

MAINSTREAMING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN SCOTTISH STRUCTURAL FUNDS PROGRAMMES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Scottish Structural Funds Programmes have since the 1997/99 programming period actively pursued the integration, or mainstreaming, of the Horizontal Themes of Equal Opportunities and Sustainable Development into the design and delivery of the Programmes. Projects, to be eligible for support from European Structural Funds, are required to demonstrate how they will promote equal opportunities and sustainable development, and to report on their achievements in these respects. The Scottish Programmes' approach to mainstreaming equal opportunities has been underpinned by recognition that individuals and groups in society do not have the same resources, situations and needs. In the 2000-6 Programmes, the European Commission gave a particular focus to 'gender mainstreaming', whilst the Scottish Structural Fund Programmes follow the spirit of the Amsterdam Treaty, which takes a broader view of equalities which sees gender equality as one of a number of key strands, along with disability, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation and age.

Post of Equal Opportunities Adviser

The post of Equal Opportunities Adviser (EOA) to the Scottish Structural Funds Programmes was created in August 2002. The Programme Management Executives and the Scottish Structural Funds Forum had identified that a systematic approach was required to tackle some of the challenges involved in mainstreaming equal opportunities in the Programmes and it was agreed that a dedicated seconded post of national Equal Opportunities Adviser should be created to take forward the co-ordination of mainstreaming activities within and between the Programmes. For the first two years, the post was jointly funded by the Programme Management Executives (through Technical Assistance) and by the Scottish Executive Equality Unit. The seconded post of Equal Opportunities Adviser came to an end on 31 December 2006 and this report details the work she has carried out with the Scottish Programmes to mainstream equal opportunities.

This report aims to:

- situate the Scottish Programmes' approach in the equal opportunities policy background in Scotland, the UK and the European Union
- examine the Scottish Programmes' approach to mainstreaming equalities in the 2000-2006 Programmes;

- provide good practice examples of how each of the Programme Management Executives as intermediate bodies worked towards mainstreaming equal opportunities, reflecting a broad range of activities
- identify some challenges and some key messages for mainstreaming equal opportunities in Structural Funds Programmes.

2. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY BACKGROUND

UK Equal Opportunities Policies

A number of changes took place in equal opportunities legislation in the UK in 2006. The Equality Act 2006 introduced a move towards more proactive equality legislation, in line with the amended Race Relations. The Equality Act introduced proactive legislation through Public Sector Duties on disability and gender equality; the creation of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (subsequently renamed the Equality and Human Rights Commission) which merged the previous Equality Commissions, the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission, and the Equal Opportunities Commission. We have also seen an increased focus on mainstreaming equalities, for example in Community Planning Partnerships' Regeneration Outcome Agreements and in Best Value arrangements.

Public Sector Duties

The Public Sector Duty on disability equality came into force on 4 December 2006 and ensures that when public authorities are carrying out their functions they have due regard to:

- promoting equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people;
- eliminating discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act;
- eliminating harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability;
- promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people; encouraging participation by disabled people in public life; and
- taking steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment

The public sector duty on gender equality came into effect in April 2007 and means that service providers and public sector employers will have to design employment and services with the different needs of women and men in mind.

The duty will require public bodies to set their own gender equality goals in consultation with service users and employees and to take action to achieve them.

Our experience of mainstreaming equal opportunities in the Structural Funds in Scotland has made an important contribution to the debate on how public authorities respond to the public sector duties, for a number of reasons. Structural Funds have been an important lever for encouraging the mainstreaming of equal opportunities and our experience of mainstreaming provided lessons for organisations preparing to meet the public sector duties on equal opportunities.

In particular, we would point to:

- ♦ the importance of partnership working, learning from and sharing experience and expertise between organisations;
- ♦ the key role that can be played by senior staff in organisations in providing leadership and positive messages on the relevance of mainstreaming equal opportunities;
- ♦ recognition that resources must be committed to make the shift from policy to practice; and
- ♦ the importance of consultation, involvement and engagement with individuals and groups facing discrimination and with equality organisations.

Our approach emphasises both the social justice and business cases for building equality into projects. We recognise the importance of identifying and sharing good practice and we acknowledge that resources must be committed to make the shift from equal opportunities policy to practice. We also understand the crucial role of partnership working in sharing expertise, advice and understanding.

Age Discrimination Legislation

In October 2006 new legislation came into force to protect workers from age discrimination, making it illegal for employers to discriminate against employees, trainees or job seekers because of their age and to ensure that all workers, regardless of age have the same rights in terms of training and promotion. The legislation covers direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and includes all workers and those taking part in or applying for employment-related training, including further and higher education courses.

Scottish Government Policies

Equality Strategy

The Scotland Act 1998 gave the Scottish Parliament the power to encourage equal opportunities, particularly the observing of equal opportunity requirements. The Scottish Parliament also has the power to impose duties on Scottish public authorities and cross border public bodies operating in Scotland.

In November 2000 the Scottish Executive published its "Equality Strategy: Working together for equality" which outlined how the Scottish Executive planned to change the way it works to ensure the prevention and elimination of discrimination between persons on grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes including beliefs or opinions, such as religious or political beliefs. The Strategy defined mainstreaming as "the systematic integration of an equality perspective into the everyday work of government, involving policy makers across all government departments, as well as equality specialists and external partners."

"Making Progress: Equality Annual Report" was published in 2003 and charted the progress which the Scottish Executive, working with the Scottish Parliament, the statutory equality bodies and many other organisations and individuals, was making with the Equality Strategy. It recognised achievements to date but acknowledged there is still much to do. This report indicated the breadth of the work which was being undertaken across the Scottish Executive to tackle inequality and discrimination. It demonstrated the commitment of the Scottish Executive to making a real difference to the lives of people who experience prejudice, exclusion, unfairness and injustice.

A key part of the public sector duties is the requirement to undertake an impact assessment of all of the Scottish Government's policies to ensure that they do not inadvertently create a negative impact for equality groups. It is the Scottish Government's policy that the equality groups they consider extends beyond those three areas covered by a public sector equality duty and includes six equality strands (age, disability, gender, race, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, and religion and belief).

The Scottish Government Equality Unit developed an Equality Impact Assessment Tool, recognising that impact assessing all Scottish Government policies is a process and will take time to deliver. The Equality Impact Assessment Tool is available to all staff via their internal intranet and a read only version of the Equality Impact Assessment Tool is available online.

The key points of the Scottish Government's mainstreaming strategy are:

- It is a long term strategy that aims to make sure that policy making is fully sensitive to the diverse needs and experiences of people
- It leads to improved policy making through better information, greater transparency and openness in the policy process
- It involves groups and individuals who experience inequality and discrimination in informing policy making through effective consultation mechanisms
- It tackles the under-representation of disadvantaged and excluded groups through encouraging wider participation
- It tackles structures, behaviours and attitudes that contribute to or sustain inequality and discrimination
- It can avoid policies and programmes being adopted that continue existing inequalities or make them worse
- It complements lawful positive action that is designed to address long-term historic disadvantage experienced by specific groups as a result of discriminatory practices and structures

The Scottish Government acknowledges that mainstreaming requires:

- leadership and political commitment to the principles and processes of mainstreaming equality
- commitment and ownership across the organisation for the principles and processes of mainstreaming
- work on mainstreaming equality to be integrated with departmental work plans and policy objectives
- guidance, advice, training and support to help departments to develop mainstreaming
- appropriate data, information and research to inform the development of policy and programmes
- policy appraisal and impact assessment with ongoing monitoring, evaluation, audit and review
- networks and effective mechanisms of consultation with external bodies and interests
- an acknowledgement that mainstreaming is not a quick fix and requires time and resource

The Scottish Government has also been engaged in a range of proactive campaigns to fight discrimination. Examples include:

One Scotland: No Place for Racism is the Scottish Government's campaign designed to tackle racism, aiming to raise awareness of racist attitudes, highlighting its negative impact and recognising the valuable contributions that other cultures have made to our society. The Scottish Government funded a range of projects tackling racism, including 'Show Racism the Red Card' which works to take the anti-racist message to Scottish schools and football clubs through resources, events, competitions and partnership working, and 'Heartstone' which is an organisation that uses stories, in particular photojournalism, to present the issues to children and young people, working with schools, colleges, youth groups. The 'One Workplace Equal Rights' project was launched in 2004 by the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and aims to tackle racism and promote equal opportunities in workplaces across Scotland as well as build the capacity of trade unions to bargain for, and promote, equality in the workplace. The project provides information and support to employers, employees and trade unions through: a free advice line; a website; awareness seminars; distribution of promotional material; and training. This project was part of a Scottish EQUAL Development Partnership, funded by the EU EQUAL Community Initiative.

Close the Gap

Scottish Government was also a partner, along with the STUC, Scottish Enterprise, Careers Scotland and the Equal Opportunities Commission Scotland in the 'Close the Gap' campaign working across Scotland with those who can influence the gender pay gap, as well as with those who are affected by it. The main focus of the project has been developing innovative methods for raising awareness and capacity building around the pay gap. Close the Gap initially received ESF funding from the EQUAL Community Initiative and has continued to develop. Key outputs from the project include training of workplace equal pay representatives; the first outdoor advertising campaign on the pay gap in Scotland; development of negotiating kits for trade unionists; awareness raising materials for HE and FE student officers; research into the gender pay gap in the Highlands and Islands; online training material for Scottish Enterprise employees; a guide to comparing jobs for equal value for SMEs; and undergraduate and postgraduate modules on women in the workplace.

Fresh Talent

The Fresh Talent Initiative was launched by Scottish Executive in February 2004 with the aim to address the impact of demographic changes which impact on Scotland's economic future, and stressing the benefits of a diverse and skilled workforce. It promotes Scotland as a place to live and work, as a destination for people applying for UK permits, and encourages overseas students at Scottish universities to stay in Scotland after their studies. In launching the Fresh Talent Initiative, the then First Minister, Jack McConnell, stated that "The single biggest challenge facing Scotland as we move further into the 21st century is our falling population" and "if we are to make Scotland even better, if we are to compete – and succeed – in the global economy, we need a constant flow of fresh talent to flourish alongside our home-grown talent."

Fresh Talent is aimed at students; entrepreneurs looking to start up businesses in Scotland; Scottish businesses who want to recruit overseas workers; and immigrants and returning Scots who want to live and work in Scotland. The Initiative aims to promote Scotland in a number of key markets, including recent EU accession states. As part of this initiative, a 'Welcome Pack' in Polish was produced to encourage Polish workers to relocate to work in Scotland – www.szkocja.eu.

The Relocation Advisory Service has been set up to offer services to help people to relocate and work in Scotland, and employers can direct potential employees to this service to gain information on a range of issues related to living and working in Scotland.

EU Equality Policies

The Treaty of Amsterdam introduced Articles to include equality between men and women, tasking the Commission to include the promotion of equality between men and women and to aim to eliminate inequalities between men and women. It introduced Article 13 which enabled the Council to take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

The Lisbon European Council in March 2000 agreed a new strategic goal for the EU to strengthen employment, economic reform and social cohesion as part of a knowledge-based economy. The Lisbon Strategy, as this EU flagship economic policy is known, has three key elements to increase competitiveness of the European Union:-

- an economic pillar preparing ground for transition to a competitive, dynamic, knowledge-based economy. Emphasis is placed on the need to adapt constantly to changes in the information society and to boost research and development
- a social pillar designed to modernise the European social model by investing in HR and combating social exclusion. Member States are expected to invest in education and training and to conduct an active policy for employment, making it easier to move to a knowledge economy
- an environmental pillar, added at the Gothenburg European Council in June 2001, draws attention to the fact that economic growth must be decoupled from the use of natural resources

The Lisbon Strategy invited the European Commission and Member States to further integrate aspects of equal opportunities in employment policies, including reducing occupational segregation and helping to reconcile working and family life. The Lisbon Council set quantitative targets for achieving gender equality in economic life, such as that of raising women's employment rate in the EU. The targets stress the importance of fostering and mainstreaming ways of giving women equal access to the knowledge-based economy.

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities focus strongly on issues of gender equality, and are actively engaged on issues such as gender pay gap, reconciliation of working and private life, migrant women, gender budgeting, gender-based violence and trafficking in women, gender balance in decision-making, women in science. A European Institute for Gender Equality was recently established, based in Lithuania, with a budget of 52.5 million euro for the period 2007-13. The remit of the Institute is to "collect, analyse and disseminate relevant objective, comparable and reliable information as regards gender equality, carry out surveys on the situation in Europe as regards gender equality, organise ad hoc meetings of experts to support the Institute's research work, encourage the exchange of information among researchers and organise, with relevant stakeholders, conferences, campaigns and meetings at European level".

DG Employment are also involved in promoting disability equality. The Disability Action Plan constitutes an operational framework for actions to be developed at EU level between 2004-10. Regular, biannual updates of the Plan and continual dialogue with key stakeholders take place to try to ensure that actions carried out by the Commission are relevant and targeted. The EU Disability Strategy has three main components – co-operation between the Commission and Member States; full participation of people with disabilities and mainstreaming disability in policy formulation.

DG Employment's Community Action Programme on anti-discrimination ran from 2001 until 2006 and placed particular emphasis on the involvement of discriminated groups. The Programme was designed to support activities combating discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The three core objectives were: to improve understanding of issues relating to discrimination through analysis and evaluation; to develop capacity to combat and prevent discrimination through building and strengthening inter-organisational dialogue and to promote awareness raising activities,

3.THE SCOTTISH STRUCTURAL FUNDS PROGRAMMES' APPROACH TO MAINSTREAMING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES - SOME KEY ELEMENTS

Background

The Scottish Programmes adopted a pro-active approach to ensuring that equal opportunities were mainstreamed as a horizontal theme in all projects and Programmes. The concept of mainstreaming is one which we both advocate and practice in the Scottish Programmes. A Programme strategy paper "Mainstreaming the Horizontal Themes – The Scottish Approach" gives the following definition:

"Mainstreaming, if it is to be properly understood and applied, requires that the policy objectives of the Horizontal Themes be embedded in design, appraisal and implementation through to the monitoring of activity and subsequent evaluation of the outcomes and delivery mechanisms. In effect, the process and means of achieving the desired outcomes is as important as the desired outcomes themselves. What we are seeking to achieve is positive change in attitude and approach to the Horizontal Themes, not only in respect of Structural Fund supported actions but across the spectrum of activities and services provided by applicant organisations.

To bring about this degree of change requires considerable effort in terms of raising awareness, providing advice and guidance including examples of good practice, encouraging and promoting positive actions through case studies and demonstration schemes, in order to illustrate with real live projects what can be achieved. Much of this effort involves building a consensus of the need to introduce improvements at all levels and in all aspects of regional economic development. Demonstrating both the value, relevance and derived benefits of fully integrating the horizontal themes is critical to achieving consensus and 'buy in' from policy makers to practitioners."

There are strong parallels between the two horizontal themes of equal opportunities and sustainable development and the Scottish Programmes, where possible, addressed these themes in complementary ways.

Mainstreaming was taken forward in a number of ways in the Programmes: through direct promotion to projects; by hardwiring the importance of equal opportunities into the eligibility criteria for award decisions; and lastly, through good practice dissemination, demonstration and advice provided by the National Advisor for Equal Opportunities. The general success of a mainstreaming approach was highlighted in the reports of the mid-term evaluations and subsequent updates and continues to be a key feature of Structural Funds delivery in Scotland.

Definition of Equal Opportunities

The 2000-6 Scottish Programmes took their definition of equal opportunities from the Scotland Act which states:

“the prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between persons on grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions.”

A Dual Approach – Mainstreaming and Positive Action

In the 2000-6 Scottish Programmes there was a ‘twin-track’ or dual approach to mainstreaming equalities, combining scope for *positive action* - discrete projects which work with individuals or groups who face particular disadvantage in accessing economic opportunities; and mainstreaming - a requirement that *all* funded projects *evidence they address equalities* in their activity.

Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities

Training and awareness raising carried out by the Scottish Programmes emphasised an approach to mainstreaming which: encouraged projects to consider equalities in their activities as a **matter of routine**; which focused on facilitating **cultural** change on the part of organisations leading to **practical results**; with the aim of embedding equalities in Structural Funds Programmes’ **formulation, implementation and evaluation**.

Positive Action Projects

All Structural Funds Programmes had scope for positive action projects, however the uptake of these has differed across different Programme Measures. The Scottish Objective 3 and Highlands and Islands Special Transition Programme European Social Fund Programmes for 2000-2006 had specific measures to fund positive action projects. Uptake was slower than anticipated in the first years of the Programmes, and Programme Management Executive staff were actively involved in development work with partner organisations to encourage them to consider submitting applications for positive action projects, and the EOA was involved in discussions with PME staff to examine possibilities for funding positive action projects specific to each Programme. Development work involved, for example, giving examples of existing projects at awareness raising and training sessions, and on Programme websites. This development work led to a range of positive action projects being funded by the Programmes, including training for men and women in sectors and occupations where they have been traditionally under-represented, such as construction, higher level ICT, and engineering projects for women, and social care and childcare projects for men.

The lack of positive action projects was not confined to the Structural Funds Programmes. The Equal Opportunities Commission, through the Equality Exchange, held seminars to highlight issues of positive action, and the EOA was involved in these, highlighting opportunities in Structural Fund Programmes to fund positive action projects.

There may be a number of reasons to explain a lack of uptake on positive action projects, including:

- uncertainty about the difference between positive action which is legal and positive discrimination which is not;
- in some organisations the approach to equalities is one of mainstreaming into policy and practice rather than discrete activity with one target group;
- until relatively recently, equality legislation was more strongly focused on disability and race rather than gender equality;
- difficulty in finding match-funding for positive action projects
- problems with accessing relevant, up to date disaggregated data to evidence demand

Examples of positive action projects in the 2000-6 Programmes include: capacity building projects for particular target groups, provision of ESOL and accreditation of prior learning for migrant workers and refugees, training and support projects that address accessibility issues; entrepreneurship projects which target women, disabled people and other equality groups; training for women and men in occupations and sectors where they are under-represented; childcare provision and training for childcare workers, including men into childcare and social care projects; family learning centres; and training for women in higher skilled and higher paid occupations.

4. EMBEDDING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SCOTTISH PROGRAMMES

In recognition of the considerable task of raising the profile of the horizontal themes across the activities of the Scottish Structural Funds Programmes, various management structures were put in place to direct and oversee the mainstreaming process. At the national level a Structural Funds Equal Opportunities Forum and a Sustainable Development Forum were established, both convened by the Scottish Executive and comprising representatives from the PMEs, partner bodies and the relevant competent authorities. Membership of the Forums were enhanced by the National Advisers for Equal Opportunities and Sustainable Development to the Scottish Structural Fund Programmes. The remit of the national advisers was broadly to work with the partnerships in examining current practice on mainstreaming in Structural Fund Programmes, publicise good practice and share experience within and across Programmes through training support and good practice guides.

Structural Funds Equal Opportunities Forum

The Scottish Structural Funds Equal Opportunities Forum was established in 2000 and is made up of representatives from the five Structural Funds Programme Management Executives, the Scottish Executive European Structural Funds Division and Equality Unit, COSLA, Scottish Enterprise, SCVO, UHI Millennium Institute, Craigmillar European Partnership, Equal Opportunities Commission, Equality Network, and the Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee. The Forum met twice a year and offered the opportunity to discuss Programme mainstreaming issues with other practitioners, sharing expertise and experiences.

In 2004 the remit of the Equal Opportunities Forum was revised as follows:

- 1) Consideration of what the Scottish Structural Funds Programmes are doing to ensure mainstreaming of Equal Opportunities including dissemination, publicity and awareness raising to the beneficiaries and to the Partner organisations.
- 2) An opportunity for those running projects to advise on their efforts and whether these could be mainstreamed.
- 3) Ensure that the PMEs are continuing to direct EU funding to areas in line with Scottish and National policy developments. To ensure that this is happening, it is important that the views of the Scottish Executive Equality Unit, Scottish Parliament and the Commissions on Equal Opportunities, Race Equality and Disability are all taken into account.
- 4) Raise awareness of the Scottish Programmes as potential funding sources for equal opportunity projects.

Complementarity with Sustainable Development – Posts of National Advisers

In 2002, the posts of national advisers on equal opportunities and sustainable development were created. Whilst the two advisers had separate roles and distinct policy areas to promote, they increasingly worked collaboratively with the Programmes. This was in part in response to the fact that there was considerable commonality in the way in which these issues were addressed in the Programmes and the manner in which appropriate solutions were designed and delivered. Equally, the process of mainstreaming also demands a significant level of collaboration, co-ordination and sharing of experience and good practice. This collaborative approach reinforced the complementarity and overlap between the two broad policy areas and further demonstrated the need for not only greater coherence but also more effective articulation and integration of these key policy objectives.

The two national advisers made a substantial contribution to the work of the Mid Term Evaluations (MTEs) and Mid Term Evaluation Updates (MTEUs) of all five Scottish Programmes, regarding the assessment of the horizontal themes. They provided objective input to the exercise, being members of all five MTE Steering Groups. Having had this unique insight across all Programmes, they were able to produce reports highlighting common themes and issues arising from the MTEs and MTEUs and assisted, where appropriate, in the implementation of the recommendations of the respective MTEs and MTEUs.

Post of Equal Opportunities Adviser

The work priorities for the Equal Opportunities Adviser (EOA) were agreed as follows:

- Work with Scottish Structural Funds Partnerships to examine current practice on EO mainstreaming in Structural Fund Programmes, and publicise good practice and share experience within and across Programmes
- Examine systems used by Programme Management Executives (PMEs) to monitor equal opportunities and suggest improvements to monitoring systems
- Map out the training needs for PMEs and help develop appropriate training programmes to be undertaken by PMEs
- Advise Steering Groups and consultants on equalities issues in the Mid Term Evaluations of the programmes, and ensuring that the methodologies used in evaluation embed equal opportunities
- Discuss with equalities agencies the need to identify sources of baseline information
- Consider how to facilitate positive action projects
- Identify and publicise good mainstreaming practice from other Member States which is transferable to Scottish Programmes

Working with the Programme Management Executives (PMEs)

It was recognised that a mainstreaming approach should not solely rely on specialist input from a national adviser, and that it was essential that all key staff of the PMEs, and the members of the Advisory Groups, who are required to appraise projects, would continue to develop their understanding and knowledge of the horizontal themes and how they could be addressed appropriately across a wide range of development activities. This ensured that the horizontal themes were not seen as the sole province of specialist advisers where they could have been a danger that they were marginalised, but were properly regarded as the responsibility of all concerned in the management and implementation of the Programmes.

In some Programmes the horizontal themes were given prominence through the activities of horizontal themes policy groups, comprising members drawn from the Programme partnership organisations, some expert advisers and senior staff or dedicated policy officers from the respective PMEs.

The EOA worked closely with each of the PME's, with the aim of improving how each Programme mainstreamed equalities in all aspects of their work. Advice and training was provided, building on the work already undertaken by the PME's, by developing specific workplans for the EOA's work with each PME. The Programmes' systematic approach to mainstreaming was reflected in a number of activities detailed below.

The Equal Opportunities Adviser worked with the PME's to help deepen the understanding of equalities for all PME staff. While the Equal Opportunities Adviser's day to day contact on equalities issues was mostly with those members of PME staff responsible for equalities, and who attended the Structural Funds Equal Opportunities Forum, it was seen as vital that all PME staff improve their understanding of equalities issues and how they themselves could put this into practice and help provide advice and information to partners. One of the strengths of the PME's was that they had a positive image as equal opportunities organisations and staff training played an important role in ensuring that all staff could play their part in this, whether it was making sure that venues for awareness raising and other events were accessible to disabled people, or giving information to project applicants about how best they could reflect and report on their equal opportunities activity.

The Equal Opportunities Adviser developed training plans for the PME's to take this forward and provided equalities training where necessary. Training sessions with staff addressed issues such as discussions on the implementation of a mainstreaming approach; updates on equal opportunities legislation; how best to monitor equal opportunities in projects, and how best to develop a PME Equal Opportunities Action Plan.

Action Plans

Programme-level Equal Opportunities Action Plans were produced with the aim of developing and sharing good practice throughout Operational Programmes and at broadening the understanding and importance of equal opportunities for all partners. These action plans were approved by the respective Programme Monitoring Committees during 2001 and were also submitted to the Equal Opportunities and Sustainable Development Forums for their consideration to ensure consistency between the Programmes, and to establish an overview of the approach to mainstreaming at a pan-Scotland level. These action plans described the context, identified any distinctive characteristics of the Programme, and set out priorities and a future programme of work for the duration of the Programme. They contained commitments to mainstream equal opportunities through monitoring of projects, to provide training and awareness, information gathering for inclusion in Annual Implementation Reports for the European Commission, and promotion of equal opportunities in project appraisal and selection criteria.

Application and Selection of Projects

In the 2000-6 Programmes, the PMEs developed a systematic approach to mainstreaming equal opportunities, from support during a project's development phase, during the delivery of a project, right through to evaluation of a project's impact. The PMEs worked to ensure that appraisal systems for projects could identify where projects were committed to considering the equality implications of their project. The horizontal themes were a core appraisal criteria for all Programmes and the PMEs worked to ensure that applicants were provided with sufficient guidance, both written and verbal, to allow them to understand how to mainstream equalities effectively, and how to report their activity in application forms, claims reporting, and during project monitoring visits.

PME Training And Awareness Raising

All Programmes held regular events for their partnerships, ranging from introductions to their particular Programme through to sessions focusing on particular topics. General awareness raising sessions included sessions on mainstreaming equal opportunities, and as the Programmes progressed, contained more concrete examples from 'live' projects. The Equal Opportunities Adviser was involved in identifying and delivering training to a range of Programme partners, including awareness raising and training for project applicants, both at events with an 'equalities' or 'horizontal themes' focus, and at general Programme awareness raising events

In the Scottish Programmes, selection of projects involved a peer appraisal process and as Advisory Group members often were project applicants themselves, awareness raising and training helped to cascade mainstreaming throughout the partnerships. Advisory Groups carried out the appraisal of projects, including assessing how well projects addressed equal opportunities, therefore training and sharing expertise for Advisory Groups was extremely important. Timing of the training for Advisory Groups reflected the timetables for each Programme and took place at different times of the year, depending on Programme deadlines.

The EOA was actively involved in the Advisory Group training on the horizontal themes, along with the Sustainable Development Adviser. Separate training sessions were held for each Priority and this allowed for much more in-depth consideration to be given to what the specific issues on equal opportunities and sustainable development were for that particular Priority. The national advisers worked with PME staff to develop programmes of training and awareness raising programmes for Advisory Group members, focusing on project development, local case studies, updates on legislation and action planning. The training packages were updated regularly to reflect changes in legislation to reflect the fact that membership of Advisory Groups were subject to change and to allow for the feedback of good practice examples from 'live' projects.

Equal Opportunities Guidance and Information

The EOA worked to provide advice which was appropriate to economic development programmes, highlighting both the social justice and the 'business case' for mainstreaming equalities. Contact with Programme partners such as Advisory Groups and project sponsors allowed the EOA the opportunity to find out from partners what equalities advice they wanted and how they would like that information to be provided (eg checklists, training, signposting to other information sources), reflecting their development from 'why' mainstreaming is necessary to 'how do we do it'. Partners were encouraged to see how they could address equalities in ways which were proportionate and relevant to their project activity.

Guidance on equal opportunities developed as the Programmes developed, and as project sponsors and PME staff became more familiar with the concepts and processes involved in mainstreaming. Guidance to projects in the earlier part of the Programmes focused on providing definitions of equal opportunities, key equality target groups, and why it was important to take issues of equality seriously in projects. As the Programmes developed and projects had more knowledge and expertise, guidance shifted more towards 'how to mainstream' rather than 'why mainstream?' or 'what is mainstreaming?', and to providing concrete examples of how ESF and ERDF funded projects had embedded equality into their project design, activity and evaluations.

Information Provision

Information was provided to projects and partner organisations in a variety of ways. All of the PME websites contained sections for project applicants on equal opportunities, providing fact-sheets, Frequently Asked Questions, information on legislation, downloadable versions of equal opportunities toolkits and checklists, and links to the websites of the Equality Commissions and equality organisations which could provide further information, advice and assistance.

Newsletters produced by the PMEs often carried features on equal opportunities issues, highlighting examples of good practice in projects, providing information and advice on changes in legislation, or reports of events with an equal opportunities focus.

Events

Gender Mainstreaming Conference (UK and Ireland)

The Scottish Executive and the five Scottish PMEs hosted the third in a series of annual Gender Equality Conferences for UK and Ireland Structural Funds Programmes. It was held at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall on 19 November 2003. In keeping with the multi-strand approach to the horizontal themes in Scotland, the conference theme was widened to address the full spectrum of equal opportunities strands rather than focus exclusively on gender equality.

Around 180 equal opportunities policy practitioners participated from across the UK and Ireland and keynote speakers were Lewis Macdonald, the Scottish Deputy Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning (who had Structural Funds in his ministerial portfolio) and José Palma Andres, Director of DG Regio.

The conference included workshops on a range of topics including a stock-taking of the methodologies for equal opportunities used by the Mid Term Evaluations, the difficulties in generating positive action projects, and the challenges of mainstreaming equal opportunities in rural areas. Overall, the conference proved to be a valuable opportunity for a comparative review of the results of the Mid Term Evaluations with respect to equal opportunities.

Mainstreaming the Horizontal Themes Good Practice Event

This event took place in Dunfermline in October 2004 and was attended by around 120 delegates from the Objective 2 and 3 Partnerships and from other EU Member States. Keynote speakers included Christine May MSP, Deputy Convener of the Scottish Parliament's Enterprise and Culture Committee, Pierre Schellekens from European Commission DG Environment, John Markland, Chief Executive of Scottish Natural Heritage and Rona Fitzgerald, Head of Policy and Parliamentary Affairs, Equal Opportunities Commission Scotland. The event included practical workshops based around 'live' projects supported by the Eastern Scotland Objective 2 Programme, the Scottish Objective 3 Programme and the EQUAL Community Initiative in Scotland. The workshops focused on sharing experience of mainstreaming equal opportunities and sustainable development, and feedback from delegates was positive.

The workshops provided an opportunity for delegates to share experience of mainstreaming the horizontal themes and commenced with a short presentation on the project, followed by more in-depth discussion on delegates' own experience of mainstreaming. For the final plenary session an expert panel was assembled which included keynote speakers and members of ESEP's Key Policies Group. Three publications were launched at this event, "Linking Sustainable Development to Regional Regeneration (produced by National Adviser on Sustainable Development), "Mainstreaming Sustainable Development: Review of the ESEP Approach and Guidance for Applicants" and "Equality in Practice – Making it Work).

Sharing Good Practice and Developing Case Studies

This was one of the key aspects of the Equal Opportunities Adviser post. Work with the Scottish Programmes had demonstrated that there was a great deal of good practice on how partners have mainstreamed equalities in projects and evidence that a lot of the good practice is under-reported. The PME's were committed to sharing good practice and the Equal Opportunities Adviser was actively involved in developing the most effective mechanisms to identify and share experiences.

Equal Opportunities Good Practice Guide

In 2004 "Equality In Practice – Making It Work: A Practical Guide for the EU Structural Funds" was produced by the National Adviser. The guide provided projects with an easy-to-use manual to help ensure that mainstreaming equal opportunities takes place at each stage of project design and delivery, and to share the extensive experience of mainstreaming equal opportunities in projects funded by the Structural Funds in Scotland. The Guide provided good practice examples and case studies taken from a range of projects from the five Scottish Programmes and the four Community Initiatives.

Discussions with partner organisations and projects highlighted an increased demand for an exchange of experience guide, which used real examples from projects funded through ESF and ERDF. The guide provided contact details to facilitate exchanges between projects and Programmes, and the clear message in the guide was that all projects can address equal opportunities issues. The range of projects covered activity in:

- business start up and growth
- community economic development
- research and development
- urban development
- rural development
- industrial sites and premises
- tourism
- training for employed people
- training for non-employed people

and presented case studies from projects, giving consideration to how projects have addressed equal opportunities issues. It also importantly detailed the challenges they faced and how these were overcome, and covered all five Scottish Programmes and the EQUAL Community Initiative. The guide was also designed to help with monitoring equal opportunities in projects - projects could develop checklists for their own activity from examples in the guide, and PME's could develop checklists for project monitoring.

The Guide was a useful tool for PME's for awareness raising with projects, and it was well also received by partner organisations, projects, staff in the European Commission, and Structural Fund Programmes in the rest of the UK and other EU Member States. A pdf version of the Guide is available for download from the PME websites:

www.esep.co.uk

www.hipp.org.uk

www.objective3.org

www.sosep.org

www.wsep.co.uk

Monitoring and Evaluation

The EOA developed checklist and monitoring guides to help support Programme Management Executive staff carrying out project monitoring visits, giving some suggestions on how to monitor progress on equal opportunities. Monitoring of equal opportunities is central to a mainstreaming approach. This was seen as important for a number of reasons:

- It is a very good way of identifying examples of good practice, eg innovative ways of data collection, partnership working, which are often under-reported by projects;
- It can help to recognise where there are any discrepancies between the activity proposed in the approved application form, and what is actually being delivered;
- It is a useful way to gauge what type of advice and support is required to meet project sponsors' needs; and
- It can help PME staff respond to these needs through awareness raising, sharing of good practice, and relevant information sources.

The EOA carried out training with PME staff to customise the guidance and checklists to the needs of each Programme.

5. SHARING GOOD PRACTICE FROM PMEs' MAINSTREAMING ACTIVITIES

This chapter provides examples from each of the Programme Management Executives, showing just the range of activities undertaken in mainstreaming the horizontal themes. These examples are a 'snapshot' illustration of just some of the activities undertaken by PME staff and project sponsors.

Eastern Scotland European Partnership

Key Policies Group

ESEP's Key Policies Group was set up to oversee and accompany the implementation and mainstreaming of the Programme's Sustainable Development and Equal Opportunities horizontal themes. It was a non-executive group sitting alongside the Advisory Groups and met regularly to review progress, and to initiate and manage new activity. It combined expertise on sustainable development and equal opportunities and comprised PME staff, representatives from the Scottish Government, the Scottish ESF Objective 3 Programme, environmental agencies, local authorities, Scottish Enterprise, ESEP's Sustainable Development Consultant Adviser and the National Advisers on Equal Opportunities and Sustainable Development.

The Key Policies Group had responsibility for maintaining progress on ESEP's mainstreaming of the horizontal themes of Equal Opportunities and Sustainable Development. The priorities for the Group were initially set out in the Mainstreaming Sustainable Development Action Plan. Subsequently this was strengthened by giving additional weight to the inclusion of equal opportunities expertise. The main priorities for the Group were to continue the programme of awareness raising; and to give support and encouragement to positive actions to demonstrate the horizontal themes in practice. The Group had an ongoing interest in sharing experience with other European regions, building on a track record of more than 7 years of taking part in EC initiatives, seminars and exchanges of good practice. It also maintained awareness of developments in policy and practice in sustainable development and equal opportunities at UK, Scottish and EU Programme levels.

Three features of the Key Policies Group's way of working are worth highlighting. First, the Group is the successor to the Steering Group of ESEP's successful EC sponsored pilot project of applying sustainable development to SF Programmes in the 1997-99 Programme. This continuity has given the Group a track record and considerable experience.

Secondly, it continues to be chaired by ESEP's Director and its broad and representative membership gives the Group leadership and status, and also ensures it remains rooted in the wider partnership.

ESEP Approach to Mainstreaming Sustainable Development and Equal Opportunities

The third key feature is ESEP's particular approach to mainstreaming. This aims to make the horizontal themes integral to the Programme as a whole and to all projects. It does not treat the themes as discrete or separate strands of an economic development programme, but aims to see economic development, social inclusion, equal opportunities and environmental responsibility bound together in all ESEP's activities.

Following the Mid Term Evaluation of the Programme in 2003, ESEP committed itself to conducting a dedicated evaluation exercise at both quantitative and qualitative levels on the achievement, economic impact and wider benefits of their approach to mainstreaming Sustainable Development.

In 1998 ESEP, along with 11 other European regions were part of the European Commission DG Regio pilot action on mainstreaming Sustainable Development into regional regeneration.

ESEP's approach sought to bring about positive changes in attitude, behaviour and practice in all activities supported by European Structural Funds, encouraging its adoption as routine business across applicant organisations. A recurring issue was how best to measure the impact of a mainstreaming approach in regional regeneration was that assessing attitudinal and behavioural change is not amenable to conventional evaluation methodologies since they depend largely upon quantitative assessments of project monitoring data and specific vertical Measures or Priorities targeted for example on environmental actions. ESEP agreed to adopt methods of qualitative assessment, based on the 12 sustainable development core criteria as a key evaluation tool. These criteria were seen to be essential to the project selection process, and in encouraging project sponsors to embed a holistic approach to Sustainable Development, and were incorporated in Article 4 monitoring.

The Mid Term Evaluation of the Programme noted that the Key Policies group

“has a very strong practical orientation in that it delivers training and awareness raising events to and with the engagement of, Programme partners, thereby involving a wide range of partner organisations. The improvement of project applications and how project applicants address the horizontal themes in more detail now, can be regarded as a measure of success in this context. This has also been confirmed by the project manager surveys and the researched case studies.

The Group ensures that the principles of the horizontal themes are being adopted through project design and proposed practice and that the objectives and targets for the Programme are being met. Care has also been taken to represent relevant expertise throughout the various committee structures.”

The other strand to awareness raising arose as a result of actions by the Scottish Executive. Earlier Key Policies Group reports noted the significance of the requirement within the duty on Best Value to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and to secure equal opportunities. Work based on the ESEP guidance and good practice case study approach was undertaken to produce guidance for Scottish local authorities and for the wider public sector in Scotland. Scottish Executive established a Steering Group on Best Value and Sustainable Development and invited three members of the Key Policies Group to be the external members of this Steering Group. Through this activity, the experience of ESEP was shared with a much wider range of public bodies, with the aim of mutual sharing of experience and learning on how to make further progress on mainstreaming these horizontal themes.

The MTE of the East of Scotland Objective 2 Programme 2000-2006 in its section “Efficiency and Effectiveness of Monitoring and Implementation Procedures” states that “in addition, the inclusion of Horizontal Themes into application, appraisal and monitoring process has been managed successfully, even to the extent of best practice in the case of the set-up of a Key Policies Group, and the integrated manner in which training/awareness raising workshops have been implemented”.

Highlands and Islands Special Transition Programme

Highlands and Islands Equality Forum

The Highlands and Islands Equality Forum is an ESF funded project to raise awareness of equality issues and delivers equality training at local levels to small businesses, voluntary organisations, education institutes and public authorities, working in partnership with Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, University of Highlands & Islands, local authorities and Communities Scotland. It was funded by ESF through the Highlands & Islands Partnership Programme. HIEF’s work programme focuses on six strands: training and learning; awareness raising; events; research; communication; and strategic programme and greatly adds to the understanding and practice of mainstreaming in the HISTP area.

Some examples of their activities are detailed below.

The Forum held a Business Seminar in September 2005 which brought together members of the business community to discuss the impact of equality and diversity. The seminar was successful in encouraging both business networking and the exchange of thoughts, ideas and opinions.

In November the Forum held an Employment Opportunities Event in Inverness which attracted over 100 people. It brought together ‘inclusive’ employers - those who do not discriminate and who welcome applications from under-represented groups - and people searching for job opportunities.

2006 saw HIEF actively involved in a range of consultations and networking activity. They participated in four major consultations: for the Equal Opportunities Commission on their Corporate Plan; for Fair Play Scotland; for the Disability Rights Commission on the Public Sector Duty on Disability; and submitted evidence to the Scottish Parliament on equal opportunities, with a focus on disability equality issues.

HIEF's involvement in strategic planning groups increased, working with national and regional groups to influence and shape the equality agenda, e.g. the Scottish Executive Race Equality in Rural Areas Strategic Group; Scottish Women's Convention Women and Poverty Group; Highland Wellbeing Alliance Equality & Diversity Strategy Group and Age Strategy Group and the Scottish Voluntary Sector Equality & Human Rights Coalition Group.

Roadshows and Training

HIEF's approach to training was responsive to local needs and was designed and delivered to overcome barriers of rural geography, providing training to local areas, including sparsely populated areas, and at a time that suits local needs, for example 12-2pm, 5-7pm, 7.30-9.30pm. HIEF held awareness raising roadshows in spring and autumn of 2006 throughout the Highlands & Islands area, reflecting a significant increase in demand for these events. Workshops were open to all businesses, organisations and individuals, and provided information on changes to equality legislation, including changes to the equal opportunities legislation, the public sector duties on gender and disability and changes to legislation on religion and belief and sexual orientation.

In addition to the roadshows, HIEF delivered training sessions, covering topics such as general awareness raising, disability awareness, race and gender, age, attitudinal challenging and case history workshops (interactive sessions), guidance on new public duties, and train the trainer sessions with key networks such as the Adult Literacy Network, and each training package was customised to meet clients' needs. The Forum also provided aftercare to organisations who have been involved in roadshows, training and learning events or consultations, and included: cards for providing contact details (followed up within two weeks); one-to-one meetings for follow-up work; signposting to further information or contacts; and problem solving for organisations on specific issues, for example regarding legislative requirements. In 2005/6, 80% of beneficiaries said that their awareness had improved after one of HIEF's sessions (89% for roadshows and 71% for training events).

Work with Employers

HIEF promoted diversity and equality in the workplace and delivers training to employers to help promote understanding of all equality issues in the workplace, challenging prejudice and attitudes and ensure equal opportunity policies are in place and monitored. The Forum identified examples of best practice within the private sector to act as role models and motivators to other SMEs, and to highlight champions of any new equality legislation. HIEF have developed an approach which has been increased the number and range of employers involved with the project, including: using venues that businesses would use

themselves; using extended lunchtime sessions to fit with business needs; going to businesses to deliver training; fitting training into other training days or sessions; and flexibility and willingness to talk to businesses and be reactive to their needs.

HIEF regularly received training requests from businesses and organizations, and this is a useful indicator of interest in equality issues. Examples of requests have included: a repeat of the roadshow to workforce/board/managers; information on attitudinal change – how do you change behaviour?; help with compliance on the public sector duties; and sign-posting to other equality services

HIEF presented a common sense approach, providing reassurance that much is achievable and aiming to take away people's fear of 'getting it wrong'. Their work reflected their understanding of the importance of interacting with people, of building up knowledge and understanding of how to communicate with people from marginalised groups. Also, their flexible approach to training - taking training to where clients are, helping them identify their training needs, working with them to develop a training solution, and delivering free training at times which suit the client, have been very successful.

Welcome Pack

HIEF were actively involved in preparing an online Welcome Pack for newcomers to the Highlands, particularly those whose first language is not English, and which can be used by agencies and organisations working with newcomers. Migration has become an increasingly important issue for the HISTP area, with growing numbers of migrants, particularly as a result of the enlargement of the European Union. The welcome pack contains information on where to get help and advice on issues such as work and money, health, education, accommodation, law and personal safety. The pack is available online in English, Polish, Latvian and Lithuanian versions at http://highlandlife.net/welcome_pack.

Further information on the work of the Highlands & Islands Equality Forum can be found at www.hief.org.uk

Scottish ESF Objective 3 Partnership

Equal Opportunities Questionnaires

The Scottish ESF Objective 3 Programme for 2000-6 had five horizontal themes: Sustainable Development; Lifelong Learning; Support for Local Initiatives; the Information Society and Equal Opportunities. As the Programme developed, the Programme Management Executive introduced various tools to help measure how projects were implementing the horizontal themes throughout all areas of development and delivery of projects, and these were refined and modified as project sponsors became more skilled in integrating the themes. For example, with regard to Equal Opportunities, the PME were keen to find ways of monitoring mainstreaming activity at a project level, and developed and used project questionnaires to identify and share good practice in projects. During the earlier part of the Programme, a questionnaire was issued with the grant award letter to project sponsors receiving funding from the Programme. The aim of the questionnaire was to encourage applicant organisations to address a range of equal opportunities issues, from policy to practice by providing written details on how they would integrate equal opportunities into their activity.

In the latter part of the Programme period, a new form of questionnaire was developed, this time gathering information on all five horizontal themes. The questionnaire was developed by the PME and the National Advisers and all projects completed a questionnaire on their project activity, which was submitted with the project's final claim. The questionnaire enabled project sponsors to record their progress in mainstreaming the horizontal themes, including equal opportunities, and to identify examples of good practice. In December 2005, the PME consulted with partner organisations on how user-friendly the questionnaire was, and based on their recommendations, some alterations were made to the structure of the questionnaire, eg allowing online completion of the form, which also allowed the PME to extract response data electronically and prepare reports based on project sponsors' responses.

In general the results of the questionnaire were very positive and have not only demonstrated that horizontal themes have been integrated well into projects, but they have also provided additional information regarding how the themes have been mainstreamed. Ongoing analysis of the questionnaires offered a useful insight to innovative approaches, case studies, and to identify any problem areas that the PME could assist projects with, for example, by sharing experience between project sponsors.

The completed questionnaires returned from projects contained important information on mainstreaming the horizontal themes and the PME produced a report which detailed some of the good practice employed by partner organisations which will be useful and interesting to projects and programmes beyond the EU Structural Funds, providing concrete examples of 'solutions' to other projects.

The following are just some examples of the range of mainstreaming activity that has taken place in Objective 3 funded projects:

- Steering Groups have been used to implement equal opportunities policies
- Some projects have actively advised partners and employers to also implement an equal opportunities strategy
- Some projects have reduced inequalities by assisting beneficiaries to change their mind set to think about value of training and employment
- Several projects have had focused marketing campaigns, as well as strategies in areas such as flexible working times.
- One project had installed a multi-cultural room as well as more standard access issues (disabled access etc)
- Several projects used focus groups with representation from various minority communities, one project even used house surveys to advise future activity.
- Recruitment methods used to ensure target groups are reached.
- Investment in disability access and specialist staff training
- Training materials developed to act against stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination.

A copy of the horizontal themes questionnaire can be downloaded from the Objective 3 website www.objective3.org.

Good Practice Awards

The Objective 3 PME introduced annual awards ceremonies to celebrate good practice in projects funded through the 2000-2006 Programme that have demonstrated exceptional activity in specific categories, based on project delivery and outcomes. The awards were a very good example in practice of the twin-track approach of positive action and mainstreaming - there was an award specifically for good practice 'Equal Opportunities', however, award winners in other categories very often provided good examples of mainstreaming. For example, at the 2005 Awards, the project which won the category 'Most Creative Use of Publicity' was a Construction Industry Training Board project 'Women into Construction'. This project raised awareness, provided careers and training advice and developed an employers' helpline, promoting equal opportunities.

The project's aim was to focus on encouraging women of all ages to adopt careers in a sector where they are underrepresented at all levels including craft, technician, management and professional. Again, the category of 'Best Support Package Provided to an Objective 3 Target Group' was awarded to Aberdeen City Council's Minority Ethnic Childcare project which was selected because of its ability to demonstrate a vast range of support to its beneficiaries from the very outset through its advertising, initial assessment of needs, interviews, interpreters, family-friendly timetabling and children's support. It was created to attract minority ethnic people who wished to train and work in the childcare sector.

South of Scotland European Partnership (SoSEP)

Horizontal Themes Learning Review Group

Background

At the end of 2005 a Horizontal Themes Review Group was set up to examine some of the issues regarding mainstreaming the horizontal themes identified in the Mid Term Evaluation and the subsequent Mid Term Evaluation Update. The SoSEP PME thought that it was important to acknowledge the body of knowledge on mainstreaming built up over the life of the current Programme, and to learn lessons from the experiences and processes. The Review Group was made up of PME staff, representatives from key partnership agencies across the South of Scotland, and the two horizontal themes national advisers.

The scope of the review was agreed as follows:

Objectives

- to re-assess, if appropriate, the impact of the Programme's activities on mainstreaming equal opportunities and sustainable development;
- to formulate further recommendations on:
 - any short term action points which will help to strengthen effective mainstreaming of the horizontal themes during the remainder of the 2000-6 Programme
 - ways to build on the experience of the current Programme to help ensure that equalities and sustainable development are at the heart of policy making across the South of Scotland after 2006, and help to demonstrate the capability of the current Programme itself to leave a sustainable legacy

Outputs

Production of a report which:

- addresses the question of what the South of Scotland the predominant issues of mainstreaming equalities and sustainable development;
- provides recommendations that are realistic and achievable; and
- has the capacity to inform and invigorate discussion about the effective integration of horizontal themes into future corporate strategies

Review Group Workshop

The Review Group held a workshop was held in June 2006 involving a cross-section of project managers from the South of Scotland Programme and the discussion focused on:

- project managers' experience of applying the horizontal themes to individual projects within the programme;
- project managers' experience of the outcomes from the process – what has been achieved on the ground; and
- views (obtained through small group discussion) on what sorts of actions might help to improve integration of the horizontal themes in any structural funds programme applicable to the South of Scotland after 2006

The Review Group used the feedback from the workshop as the basis for drawing up findings and recommendations. They benchmarked the findings from the workshop against findings from other surveys and research work carried out at a Scotland-wide level. The group looked into solutions or initiatives put in place elsewhere in order to harness wider good practice experience.

The main conclusions arising from the review were:

- a) There are sources of funding available to help specifically with equal opportunities or sustainable development issues. The difference between these and European Structural Funds is that the purpose of the latter is to encourage applicants to incorporate equal opportunities and sustainable development principles into wider economic development activity. The challenge therefore is for people to make this link. The difficulty was the risk of perceptions that in terms of economic or business development or achieving more competitiveness, equal opportunities or sustainable development principles are seen as (at best) an add on or (at worst) an irrelevance or an additional and unnecessary burden. This is compounded when these themes are seen to focus on issues that are not viewed as being core.
- b) The experience of the current South of Scotland Objective 2 Programme suggests that the Programme has had a genuine and creditable impact on mainstreaming equal opportunities and sustainable development principles. It is important that this impact is not understated.
- c) At the same time, however, the Programme has highlighted a number of learning experiences and it would be equally important that these are used to allow the next programme to build further on the achievements reached to date. In particular, these experiences suggest that the critical need in terms of planning for the next round of structural funds is to successfully establish that there is a genuine link between economic development and achieving competitiveness on the one hand and incorporating equal opportunities and sustainable development principles on the other in order to achieve full understanding and commitment at all levels.

The fundamental first building blocks which the experience of the current Programme would suggest need to be in place in order to accomplish this are –

- ♦ to establish the business case for incorporating equal opportunities and sustainable development principles into economic development and business development activity.
- ♦ to have performance measures which have the capability to address equal opportunities and sustainable development issues relevant to specific geographical regions of Scotland and which thus help to reinforce the business case for active adoption of such principles.
- ♦ to have in place active leadership at the top and facilities for advice and support for those on the ground.

Strathclyde European Partnership

Equal Opportunities Working Group

At one of the regular training session for Advisory Group members the National Advisers and Advisory Group members discussed some of the challenges in measuring the impact of mainstreaming equal opportunities. As a result, a short-term Equal Opportunities Working Group was set up, and comprised members of Advisory Groups (Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, Stow College, SEPA, Ayr College, and Scottish Screen), PME staff and the Equal Opportunities Adviser. The remit of the group was to examine issues around measuring the impact of mainstreaming equal opportunities in projects supported through the Structural Funds Programmes, which could also be used by partners within their own organisations. The focus of the Working Group was on the equal opportunities strands of age, disability, gender and race/ethnicity (the equal opportunities issues captured by monitoring data). The Group also examined complementarity with the equal opportunities criteria applied by co-funders of projects as part of the development of the impact measurement system. It identified some key issues regarding harmonization of indicators for projects in receipt of funding from funding streams with different measurement systems.

The Group examined existing impact measurement systems to ascertain which of these could be used as the basis for the development of an equal opportunities tool. They also examined the equal opportunities criteria of match funders, and how a mainstreaming approach complements social inclusion and community planning strategies, focusing on issues such as how best to set baselines; some of the challenges in gathering information on equal opportunities; how best to report on progress; and trying to identify methodologies for measuring success. The Group also spent time considering how the Structural Funds experience could help public sector bodies meet the new equality duties being introduced at that time.

Programme Documentation

Equal opportunities features prominently in the key documentation for all five Scottish Programmes. The Western Scotland Objective 2 Programme provides good examples of how Programme documentation can make a positive impact in reinforcing messages on the importance of the horizontal themes to regional economic development programmes, by placing them in context, and encouraging projects to consider how they can be proactive on equal opportunities.

For example, the Western Scotland Single Programming Document (SPD) highlights the importance of consultation with partner organisations in preparing Programme documents. The partnership Plan Team met regularly, assessments of the Programme were carried out by expert environmental and equal opportunities organisations, consultation questionnaires were issued to partners and large scale meetings were held to feedback partners' views.

In the 'Economic and Social Context' chapter of the SPD, where possible statistics have been disaggregated by gender, disability and ethnicity, highlighting any specific equal opportunities issues arising from the analysis.

The SPD carried a clear aim to eliminate inequalities and to support the principles of mainstreaming equal opportunities at all stages of implementation of the Programme. One of the four Programme Strategic Objectives is to

"Promote Equal Opportunities - This objective will focus on the mainstreaming of equal opportunities relating to all aspects of the Programme to reduce inequalities and disparities. This will ensure the development of inclusive processes and procedures, impact on the eligibility and scoring of all projects and include scope for positive action projects to address specific inequalities.

Reference to equal opportunities was built into each of the Programme's Priorities and Measures, through the inclusion of measure-specific indicators on equal opportunities issues. Some examples are the measurement of:-

- ♦ No of gross new jobs created for disabled people
- ♦ No of gross new jobs created for members of ethnic minorities
- ♦ No of gross new jobs created for women
- ♦ No of organisations which introduce active people friendly policies
- ♦ No of childcare facilities created in areas of most need
- ♦ Sqm of childcare facilities created in areas of most need

Encouragement to projects to consider positive action or discrete projects reinforced the dual approach of mainstreaming and positive action. For example, in Priority 1 'Developing the competitiveness and innovative capacity of the region's SMEs', projects were encouraged to consider activity which will increase business formation, improve competitiveness and growth rates of businesses owned or managed by under-represented groups such as women, disabled people and people from ethnic minorities, and support the adoption of policies to encourage the reconciliation of work and personal life.

In Priority 2, 'Developing the region's competitive locations', projects were encouraged to consider improvements to safety and security of business and industrial areas and to promote actions to ensure equality of access to economic opportunities by removing barriers in the physical, environmental and social infrastructure.

The SPD also contains a Strategic Equal Opportunities Assessment of the Programme, carried out by the PME's Equal Opportunities Focus Group, highlighting how the equal opportunities objectives of the Programme can interact at Priority and Measure level. The Assessment highlights four equal opportunities objectives for the Programme: - extending entrepreneurship; focusing entrepreneurship; a balanced labour market; and equality of access.

6. MAINSTREAMING CHALLENGES

Mainstreaming equal opportunities in regional development programmes such as the EU Structural Funds Programmes is not without its challenges. Progress has been made on embedding equal opportunities into the structures, processes and procedures of Programmes, and more generally in organisations and projects, however there is a possibility that this could lead to complacency and a sense that equal opportunities has been 'done' or 'sorted' and less resources should be committed to it. In the Scottish Programmes we encouraged projects to look beyond the minimum legal requirements on equal opportunities and to share experiences and lessons of how they have developed innovative and effective ways of ensuring that equal opportunities are identified and addressed in all of their project activity.

Another challenge was how to best share the experience of mainstreaming equal opportunities beyond Structural Funds Programmes and projects themselves, how to engage policy makers and other funders by sharing examples of project activity and the systematic approach taken by the Programmes in working to embed equal opportunities into all Programme activities, processes, structures and practices. The success of the Programmes' commitment to sharing good practice between projects and beyond Structural Funds themselves highlights the importance of identifying the transferability of good practice, particularly in addressing issues of multiple discrimination and disadvantage, where a multi-agency and partnership approach is most effective.

Monitoring the impact of mainstreaming activity is also a challenge in economic development programmes, as horizontal themes targets are often qualitative rather than quantitative. How do projects measure and record changes in behaviour, attitudinal changes, increase in awareness of equal opportunities? The Scottish Programmes have tried to provide some qualitative detail on projects' equal opportunities activities through case study information.

Debates on mainstreaming equal opportunities often centre on the best way to implement a mainstreaming approach, for example through the use of 'champions' who have particular responsibility for these issues, or 'animateurs' who proactively encourage good practice, or through strong leadership from senior management, committees and boards on equal opportunities. There can also be difficulties where responsibility lies with one individual and effective practices and processes are not put in place. In that event, the impact may not be sustainable beyond that individual's involvement in a project. Our experience has been that an approach which can combine a range of approaches, which encourages engagement and buy-in at all levels will be the most effective way to tackle many of the barriers to mainstreaming.

7. SOME KEY MESSAGES

There is a risk that mainstreaming is a strategy that can encourage tokenism where public commitment is given in principle but where in practice little is achieved. A Scottish Executive report from 2003 "Learning from Experience: Lessons in Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities" notes that "Without co-ordinating structures, specialist expertise and lines of accountability, mainstreaming can become 'everyone's responsibility and no-one's job'."

It Requires a Systematic Approach

The experience of the Scottish Programmes highlights that a systematic approach can help mitigate against such tokenism. Partnership working has a particular contribution to make. The Scottish Programmes were delivered through a strong commitment to partnership and this also extends to the approach developed to mainstream equalities. A systematic approach should include:-

- ♦ High priority given to equal opportunities in the Programme documentation and activity
- ♦ Embedding equal opportunities in implementation structures e.g. appraisal, monitoring and evaluation systems
- ♦ Providing a range of guidance, which can be in published form, on websites, or delivered through awareness raising or training events

Importance of Sharing Good Practice

The emphasis on exchanging good practice encouraged project-to-project contact, sharing of expertise and experiences, and cross-sectoral working. This approach allowed projects working in partnership to make the most of the expertise and skills in their partner organisations; it avoided duplication of activity; was more cost-effective and efficient, and developed capacity in working with particular target groups.

Good practice examples from all of the Scottish Programmes show that there are opportunities to integrate equal opportunities in all regional economic development activity, and at all stages of a project's lifecycle, from initial design, through delivery and in monitoring and evaluation.

It is an Iterative and Longer Term Process

We should not underestimate the resources that are required to mainstream equal opportunities, in terms of commitment, time, materials and individuals, however the benefits of an effective mainstreaming approach are well evidenced.

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