

## CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

### STUC Response

The STUC has also contributed to the Scotland Europa joint response by members.

***Question 1 – Are there other areas you think the Partnership Agreement should address?***

***Question 2 – Do you think these thematic objectives will best address Scotland's short-term and long-term challenges?***

***Question 3 – Do you think there are any other thematic objectives which should be addressed?***

***Question 4 – Do you think the Scottish Themed Funds will address Scotland's key challenges?***

***Question 5/6 – How do you think the governance and delivery arrangements will impact on your sector/organisation?***

The STUC is not currently included as a Lead partner and as a key social partner would welcome further dialogue on the proposals for Strategic Delivery Partnerships and the inclusion of the STUC in the development process. The STUC represents over 630,000 trade unionists, the members of 37 affiliated trade unions in Scotland. The STUC speaks for trade union members in and out of work, in the community and in the workplace, in all occupational sectors and across Scotland. The STUC's representative structures ensure that they can speak with authority for the interests of women workers, black workers, young workers and other groups of trade unionists that otherwise suffer discrimination in the workplace and in society.

The STUC and its affiliated trade unions have been successfully delivering European funded projects in Lowlands and Uplands Scotland and Highlands and Islands Scotland over the last 5 years. Through the support of ESF funding, union learning activities are assisting workers by providing learning opportunities in the workplace which aim to enhance their productivity and job satisfaction and expand opportunities for career progression, ultimately contributing to more secure employment. Union learning activities have also been very successful at providing training and support for hard to reach learners in the workplace, indeed it is acknowledged that "trade unions engage with and raise aspirations of individuals in the workplace that other agencies struggle to reach" (Scottish Government 2007).

It is suggested that "*Delivery operations through SDPs will ensure that most current beneficiaries of ESI funding will continue to have opportunities to access funding.*" It also suggested that one of the eight thematic objectives across the ESI Funds is skills and lifelong learning. The STUC would suggest that none of the suggested

lead partners have a wholly specific focus on workplace learning as the STUC does. Furthermore, none of the lead partners have the knowledge and experience the STUC and its partner trade unions have about worker's learning and training needs, or the unparalleled and unique access and reach trade unions have to workers across Scotland. With no specialised focus on workplace learning at lead partner level, it is perhaps questionable whether the skills and lifelong learning objective can be fully realised.

The STUC in LUPs is successfully delivering a project under ESF Priority 5 as a strategic body and has to date provided over 3000 learners with training opportunities. Clearly in designating the STUC as a strategic body in the current programme there was recognition that the STUC has the capacity, knowledge and capability to act as a national delivery body and provide a strategic delivery mechanism for skills development in the workplace. However the proposed governance structure appears to offer no opportunity to utilise the STUC's strategic capacity, knowledge and capability. The STUC and its affiliated trade unions are in a unique position to engage with those in employment and it is crucial that SDPs contains the most appropriate partners who will contribute to achieving the Programme objectives.

***Question 7 – Are there any unidentified governance or delivery arrangements that could aid simplification of the future programmes and ensure that the Structural Funds complement each other?***

***Question 8 – What other delivery mechanisms do you think would be feasible for delivering youth employment initiatives?***

***Question 9 – What other measures could be taken to reduce the audit and control pressures?***

The process for audit and control needs to be clearly outlined at the outset so that all involved in the delivery of the Programme understand what the requirements are. It is important that rules and regulations are applied consistently and that different interpretations do not cause long delays. Quicker decision making is required and better communication during the Programme on the common issues arising.

It is unclear at present what impact the proposed move to an outcome based approach will have on training projects and there should be some consideration for soft outcomes in development of this approach. While recognising the reasoning behind the proposal to link payment clearly to an outcome, given that it can take a considerable time to deliver an outcome, smaller organisations may see this as a barrier and be deterred from taking on the role of delivery agent. While there is a suggestion of milestones being built into the outcome process, which would help release some payment earlier, there is a danger that the delivery agents will be those organisations who can afford to wait for payment as opposed to perhaps the organisations who are best suited to deliver the Programme objectives. Consideration should be given to building some kind of contingency into the process to ensure that small organisations are not disadvantaged and enabled and supported to take on the role of delivery agents.

***Question 10 – Do you have any further comments on the proposals?***

Further detail is required about how the Highlands & Islands transition arrangements will work in practice and what that means for partners/delivery agents. There are clearly ambitions to allow lead partners and delivery agents with a national remit to deliver Scotland-wide projects. However, would these same partners/delivery agents also be able to deliver specific Highlands & Islands projects as well as Scotland-wide?