

CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

Question 1 - The table in part 5 provides an overview of the proposals under each of the EU 2020 headings – Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive – matched against the relevant thematic objective and investment priorities. Do you think the investment priorities are the most appropriate ones for the activity suggested?

Strategic Objective 1: Developing Scotland's Workforce

Universities are vital in developing Scotland's workforce of the future. Employability is embedded within our programmes at Stirling, and these are responsive to the needs of business and industry. Making the Most of Masters, a collaboration between the universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling places postgraduate students in work settings in lieu of a traditional dissertation. Working with Forth Valley College we have launched two new fully integrated, skills-based programmes with industry partners. These programmes promote employability and also access to higher education. Funds are welcomed which would allow the further development of innovative employability initiatives such as these.

Strategic Objective 3: Innovation

We support the proposals regarding innovation. The Encompass programme supported by the European Regional Development Funded (ERDF) is an example of what can be achieved with European Structural Funds. Encompass, a collaborative project between the universities of Stirling, Glasgow, Strathclyde and Aberdeen, is focused on increasing engagement between small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and the knowledge-base in universities through raising business awareness of the benefits of and opportunities for research-led innovation.

Innovation must be embedded as part of a broader, market-led, business support programme. Innovation funds should not only support the research aspect of innovation, but the subsequent and critical commercialisation aspect as well. The Sporting Chance Initiative, based at the University of Stirling and supported by ERDF funds has established itself as a hub for business and innovation in sport and has already supported the development of 528 business opportunities across 445 SMEs. Critically, the Initiative is supporting economic growth in an emerging business sector, unlocking substantial new possibilities. Such innovative approaches to economic development must continue to be supported through ESF.

Strategic Objective 2: Business Competitiveness

This priority addresses only a limited number of high growth companies. While these are important, they are currently too few in number and too restricted in scope. A significant number of small and medium sized enterprises have the ability to innovate, but require firstly, research and innovation support and secondly business support to develop and grow such as through that provided by the Sporting Chance Initiative. Expanding this objective to allow for businesses exhibiting medium growth and/or operating in emerging or cross-sectoral business areas would have a more substantial impact on overall economic growth.

Question 2 – Section 6 sets out the linkages between Structural, Rural and Fisheries Funds as well as linkages to other EU Funding Programmes. We would welcome stakeholder comments on these linkages in order to help us develop this thinking further

Avoiding duplication or funding 'gaps' between the funds is important. Funds should also be offered which are not bound by Scotland's key sectors to support industries such as sport which make a significant contribution but cross a number of sectors.

Question 3 - Do you think the new proposals will have a positive or negative impact on the protected characteristics and wider issues of inclusion and participation?

Question 4 - If you think there will be a negative impact on the protected characteristics or inclusion and participation please provide suggestions as to what could be done differently to diminish this impact.

Question 5 - Please provide your views for improving the process for design, procurement, delivery, monitoring and evaluation to strengthen delivery of sustainable development.

Responses relate to projects and are drawn from experiences from an ERDF/ESF funded sports project:

- Match funding amounts
 - Funding of 50% or higher from EU funds would ease the sourcing of match funding and allow a closer match of criteria between funders. If a large amount of match funding has to be found, the likelihood is that the criteria for the programme or project will have to be broadened to accommodate the requirements of all funders. This could dilute the central focus of the project and reduce the likelihood of creating sustainable results.
- Eligibility of spend for projects
 - Some essential aspects of project work have proved ineligible under ESF/ERDF funding. For example, in order to deliver a project, recruitment and HR costs are incurred, together with redundancy for staff remaining until the final close date. Only some of these costs are admissible despite them being a requisite part of any project delivery. Allowing budget for staff training (even if this has to be early in the project) would enable teams to up-skill more quickly, delivering more effective and sustainable results.
- Sport
 - Recognising the significant, and growing, role played in the economy by sports businesses (revenues of almost £1800 million in 2008, and employment of over 50,000) would allow a focus on development of this area, supporting businesses who currently fall into a 'gap' between existing key sectors. Additionally, development of sports and physical activity services and products contribute directly to Government targets of increasing activity and reducing obesity.
- Timescales
 - Whilst an often accepted timescale, three years is not an optimum period for delivery of sustainable growth via a project mechanism. Particularly where a project is set up to address an existing gap in provision, there is often a longer lead time than is expected, and many projects are not operating with any level of effectiveness until well into their second year. Extending timescales to 4 or 5 years would not only ensure that the funded project produces more sustainable outcomes, but this also gives greater scope for securing future funding and allowing beneficial work to continue beyond the first project end date.
- Lead partners

Where possible it would be beneficial for lead partners to have a level of specialist knowledge which leads to more effective support of programmes and projects. If this is unachievable for partners themselves, then a peer-review / support group could be

set up for different specialities, offering feedback and support as well as contributing to consistency amongst similar programmes/projects.

Question 6 – Do you have any further comments on the proposals outlined in this document?

