

Timetable for EU Structural Funds 2014-2020

Huckfield comments for Social Enterprises and Third Sector Organisations throughout this note are highlighted in this colour. Please click on highlighted blue links to access documents.

Though this posting is up to date for the beginning of November 2012, EU Structural Funds Programmes 2014 to 2020 will be determined by the size of an EU Budget. More precise expenditure forecasts are highly dependent on agreement the size of the EU's Budget. On Wednesday 31 October 2012 the House of Commons voted for a reduction in the EU proposed 2014-2020 Budget.

Accordingly, this posting is based entirely on currently available EU policy documents, UK and Scottish Government sources. For 27 Member States, it is currently proposed that €336bn Structural Funds might be available, including €226bn for investment in jobs and growth.

KEY DOCUMENTS

Links to main relevant documents are shown at **KEY MILESTONES AND DOCUMENTS** below.

The outline package of funding for 2014 to 2020 was announced in Brussels on Thursday 06 October 2011. The following is from the Europa Press Release on that date [Q&A on the legislative package of EU regional, employment and social policy for 2014-2020](#). The package includes:

- An overarching regulation setting out common rules governing the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). This will allow for the better combination of funds for a stronger impact of EU action.
- Three specific regulations for the ERDF, the ESF and the Cohesion Fund.
- Two regulations dealing with the European territorial cooperation goal and the European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC).
- Two regulations on the European Globalisation Fund (EGF) and the Programme for Social Change and Innovation.
- A communication on the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF)

KEY THEMES

Key themes were published on the [Scottish Government's Future of the Funds Blog](#) on March 14 2012:

"European Commission 2014 – 2020 Thematic Objectives

- Strengthening research, technological development and innovation
- Enhancing access to, and use and quality of information and communication technologies
- Enhancing competitiveness of SMEs, the agricultural sector (for EAFRD) and the fisheries and agriculture sector (for the EMFF)
- Support the shift to a low- carbon economy in all sectors
- Promote climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management

- Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency
- Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures
- Promoting employment and supporting labour mobility
- Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty
- Investing in education, skills and lifelong learning
- Enhancing institutional capacity and an efficient public administration"

KEY MILESTONES 2014 TO 2020

a) EU STRUCTURAL FUNDS

- **March 03 2010** - EU Commission published [Europe 2020](#), new economic and social strategy.
- **November 2010** - Commission published its [Fifth Cohesion Report](#), which set out its initial proposals for European funding during 2014-20.
- **February 2011** - [UK Government Response to the Fifth Cohesion Report](#), including calls for greater flexibility for Member States, a reduction in the administrative burdens, a concentration of funds on poorer Member States, a smaller Structural Funds budget and greater use of loans and financial engineering instruments.
- **October 06 2011** - Commission published a [draft ERDF regulation for 2014-2020](#)
- **March 14 2012** - Commission published the [draft regulation for a Common Strategic Framework](#) which established the strategy for all programmes across the EU in 2014-2020 and defines key activities that each fund (including ERDF) will be able to support. A [draft ESF Regulation](#) was published at the same time.
- **March 2012** - UK Department of Business, Innovation and Skills launched an informal consultation on a [draft Partnership Agreement for Structural Funds in England for 2014-20](#). Member States have agreed to produce a Partnership Contract setting out a strategy and rationale for how Funds will be deployed, drawing on the Common Strategic Framework.
- **April 2012** - UK Government's "[Europe 2020: UK National Reform Programme](#)" sets out the UK Government's position in further negotiations. Scotland's role is published on page 21.
- **September 2012 onwards** - UK Government working towards Partnership Agreement.
- **November 2012 onwards** - UK Department of Business, Innovation and Skills begins regional roadshows in England, working towards Partnership Agreement.
- **Early 2013** - Formal consultation, run jointly with the Scottish Government, Welsh Assembly Government and Northern Ireland Executive on the Partnership Contract.
- **June 2013** - Anticipated approval for the Partnership Contract from the Commission.
- **January 2014** - Anticipated beginning of 2014-20 programmes.

b) SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT TIMETABLE

Since the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills Consultation relates only to England, the Scottish Government is using a different approach with a "[Structural Funds Blog](#)", launched in March 2012. The Scottish Government proposes to launch a more formal consultation in 2013. Alongside this timetable, with the EU Commission, the UK Government is involved in redrawing boundaries for Assisted Areas. Some of this is devolved to the Scottish Government.

In the "[Future of the Funds Blog](#)", [Scottish Government Blog on Wednesday 09 May 2012](#), Brenda Russell raised interesting questions about the "fit" of the EU Commission's proposals for local management and administration within Scotland's Community Planning Partnerships.

c) ASSISTED AREAS MAP

Alongside this, the UK Government is also redrawing the map of Assisted Areas boundaries. Implementation is devolved to Scottish Government. This process includes:

- Guidelines to set maximum Assisted Area coverage for each Member State and rules for how Member States can offer aid to companies located in Assisted (deprived) Areas
- Commission to publish draft Guidelines Autumn 2012. UK will launch consultation on Draft Assisted Areas map – final approval by Commission. Final Guidelines published spring 2013.
- Assisted Areas Map will also determine the overall level of EU and domestic funding that can be paid to a Structural Funds recipient in Assisted Areas under State Aid rules.

d) SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT EX ANTE EVALUATION

The EU Commission requires an "Ex Ante Evaluation" for Member States' proposed programmes. On Friday 02 November 2012, the Scottish Government published its Invitation to Tender:

- 1) "The Scottish Government is looking to commission an ex ante evaluation for the European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) 2014-20 programmes, which is a requirement by the European Commission. This ex ante evaluation will also include a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the ERDF and Equality Impact Assessment of both the ESF and ERDF. We will also require an ex ante assessment of our planned use of financial instruments across all of the funds covered by the Scottish chapter of the Partnership Agreement, carried out in conjunction with the contractor for the ex ante evaluation for the Scottish Rural Development Programme.
- 2) "The ex ante evaluation will help to improve the quality and design of the ESF and ERDF programmes and the strategic direction of the CSF funds and to verify that the objectives and targets can be reached. It provides the starting point for evaluation during the implementation of the programmes and establishes a basis for effective monitoring and evaluation.
- 3) "The ex ante evaluation accompanies the development of all aspects of the ESF and ERDF programmes in an iterative process with the Scottish Government so as to support the submission of the proposals for the ESF and ERDF to the European Commission. Characteristically, the ex ante evaluation process is both interactive and incremental, with evaluators required to make judgements and recommendations on programme plans. The Managing Authority will consider and, where appropriate, use feedback in later programmes"

This Ex Ante Evaluation process provides an opportunity for Social Enterprises and Third Sector Organisations to become involved and feed in comments on the shape and size of programmes.