

ERDF Priority 3 – Evidencing Non-financial support to enterprises prior to National Rules clarification

In the 2014-20 ESI Fund Programmes the Commission has adopted a much stronger focus on the achievement of outputs and results. This is evident in the introduction of the performance framework for 2014-20 period which strengthens the result orientation of the ESI Funds. This means that when claims are submitted the Managing Authority now conducts checks on all aspects of delivery to ensure a correct and complete audit trail has been retained of both expenditure and activity.

In this context, and through experience of checking claims for activity taking place in the early part of the Programmes, the Managing Authority has taken the decision to update the National Rules to provide clarification on the need to provide a breakdown of 1 day (typically 7 hours) support being provided to enterprises. The National Rules stipulate that this evidence must be certified by the contractor/support provider. Recent verifications have found that this breakdown is not being provided to evidence the achievement claimed and follow up discussions with Lead Partners (LPs) have revealed that the requirement that the evidence is certified by a contractor cannot be fulfilled for some of the support that has already been provided.

Going forward the Managing Authority (MA) would expect that LPs put systems in place to meet the requirements detailed in the National Rules. However, it is recognised that for activity that has already taken place it may be difficult for LPs to fulfil the certification requirement, particularly where a contractor has been used and there is no longer any contact with that contractor. The LP must be able to evidence that reasonable attempts¹ have been made to secure the necessary certification. However, where LPs are still unable to provide the certification the MA will accept a statement (on headed paper) from the contractor or the enterprise provided that the support received is clearly detailed and equates to at least 1 day (7 hours). An invoice stating that 1 day of support has been provided is not sufficient. Please note that this only applies to activity before the revision to the National Rules on 1st March 2018. For all non-financial support after the revised National Rules it is expected that LPs have the necessary evidence.

¹ Evidence of reasonable attempts may take several forms but examples would be where the Lead Partner can provide copies of letters/emails which show that at least 3 attempts have been made to contact the Consultant. Please note this is not an exhaustive list and other forms of evidence may be acceptable.