



EUROPE & SCOTLAND
European Regional Development Fund
Investing in a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Future



EUROPE & SCOTLAND
European Social Fund
Investing in a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Future

Communications Strategy

European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 Programmes

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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

Background

1. This Communications Strategy sets out the aims, objectives and mechanisms for communicating the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2014-2020 programmes in Scotland. Specifically, it covers the European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Operational Programmes for Scotland and related activities.
2. It adheres to European Commission regulations set out below and was submitted to the Commission on 1 June 2015.
 - [1303/2013, articles 115-117 and Annex XII](#)
 - [1304/2013, article 20 Youth Employment Initiative](#)
 - [Commission Implementing Regulation 821/2014, chapter II and Annex II](#)
3. The strategy provides the strategic communications aims of the Scottish Government (Managing Authority) for the ERDF and ESF 2014-20 programmes and the communications obligations of lead partners. It sets out key stakeholders and interest groups who require up to date and accurate information about ERDF and ESF activity on a regular basis, the communication channels providing this information, and monitoring and evaluation procedures to support continuous improvement.
4. The strategy will ensure ERDF and ESF communications activity is robust and effective, and that information being communicated is clear, accurate and consistent.
5. The publicity requirements for lead partners are the minimum set by the European Commission. The requirements underpin a partnership approach to communications activity between the Managing Authority and lead partners which is designed to maximise publicity opportunities. The publicity requirements are available on the ESIF website: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/esif-publicity-requirements-2014-2020/>

2007-13 Programme Evaluation - Lessons

6. In June 2012 Hall Aitken conducted an independent evaluation of the communications strategy for the 2007-13 programmes. It made a number of recommendations for 2014-20 ERDF and ESF activity:
 - To ensure project sponsors (lead partners in the new programme structure) identify communication opportunities at application stage and that these are used throughout the project lifecycle;
 - To ensure staff understand the role of the funds and what they are designed to deliver;

- That project sponsors should use different media forms to promote key funding messages;
- That large scale communication campaigns need detailed branding guidelines to ensure consistency at different levels and across different media;
- That projects need to build in communication plans from the beginning;
- That projects should proactively use social media;
- That logos and guidance from the Managing Authority should be media friendly and easy to reproduce.

The report found that projects viewed publicity requirements as necessary and that there was a good understanding of the need for promotion and effective communication. The report recommended that the Managing Authority facilitate an exchange of best practice between projects or support capacity building to encourage better communications activity.

Aims

7. The key aims of the ESIF 2014-20 Communication Strategy are to:

- Promote the role of the EU and the contribution ESIF make to Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth in Scotland and the EU 2020 Strategy.
- Ensure lead partners and other interested parties understand the new ERDF and ESF funding structures.
- Ensure lead partners fully comply with the communications obligations as set out in the Publicity Requirements, and that they work with the Managing Authority to maximise ERDF and ESF publicity.
- Ensure effective supportive measures are in place to maintain the communications partnership between the Managing Authority and lead partners.
- Ensure the communications activities of the Managing Authority and lead partners effectively raise awareness and understanding of the European Commission's strategic priorities of Smart Growth, Sustainable Growth and Inclusive Growth.
- Ensure consistency of messaging about ESIF in the communications activities of the Managing Authority and to support consistency in the activities of lead partners.
- Ensure effective monitoring and evaluation measures are in place to improve communications activity in the long term and to support continuous improvement.
- Ensure potential beneficiaries are aware of funding opportunities, including calls for applications, timescales for applications and any changes to the criteria of the application process.

Actions

8. To achieve these aims the actions of the Managing Authority include:

- Developing key messages for ESIF to support clarity and consistency of messaging across Managing Authority and lead partner communication channels, and to strengthen partnership communications activity.
- Maintaining the Managing Authority webpages to provide a reliable online information source for use by the Managing Authority, lead partners and other interested parties.
- Continued support to lead partners and other interested parties as required in relation to the Scottish Government's corporate identity including the website and logos.
- Proactively maintaining Managing Authority social media channels to promote the programmes, and working with lead partners to coordinate and share relevant information through social media.
- Using planning tools and coordinating with Scottish Government Communications team to record upcoming events, announcements and schedule publications including blogs and tweets.
- Supporting lead partners in fulfilling their obligations set out in the publicity requirements.
- Providing opportunities for the Managing Authority and lead partners to share information and learning, and to support and promote communications best practice.
- Proactively identifying events and opportunities to widely promote the ESIF 2014-20 programmes.
- Participating in EU-level communications networks to support continuous improvement in communications activity about the programmes in Scotland.
- Effectively monitoring and evaluating Managing Authority communications activity to support continuous improvement.

Stakeholders

9. There will be shifts in key stakeholder communication needs, and types of key stakeholders, throughout the duration of the ESIF 2014-20 period. However, the list below sets out the existing key stakeholders for the programme – those organisations and individuals requiring regular, accurate updates throughout the programming period:

- Scottish Ministers;
- Scottish Government Communications Teams;
- Scottish Government Directorates and Divisions;
- Lead Partners – Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Transport Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Zero Waste Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Funding Council, Local Authorities;
- Delivery Agents;
- Third Sector organisations;
- Political Representatives – MPs, MSPs and MEPs;
- European Commission – communications staff and desk officers;
- Member States – ESIF communications officials.
- Beneficiaries

Key Messages

10. Messages for ESIF activity will be tailored depending on the audience and the channel being used. The strategic core messages below are designed for general use by the Managing Authority and lead partners when promoting ESIF, although it is recognised that they will be tailored to suit particular channels and audiences:

- Since 1975, sectors and regions across Scotland have benefitted from European Structural and Investment funds. These funds have helped to build digital networks, roads, harbours and causeways; invested in urban regeneration and business premises; and supported skills and training
- The current (2014-20) programmes are worth over €872m (over £787m) to Scotland, with over £547m already committed to projects
- The ESIF 2014-20 programmes will help facilitate major investments to support transformational change and economic and social structural reforms across Scotland
- The ESIF 2014-20 programmes will be invested in tandem with significantly larger public funds, working together to enable large-scale economic and social structural reforms
- The ESIF 2014-20 programmes aim to support the delivery of the EU 2020 Strategy priorities of Smart Growth, Sustainable Growth and Inclusive Growth

- The European priorities of Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth will deliver benefits to people and communities across Scotland including helping to build an innovative, low-carbon economy, improving the competitiveness of Scotland's SMEs, reducing poverty, increasing workforce skills and providing practical routes into work for people facing multiple employment barriers
- Programme partners are working ambitiously to ensure ESIF successfully delivers long-term growth for Scotland and for Europe
- We remain committed to delivering the ESIF 2014-2020 programmes until their closure, irrespective of the UK's vote to leave the EU in 2016

SECTION 2 – INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY MEASURES

1. The European Structural Funds and State Aid division of the Scottish Government – the Managing Authority – is responsible for the strategic communications activity for the ESIF 2014-2020 programmes. Under the new structure lead partners are responsible for fully complying with the Publicity Requirements. Maximising communications activity in the long-term depends on effective partnerships between the Managing Authority and lead partners, linking activity through effective channels and tailoring messages to suit specific audiences.

Annual Publicity Activity

2. The Managing Authority is responsible for facilitating one major publicity activity a year to promote ERDF and ESF activity in Scotland, in line with 2.1.2(a) of Annex XII of the CPR.

Approved Operations

3. The Managing Authority is responsible for maintaining a list of approved operations, in line with 1 of Annex XII of the CPR, including the data fields outlined and translation of the headings to other official languages.

Communication Channels

Website

4. The Scottish Government's European Structural and Investment Funds website (<https://www.gov.scot/policies/european-structural-funds/>) is the primary source of information for the 2014-20 programmes. Content relating to the 2007-2013 programmes has been archived on the previous website (www.gov.scot/EuropeanStructuralFunds).
5. News of ministerial announcements are published on the main SG newspapers (<https://news.gov.scot/>). Other news or updates released by ESIF will be posted on the ESIF blog (<https://blogs.gov.scot/european-structural-and-investment-funds/>).
6. Lead partners and stakeholders on our mailing list will be contacted through the e-bulletin advising of any news updates published to the blog e.g. calls for applications and progress reports. Lead Partners and stakeholders are encouraged to follow our blog to keep up to date with other ESIF 2014-20 activities including announcements and case studies.

Social Media

7. The ESIF Twitter account [@scotgovESIF](https://twitter.com/scotgovESIF) is used to distribute accurate, up to date information about the programmes, as well as other relevant information of interest to stakeholders. In particular the account drives viewers to the website where relevant information will be posted.
8. The Publicity Requirements provide guidance for lead partners about linking their own social media channels to [@scotgovESIF](https://twitter.com/scotgovESIF) when promoting ESIF-supported activity.

Media

9. Print, online and broadcast media will continue to be used as a channel to promote ESIF activity to a wide audience. The Managing Authority will work with communications teams of Lead Partners and the Scottish Government to issue timely and accurate press releases focusing on strategic activity. Responsibility for this will sit with the ESIF Communications and Engagement Manager with support from the Governance Team.
10. To reflect the new 2014-20 structure lead partners need to work in partnership with the Managing Authority to maximise media coverage about the awarding of funding for individual projects. Responsibility for coordinating this activity lies with the lead partner programme contact, lead partner communications staff and the ESIF Communication and Engagement Manager and Governance Team.

Ministerial and Official Visits

11. To promote ESIF in Scotland the Communication and Engagement Manager and Governance Team will arrange, co-ordinate and support Ministerial and official visits within agreed procedures and standards, working alongside lead officials from the relevant Managing Authority teams and lead partner contacts.

Other Communication Channels

12. In its work to proactively raise awareness and understanding of ESIF the Managing Authority may develop and adopt new communication channels not referred to here. When new channels are being developed lead partners and key stakeholders will be kept up to date.

Blog

13. The Managing Authority launched an ESIF blog in April 2017. The Communications and Engagement Manager creates blogs with support from Managing Authority staff ensuring new and up to date content is published on a regular basis. Lead partners and stakeholders are encouraged to provide contributions in the form of case studies and engage with blogs which will be promoted through Social Media and the newsletter.

Communications Staff

14. The European Structural Funds and State Aid Division currently has one member of staff working on communications with support from the governance

team to ensure ERDF and ESF information is accurate, accessible and consistent.

15. Responsibilities of the Managing Authority communications staff include maintaining the Scottish Government digital channels (web, blog and social media); planning, coordinating and delivering any media-focused activity about ESIF; organising communications and promotional events; encouraging communications best practice and to support continuous improvement; providing general communications support and advice to lead partners; and attending and sharing information from communication seminars and events run by the European Commission.

Networks/Meetings

16. Membership of the EU-led networks for communications and publicity (run by DG Emloi and DG Regio) continues, in particular, with the INIO Informal Network of ESF information Officers and the INFORM Network (the Information and Communication Platform). Both of these forums provide an opportunity for sharing best practice and addressing publicity issues at an EU level. Information from these meetings will be shared with lead partner communications staff to support best practice and innovative communication.

Publicity Requirements and Branding

17. The publicity requirements for the ESIF 2014-20 programmes, as mandated by European Commission Regulation (EC) 1303/2013, are available on the ESIF website: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/esif-publicity-requirements-2014-2020/>
18. The publicity requirements set out the minimum requirements which Lead Partners **must** adhere to when developing and delivering ESIF operations. These requirements are set by both the European Commission and the Scottish Government.
19. It is a condition of grant that any assistance received by a project from the European Union through ESIF is clearly and appropriately acknowledged in all publicity material publications, public procurement documents and events.
20. It is the responsibility of the beneficiary – lead partner or delivery agent under the 2014-20 programmes – in receipt of the funds to ensure all regulations outlined in this document are complied with. If an operation has not complied with the publicity requirements, ESIF funding may have to be repaid to the Scottish Government.
21. A ESIF Publicity Toolkit has been published on the ESIF webpages of the SG website (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-publicity-toolkit/>). This is a summary designed to help lead partners meet the European Commission regulations and to effectively promote the funds.

SECTION 3 – FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Indicative Budget

1. The Scottish Government, European Structural Funds Division, has an allocated publicity budget of between £25,000 and £30,000 per annum for the Managing Authority to fund communication activities and the implementation of this Communications Strategy.
2. The Managing Authority communications budget does not cover:
 - The day to day publicity activity of the lead partners;
 - Support received from other areas of Scottish Government, for example from the Marketing Unit or the Digital/Website teams.

SECTION 4 – ADMINISTRATION

Management and Control

1. The Managing Authority may revise the Communications Strategy during the programming period. If any modifications are made, the revised strategy will be submitted to the Programme Monitoring Committee for approval.

Communications Contact Details

In line with [1303/2013, articles 115-117 and Annex XII](#) the designated information and publicity contact will be:

Patrick Douglas-Early
Communications and Engagement Manager
European Structural Funds and State Aid Division
The Scottish Government
3rd Floor, Atlantic Quay
150 Broomielaw
Glasgow
G2 8LU

Email: europeanstructuralfunds@gov.scot

2. The Communications and Engagement Manager will provide updates on strategic communications and publicity activities as and where necessary, with support from the Governance Team.

SECTION 5 – MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements

1. To ensure the communications activities of the Managing Authority are effective, and to promote continuous improvement, specific monitoring arrangements will be put in place. These may include:
 - Commissioning media monitoring surveys as required to ascertain the frequency of European Structural and Investment Funds media coverage in Scotland, and to assess amount and tone of coverage;
 - Regular analysis of social media channels, particularly Twitter, to assess development of online engagement activities;
 - Quarterly review of Managing Authority website to assess activity and ways to improve it;
 - Regular stakeholder surveys will be conducted using methods including the Managing Authority website, Twitter and stakeholder events;
 - An evaluation of Managing Authority communications activity will be included in the annual update to the PMC. The update will include a summary of the monitoring activity as outlined above.
 - Introduction of an events and content management system to ensure regular promotion of activities both by the Managing Authorities and lead partners.

Annual Reporting

2. The Managing Authority will update the monitoring committee on the implementation of the Communications Strategy and publicity requirements, and on the planned information and communication activities for the following year taking into account the monitoring and evaluation results.