit or existence will need to be agreed by the GPB.
• Sub-committees will want to consider where and how they meet; they may for example (particularly where they are not dealing with detailed, technical information) wish to meet by telekit or deal with some issues by correspondence if that is considered the most practical, or preferred, method by its members and can be supported by the Managing Authority/BIS secretariat.

• All meetings and decisions will be minuted. Minutes will normally be circulated no later than 10 working days after a meeting for approval by members (with a nil response taken as endorsement). Minutes will be agreed by the Sub-committee as a confirmation of their being a true record of the meeting to which they refer and shared with the GPB secretariat. Where the GPB or its Secretariat feel that the Sub-committee has stepped outside of its remit, they may challenge the minutes and expect a response.

• National Sub-committees will operate in accordance with the procedures and protocols laid out by the Growth Programme Board and its Secretariat. In particular, members will follow the same principles and protocols as GPB members in terms of a code of conduct and declaration of their interests.
### Remit of National Sub-committees

**Policy sub-committees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee Name</th>
<th>Remit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Smart Specialisation (innovation)** | - Provide strategic advice on the implementation of the strategy ‘Smart Specialisation in England’ and the delivery of activities in programmes within the Thematic Objective of “Research, Development & Innovation, in line with the guiding principles for selection and ex-ante conditionalities agreed for the ERDF Operational Programme Priority Axis 1 Research and Innovation”  
- Advise on the extent to which opportunities to build synergies with other EU funds, especially Horizon 2020, have added value to Smart Specialisation in England  
- Provide specialist advice and expertise on Smart Specialisation and other Research, Development and Innovation issues |
| **Small and Medium Sized Enterprise Competitiveness (including ICT and Financial Instruments)** | - Support the GPB through providing specialist advice and expertise on SME related issues  
- Undertake analysis into specific thematic/policy related issues on behalf of the GPB, and report findings back to the GPB  
- Feed policy specific advice/views at a national level in to the GPB  
- Monitor and assess FI spend and performance across ERDF programmes in order to advise the MA on issues and potential solutions  
- Make recommendations to the GPB and Performance & Dispute Resolution Sub-committee on measures to improve performance |
| **Sustainable Growth and Development (including low carbon, climate change, the environment and sustainable transport)** | - Responsible for providing the GPB with specialist advice and expertise on Low Carbon, and Sustainability related issues  
- Undertake analysis into specific thematic/policy related issues on behalf of the GPB, and report findings back to the GPB  
- Feed policy specific advice/views at a national level in to the GPB  
- Make recommendations to the GPB and Performance & Dispute Resolution sub-committee on measures to improve the overall impact of spend on sustainable development |
| **Employment, Skills and Social Inclusion (including the impact of CLLD and Co-financing Organisations)** | - Provide the GPB with specialist advice and expertise on related issues  
- Undertake analysis into specific thematic/policy related issues on behalf of the GPB, and report findings back to the GPB  
- Feed policy specific advice/views at a national level in to the GPB  
- Make recommendations to the GPB and Performance & Dispute Resolution sub-committee on measures to improve the impact of Co-financing provision  
- Make recommendations to the GPB and MA on measures to improve the impact of CLLD provision |
| **Sustainable Urban Development** | - Provide the MA and GPB with specialist advice and expertise on Sustainable Urban Development  
- Undertake analysis into specific SUD related issues on behalf of the GPB as required, and report findings back to the GPB  
- Recommend actions to the MA on aspects of SUD as needed |
### Operational Delivery sub-committees

| Performance and Dispute Resolution | • Monitor and assess spend and performance across ERDF and ESF spend, including through Co-financing organisations, undertaking regular reviews to assess spend, commitment levels, N+3 and impact across GDTs in order to be able to advise the GPB and MAs as needed  
  • Report findings and outcomes to the GPB, with recommendations  
  • Assess trends and risks – ensuring that LEP areas ESI Funds Sub-committees are asked to account for anomalies as appropriate - and advise how these might be managed. Highlight those of a sufficiently high level to the GPB and, by exception, ask LEP areas to present to the GPB where risks continue.  
  • Consider and assess programme/project related dispute cases raised by LEP areas and GDTs to advise the GPB and MAs as needed  
  • Consider broad trends in key indicators, including results, output indicators and aggregated spending/outcome totals, for both the relevant thematic objectives and overall national objectives and targets, and take a broad view across the whole growth programme in order to advise the GPB on their views of how the programme as a whole is performing or meeting its national targets. |
|---|---|
| Evaluation | • Advise on ERDF and ESF evaluations undertaken as part of the Evaluation Strategy developed by the MAs  
  • Contribute to evaluation reports developed by the MAs  
  • Provide advice to the GPB in terms of their approval of evaluation reports prior to the submission to GPB for final approval |
| Equality and Diversity | • Monitor the application and implementation of equalities principles across ERDF and ESF programmes in order to advise the GPB and MAs on risks and opportunities identified  
  • Provide advice and recommendations to the GPB on equality related issues within European programmes  
  • Undertake analysis into specific thematic/policy/operational related issues on behalf of the GPB as required, and report findings back to the GPB |
| Communications | • Advise the GPB on ERDF and ESF communications related issues and activity  
  • Promote best practice to projects  
  • Evaluate the application and implementation of the Communication Strategy  
  • Conduct regular reviews of the Communications Strategy and put recommendations forward to the GPB |