

Ireland's National Strategic Report

In accordance with Article 29 (2) and (3) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999

December 2009



**Ireland's EU Structural Funds
Programmes 2007 - 2013**

**Co-funded by the Irish Government
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**EUROPEAN UNION
STRUCTURAL FUNDS**

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Introduction

Ireland's National Strategic report has been prepared in accordance with Article 29 (2) and (3) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006. It also follows closely the template as outlined in the European Commission's Information Note on the Indicative Structure for the National Strategic Reports 2009¹. It has been compiled by the Department of Finance following consultation and submission of reports and information from the Managing Authorities involved in the Structural Funds Programmes 2007-2013.

Over the period 2007-2013, Ireland has been allocated in total €901 million in Structural Funding. Of that amount, €750m is earmarked for the two Regional programmes (ERDF) and the national Social Fund programme (ESF). As was the case in the previous round, 50% of the funding is to be allocated to labour market activity funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and 50% to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The balance of €151m is for smaller Territorial Cooperation programmes, including the PEACE and Interreg programmes. Ireland is eligible for funding under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective (Objective 2) for 2007-2013.

The National Strategic Reference Framework was developed with a view to contributing towards achieving Ireland's National Reform Programme goals particularly the micro-economic and employment policy objectives. The priorities identified have a strong focus on the Lisbon Agenda and demonstrate a clear European added value. The priorities chosen for the European Social Fund are focused around upskilling the workforce and measures to increase participation and activation of the groups outside the workforce. For the European Regional Development Fund, the focus will be on supporting innovation, knowledge, and entrepreneurship in the regions, and strengthening the competitiveness, attractiveness and connectivity of the National Spatial Strategy Gateways and Hubs through improved access to quality infrastructure and promoting environmental and sustainable development.

The economic and financial downturn has impacted on the implementation of Ireland's EU Structural Funds Programmes. However, the Irish Authorities have utilised the flexibility in the regulations to amend the Operational Programmes while still achieving the overall strategic objectives.

¹ Final Version 18/05/09 Document COCOF 09/0018/01-EN

Chapter 1 - Overview

1.1 Socio Economic Situation and Trends

The economic situation in Ireland at the time of the agreement of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) in July 2007 was very positive. The macroeconomic projections for the 2007-2013 programming period as set out in the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) are listed in the table 1 below:

Table 1: Macroeconomic projections 2007 – 2013 (annual average)

	2007 – 2013 (per cent increases)
Gross National Product (GNP)	4 – 4½
Consumer Prices	2
Employment	2
Unemployment rate (per cent of labour force)	<5

Source: Department of Finance, 2007

Our National Investment Programme, the National Development Plan 2007-2013-Transforming Ireland predicted, based on the assumption of a broadly favourable international economic climate, that the Irish Economy would expand at an average rate of around 4-4.5 % over the period 2007-13².

The situation has changed dramatically since the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) was first agreed with the EU Commission on 27th July 2007³ due, in the main, to the global economic recession and financial crisis and domestically, the correction in the property market. The past eighteen months or so have been an exceptionally difficult period for the Irish economy.

1.2 Government's response to economic downturn

The Government response to the economic and banking crisis centres on three main approaches:

² National Development Plan 2007-2013 Transforming Ireland p51

³ COMMISSION DECISION of 27-VII-2007 approving certain elements of the national strategic reference framework of Ireland - CCI 2007 IE 16 U NS 001

a) Repairing our banking system, thereby facilitating the provision of adequate credit within the economy;

This is a prerequisite for economic recovery. Financial intermediation – directing funds from lenders to borrowers – is a key part of any modern economy. Global financial market turmoil, which began in mid-2007 and intensified in the autumn of last year, has had adverse implications for the world financial system. This global background, compounded by domestic factors, has had serious consequences for the Irish banking system. This has necessitated various public supports for the banking system, including the introduction of the bank guarantee, recapitalisation of some banks, and, in one instance, nationalisation. The purpose of these measures is to facilitate the security of savings and the efficient flow of credit to the wider economy in order to support activity and underpin employment; economic recovery is not possible without a properly functioning banking system. Notwithstanding the measures already taken, there remain concerns about the exposure of the Irish banks to the property market and, in particular, the uncertainty regarding potential losses on land and development loans. It is clear, therefore, that these loans are obstructing the normal functioning of the banking system in Ireland, restricting the flow of credit and weighing on economic activity. To address this issue, the Government has established the National Asset Management Agency in order to remove the riskiest loan portfolios from banks' balance sheets. The Government considers that without this measure, economic recovery will be seriously hampered. In addition, this asset management approach has been supported by well-respected international institutions such as the IMF, OECD, the EU Commission and ECB and financial markets have also taken a positive view of this approach. The Government has also taken measures to ensure that the risk to the taxpayer is minimised.

b) Fostering sustainable employment through improving competitiveness, thus safeguarding future living standards

Ireland's cost competitiveness deteriorated in recent years and this has not been helped by the euro appreciation in recent months, especially vis-à-vis sterling. Various input costs are higher than elsewhere, and this has been well documented by the National Competitiveness Council. In particular, labour costs in Ireland have moved out of line with productivity developments. Reducing labour costs – through some combination of nominal pay reductions and enhanced productivity – must therefore form part of the strategy to improve competitiveness. Account must be taken of wage developments elsewhere, particularly so in relation to developments in those countries with which we share a common currency. In

line with the shifting of global activity, strategies to develop new markets in emerging economies are also necessary. The Government has taken measures to reduce the public service pay bill and there is some evidence of downward adjustment in private sector earnings. In addition, the price of goods and services is falling much more rapidly than elsewhere. In this context, it must be borne in mind that the decline in consumer prices over the past year or so has been broadly based – the harmonised index of consumer prices, which excludes the impact of changes in mortgage interest rates, fell by 3 per cent year-on-year in September. Over the medium term, boosting productivity is the key to improving competitiveness and raising living standards. For example, the Government's Smart Economy initiative provides the framework for sustainable medium-term economic expansion based on shifting resources into sectors characterised by higher levels of knowledge-input and innovation.

c) Restoring the public finances to sustainable and lower deficit levels over the medium-term;

Separate to the banking problem, Ireland faces a serious fiscal challenge as there is a significant gap between expenditure and revenue. The budgetary position has deteriorated rapidly; tax revenues are back at 2003 levels, while current expenditure has increased by over 70 per cent since then. The Exchequer deficit is forecast to be in the region of €26 billion this year. Continuing to borrow at a high level to bridge the gap between our revenues and our expenditures is unsustainable in the medium to long-term. The expected improvement in the economy over the medium term will not be sufficient on its own to eliminate the gap between revenue and expenditure because of the narrow tax base and the fact that the tax content of export-led growth is less than that of domestically-driven growth. In other words, a large part of the deficit is of a permanent nature and not transitory. This structural imbalance between the levels of public spending and revenue will not be eliminated without discretionary, targeted action. This is why revenue-raising and expenditure-reducing measures have been necessary. The Supplementary Budget in April 2009 set out a path to return the public finances to stability over the medium-term based on the economic assessment as pertained at that time. Very significant steps have already been taken. Measures estimated to yield approximately 5 per cent of GDP in 2009 have been taken since July 2008. The priority for Budget 2010 is to stabilise the deficit. Taking action now is necessary to restore economic competitiveness, prevent the debt level rising to unsustainable levels, assist economic growth by taking responsible action on fiscal and incomes policies and restore expenditure and taxation to more sustainable levels.

The European Commission⁴ concluded that Ireland has already begun to take effective action to address the fiscal deterioration and that taking account of the commitments entered into by the Irish Authorities and weaker conditions, the Commission has now proposed an extension of the excessive deficit correction path to 2014 in Ireland's case. While the extension of the time period is welcome and will make the necessary corrective action less onerous in the later years, it is predicated on Ireland continuing to take effective action, in particular, addressing the immediate need of stabilising the deficit in 2010.

Budget 2010, introduced by the Minister for Finance on 9th December, is the latest in a series of measures which began in July 2008, which are designed to restore order to the public finances. Over the past 18 months the Government has made budgetary adjustments of more than €8 billion for this year. Budget 2010 has not been an easy budget and difficult and painful measures had to be taken. However, because of these decisive actions, we are now in a position to stabilise the deficit. This was the budgetary objective identified for 2010 in the plan to return order to the public finances that was set out in the April Supplementary Budget.

A General Government Balance of -11.7% of GDP is now estimated for 2009. In the Supplementary Budget last April, recognising that the economy would still be in recession in 2010, the fiscal aim was for the deficit to be stabilised at the 2009 level. Budget 2010 has delivered this budgetary objective with a General Government Balance of -11.6% of GDP forecast for 2010.

The scale of future adjustments needed to bring the deficit below 3% of GDP by 2014 will not now be as large as previously thought. For 2011, it is estimated that the necessary adjustments will be of the order of €3 billion, with €1 billion already identified and incorporated into the capital expenditure forecasts. In view of the substantial revenue raising measures undertaken in Budget and Supplementary Budget 2009, Budget 2010 focussed on the expenditure side of the account. An expenditure adjustment of €4 billion was set out, including cuts in public sector pay, social welfare and capital expenditure, as well as substantial reductions in programme expenditure. Budget 2010 re-emphasised the Government's commitment to restoring stability to the public finances which will in turn help return the economy to a sustainable growth path.

⁴The EU Commission reported on 11 November 2009 on effective action taken by member states found to be in excessive deficit i.e. running General Government deficits greater than 3 per cent of GDP.

1.3 Labour Market changes

The Quarterly National Household Survey for Quarter 3 2009 was published by the Central Statistics Office on the 16th of December 2009⁵. It outlines the changed labour market situation in Ireland. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate at Quarter 3 2009 is 12.4%. There were 1,922,400 people in employment in the third quarter of 2009, an annual decrease of 184,700 or 8.8%. There was an annual decrease of 142,000 or 12.0% in the number of men in employment, while the number of women in employment decreased by 42,300 or 4.6%. Almost 55% of the fall in male employment is attributable to a decline of 77,900 in the number of males employed in the construction sector. In 2008, Ireland experienced its first decline in the overall size of the labour force since 1989.

1.4 Regional Comparisons

Employment fell by 41,700 (-7.8%) in the Border, Midlands and Western Region and by 143,000 (-9.1%) in the Southern and Eastern region in the year to the third quarter of 2009⁶. There were increases of 35,000 (+75.3%) and 85,400 (+75.6%) in the numbers unemployed in the Border, Midlands and Western and Southern and Eastern regions respectively.

The participation rate in the Border, Midlands and Western was 60.9% compared with a participation rate of 63.0% in the Southern and Eastern region.

At NUTS3 level, employment fell by over 6% in each region with the South-East (-10.5%) and Dublin (-10.2%) regions showing the largest percentage decreases. This equated to an annual decrease of 23,800 in the numbers in employment in the South-East and an annual decrease of 63,200 in the Dublin region. All regional data is based on the location of the respondents' usual address.

1.5 Future Prospects

There is some evidence that while activity will remain at lower levels in the near-term, the worst of the decline may have passed. Externally, a global recovery appears to be underway, although there is a broad consensus among the main international forecasting institutions that this will be fairly modest. While Ireland will lag the global economic recovery, it is expected that economic growth will re-emerge during 2010, although it is

⁵ http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/labour_market/current/qnhs.pdf

⁶ *ibid.* p4

expected that it will be 2011 before we experience positive growth for the year as a whole. The latest forecast from the Department of Finance is set out in table 2 below.

Table 2 – Macroeconomic Prospects

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP growth % change at constant market prices	-7.5	-1.3	3.3	4.5	4.3	4.0
GDP Value at current market prices (€m)	164,600	160,925	169,900	181,250	192,975	204,800
GNP growth % change at constant market prices	-10.4	-1.7	3.0	4.1	3.9	3.6
GNP Value at current market prices (€m)	133,175	129,100	135,375	143,750	152,275	160,700

Source: Ireland – Stability Programme Update – 9th December 2009
<http://budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2010/Documents/Final%20SPU.pdf>

The impact of the economic downturn on the implementation of Ireland’s EU Structural Funds Programmes under the NSRF is dealt with in more detail in subsequent chapters.

1.6 The Cohesion Policy Context

The main objective of EU Regional Policy, and where approximately 35% of the total EU budget is allocated, is aimed at speeding up the Convergence of the least-developed Member States and Regions, by improving the conditions for growth and employment. Ireland, due to our relative prosperity, does not qualify for funding under the Convergence objective. The Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective (RCE) is aimed at strengthening regions’ competitiveness, attractiveness and employment. Both of Ireland’s NUTS 2 regions i.e. the Border, Midland and Western region and the Southern and Eastern region are funded under this objective, with the BMW region qualifying for additional phasing-in support. A third objective, under which Ireland receives funding for our PEACE III and INTERREG Programmes, is the European Territorial Cooperation Objective which aims to strengthen cross-border co-operation. Ireland’s National Strategic Reference Framework sets out the strategic orientation of the funding for our three Operational Programmes funded under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective:

- a) Human Capital Investment ESF co-funded Operational Programme
- b) Border Midland and Western ERDF co-funded Operational Programme
- c) Southern and Eastern ERDF co-funded Operational Programme

As outlined in the Sixth progress report on economic and social cohesion - Creative and innovative regions⁷, as published by the European Commission on the 25th of June 2009 both Irish regions have made significant progress over the period 2000-2007 across a range of measures. This is particularly evident as the two Irish regions rank first and second respectively as the regions who have most improved their Human Capital Intensity and Human Capital Intensity Index by Gender over the period 2000-2007. Also as outlined in the 6th progress report the Border, Midlands and Western region is the 6th most improved region on the Business expenditure on Research and Development Indicator.

1.7 Volume of funding available in Ireland.

The European Council reached agreement in December 2005 on the Financial Perspectives 2007–2013. This agreement covered the overall funding for Cohesion Policy and its distribution between the newly-defined Objectives for EU Regional Policy. Subsequently, the Commission made available indicative financial allocations for Member States and Regions for the programming of Cohesion Policy actions. The allocation for Ireland is €901 million of which €750 million is assigned to the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective (RCE). The EU regional funding is smaller this funding period than previous funding periods reflecting the progress Ireland has made since 1994 and the need for concentration of funds to member states that have a lower per capita GDP. In the period 1994-1999 Ireland received 2% of GDP in EU Structural funding. In 2000-2006 we received 0.5% of GDP, but in 2007-2013 our allocation is 0.05% of GDP. The funding profile for the Border Midland and Western (BMW) region is also noteworthy, with almost 80% of the total allocated to the first three years. The total allocation is €458m, €152m is for commitment in 2007 with annual figures falling sharply to €15m annually for 2011-2013 covering both social and regional fund needs. Funding for the S&E region has fallen dramatically from €269m per annum to €42m per annum for the funding period 2007-2013.

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/interim6_en.htm

1.8 Implementation Summary

There are separate chapters dealing with each of the Operational Programmes but in summary progress on each is as follows:

a) Human Capital Investment ESF co-funded Operational Programme

In view of the significant socio-economic changes in the country, the Managing Authority conducted a review of the Operational Programme. Difficulties identified in the review included:

- In-Company Training Activity operated by FÁS was aimed at supporting sustainable productivity and improving competitiveness by encouraging increased levels of training. However, this is a demand driven activity and anticipated demand has not materialised.
- FÁS Disability training – issues arose in the declaration of expenditure in a timely manner.
- Equality for Women Activity and the Equality Mainstreaming activities – the expenditure review impacted on the spending targets.

The review has resulted in a revised Operational Programme which was drafted in conjunction with DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (DG Emploi) and received European Commission approval on the 21st of October 2009⁸. The changes involve a refocusing of the first two Priorities with a stronger emphasis on the Increasing Activation Priority. There will be a greater focus on new labour market activation measures such as work experience, graduate placement, part-time third level study, short-time workers training scheme, wage subsidy measures, job retention schemes and provision for redundant apprentices' interventions. The changes also involve the re-allocation of funds within Priorities and an increase in the co-financing rate from 27.6% to 41.4% overall. The Revised Operation Programme will ensure that the important economic and social objectives are met despite the changed socio-economic and budgetary circumstances.

b) Border, Midland and Western Regional ERDF co-funded Operational Programme

As provided for under Article 33 of Council Regulation 1083/2006, the Irish Authorities renegotiated the Border, Midland and Western Operational Programme with the agreement

⁸ Commission Decision of 21/10/09 C(2009) 7923 amending Decision C(2007) 5460 adopting the operational programme for Community assistance from the European Social Fund under the Regional Competitiveness and employment objective in Ireland CCI: 2007IE052PO001

of the European Commission due to the changed socio-economic circumstances in 2009. The revised Operational Programme was drafted in conjunction with DG Regional Policy (DG Regio) and received European Commission approval on the 8th of October 2009⁹. The overall strategic focus of the Operational Programme remains unchanged. The additional expenditures identified are consistent with the approved National Strategic Reference Framework and the Operational Programme strategy and were included on a prudent basis to ensure the important economic and social objectives of the Operational Programme would be met. The amendments included;

- a Gateway/Hub Investment Fund;
- the inclusion of Science Foundation Ireland Research Awards;
- the inclusion of Water Supply and Waste Water Treatment;
- the inclusion of additional Strategic Road Projects;
- Funding of environmental investments in non-gateway locations;
- an additional investment in railcars;
- the inclusion of ocean energy theme; and
- Increasing the co-financing rate from 40% to 50%.

The changes proposed will enable the programme to draw down its full allocation of €228.8 million in European Regional Development Funds over the programming period, consistent with the frontloaded profile of the region's allocation as a phasing-in region under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective. The Operational Programme is currently delivered through 4 priorities, 1) Innovation, ICT and the Knowledge Economy, 2) Environment and Risk Prevention, 3) Urban Development and Secondary Transport Networks and 4) Technical Assistance. Among the physical progress achieved thus far to end September 2009 include the construction of the M6 Athlone to Ballinasole motorway, the N52 Tullamore by pass, over 81,00 training days provided to Small and Medium Sized enterprises and 3,294 enterprises have been supported by the County Enterprise Boards.

⁹ Commission Decision of 8/10/09 C(2009) 7759 amending Decision C(2007) 5162 adopting the operational programme "Border, Midlands and Western Regional Operational Programme" for Community assistance from the European Regional Development Fund under the Regional Competitiveness and employment objective in Ireland CCI: 2007 IE 16 2 PO 001

c) Southern and Eastern Regional ERDF co-funded Operational Programme

The Southern and Eastern Operational Programme is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. It is currently implemented through 4 priorities, 1) Innovation and the Knowledge Economy, 2) Environment and Accessibility, 3) Sustainable Urban Development and 4) Technical Assistance. There was no need to modify this Operational Programme as the overall economic and social objectives of this Operational Programme will be met in its current format. Overall implementation of the Operational Programme is progressing satisfactorily, and notwithstanding the very challenging economic environment, no amendments were made to the Programme to date arising from the economic crisis. Generally, the levels of commitments are sufficiently strong to ensure financial targets will be met. However performance across the Programme has not been uniform, with the Sustainable Urban Priority being affected by the public expenditure review. However, the Managing Authority has proactively responded to this situation by utilising the three ERDF advances provided to the Programme, to launch a Gateways Grant Scheme targeted at the four Cities within the Southern & Eastern Region. Among the physical progress achieved thus far to end September 2009 include an additional 465 researchers employed in Higher Education Institutions, 150,073 training days provided to Small and Medium Sized enterprises and 10,489 additional businesses with broadband available.

1.9 Financial Implementation

The main focus in the early years of the programming period has been on ensuring the implementation arrangements in place. Therefore, progress on financial implementation has been relatively slow. Annex 3 contains more details on the financial implementation to date.

1.10 National Co-Ordination Committee of the Funds

A national Co-ordination Committee of the Funds was established in June 2007 and has met on a number of occasions. The purpose of this committee is to ensure complementarity, consistency, co-ordination and compliance between the assistance from the EU Funds, the EAFRD, the EFF, the ESF, the ERDF and the interventions of the EIB and of other existing financial instruments in accordance with Article 9 (4) of the Council Regulation 1083/2006. Along with this, the Committee ensures the avoidance of duplication between the various European funds that are being received and will highlight any synergies which may be accruing. It provides an outlet for the managing authorities of

the various funds to discuss any issue in relation to overlapping measures and thus ensure the lines of demarcation between the funds are clear. During the planning stages of each of the Operational Programmes there was consultation with ERDF, ESF, PEACE/INTERREG representatives to avoid any problems. There is also cross-representation on the various Monitoring Committees to avoid duplication. At a local level there are representatives of rural development and enterprise funding bodies on each others' project selection boards to safeguard against crossover of funds.

1.11 Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion

In order to ensure that Cohesion policy contributed to other priorities in EU, the commission drafted the Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG) as provided for in Council Regulation: 1083/2006. The priorities for the 2007-2013 period are to promote innovation, the knowledge economy, enterprise research and development, and Information, Communication and Technology (ICT). Through the CSG the cohesion Policy will support better work environments, and training of workforce. It will also improve the attractiveness of the member state and improve the accessibility of services to citizens.

1.12 Value added of EU Regional Policy

The Cohesion Policy funding has greatly improved Ireland's economy. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) has estimated that the funding from the first 2 payment periods 1989-1993 and 1994-1999 has increased Ireland's GNP by 2%. The ESRI also estimated that funding from the years 2000-2003 will add a further 0.7%. This overall increase of 2.7% has allowed Ireland's policy makers to concentrate efforts on objectives aimed at increasing economic potential. Our experience since 1973 of Cohesion Policy and EU Structural Funds has informed the development of various value for money initiatives in this country including a more strategic orientated approach, multi annual capital investment framework and a greater focus on monitoring and evaluation.

1.13 Simplification, Administrative Burden

Concern has been expressed that the systems in place are unnecessarily complicated for the smaller programmes. They cause an undue administrative burden as the same amount of checks and procedures must be followed for the smaller programmes as those with much larger budgets. The Irish Authorities can see substantial benefits accruing if Cost effectiveness and Simplification of procedures were implemented across the Structural Funds. In particular, we would suggest a greater use of the Proportionality principle, e.g.

first level controls where the same amount of checks are applicable for €100 as for €1m. A recurring issue that has been raised repeatedly by Managing Authorities is the interpretation of procurement procedures. Ireland looks forward to working in partnership with the Commission and other Member States to address these issues.

1.14 Examples of Good Practice

Some examples of where good practice has proved successful are contained in Annex V of this document. A short summary is provided below on these projects:

1) (BMW) National Broadband Scheme (NBS). The objective of the NBS is to secure the provision of affordable broadband services in certain designated target areas in rural Ireland (1,028 target Electoral Divisions in the NBS Coverage Area), where broadband coverage was deemed to be insufficient. The Irish authorities have granted financial support for building the necessary infrastructure and the provision of broadband services at a retail level to consumers and at the wholesale level to other operators.

2) ERDF Gateways and Hubs Investment Scheme (BMW and S&E). The overall objective of the ERDF Gateways and Hubs Investment Scheme is to enhance the attractiveness of the Gateways and Hubs and how they can contribute to improving their development potential through enhancement of the economic, social and environmental conditions of the city/town.

Under the scheme grant assistance has been provided to the designated Gateways and Hubs in the Border, Midland and Western (BMW) region and to the gateway cities in the Southern and Eastern (S&E) region for projects which will improve the Gateways and Hubs economically, environmentally, socially, and/or culturally, and which fall within the scope of Article 8 of the ERDF Regulation 1080/2006, and are consistent with the overall development strategy for the Gateway or Hub.

3) (S&E) University of Limerick Incubation centre. This was set up to advance the development of emerging high potential business start-ups.

4) (HCIOP) Development of a Centre of Excellence for training in the Biopharmaceutical and Pharmaceutical Sector. The FÁS Bio-Pharma facility in Carrigaline, Cork, was developed in response to an identified need for operator training

in this sector. FÁS has developed a dedicated high technology training facility where learners can gain the practical skills required for work in the Bio-Pharma sector and related process industries.

5) (HCIOP) Third Level Access Activity - The Third Level Access Sub-priority supports the participation in higher education of people who are traditionally under-represented at this level. Under the sub-priority, financial support is provided to institutions to support the retention of certain target groups, namely students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, mature students, students with disabilities and those from Traveller and other ethnic minorities. It is managed on behalf of the Department of Education and Science by the Higher Education Authority's National Access Office and contributes to the achievement of the high level goals for Education and Training.

6) (HCIOP) Equality Mainstreaming Approach - The Equality Mainstreaming Unit provided support to the Irish Hospitality Institute for a project to assist hotels in incorporating equality considerations into employment practice and customer service. A series of 3 learning network events on equality-related issues were organised for IHI members (hotels, restaurants, recruitment agencies) during 2008.

7) (Ireland /Wales) CELTIC WAVE - Developing a Sea of Smiles

Rising fuel costs are seriously affecting the profitability of cruise lines leading to a growing desire to become more fuel efficient. CELTIC WAVE aims to demonstrate how reduced fuel costs can be achieved on selected cruise itineraries by minimising steaming times between ports and therefore lowering the carbon footprint. The project will also address the added values of the brand, cultural synergy, location, shared values and unique selling points of the Ireland Wales connection. This will result in a globally competitive offering on the Irish Sea as a cruise destination which will raise its profile and contribute to the regeneration of both areas.

8) DEIS CYFLE! - Developing Skills for Employment and Educational Integration.

The aim of this cross border partnership project between two national charities for autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) is to develop a raft of training and self evaluation mechanisms that will form a basis for increasing the employability of people with ASD.

9) Green Communities - Green Communities is a community-based project operated by Keep Wales Tidy and An Taisce. The project will take a grassroots approach to

undertaking practical environmental work by encouraging and supporting community groups. The project partners will assist and train groups to undertake practical environmental work which will lead to improved biodiversity value of the region and improved access to green spaces. 100 community groups will be assisted to focus on biodiversity enhancements and ideas will be shared with other community groups in Wales and Ireland.

1.15 Conclusion

Ireland is confident that there will be a successful implementation of its National Strategic Reference Framework despite the impact of the economic downturn. It looks forward to working in partnership with the Commission to resolve any issues that may emerge.

Chapter 2 Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme

2.1 Overview of BMW Region

The Border, Midland and Western region covers a total of thirteen counties and encompasses the BMW Regional Authority areas. These are classified as NUTS III regions and their component counties are set out in the table below. The BMW Region accounts for 47% of the land area of Ireland, 26.5% of the population and 19% of GDP.

NUTS II	Counties
Border	Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan, Sligo
Midlands	Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath
West	Galway, Mayo, Roscommon
Source: BMW Regional Assembly, 2006	

The Border, Midland and Western (BMW) NUTS II region qualifies as a phasing-in under the transitional arrangements as a previous Objective One region which now has a per capita GDP above 75% of the EU25 average. The BMW region will receive approximately €458 million in total structural funding over the period, of which 50% (c. €229 million) will be ERDF funding.

The Irish Government, as set out in the National Strategic Reference Framework¹⁰ (NSRF) has decided that Cohesion policy under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective will be delivered through separate Regional Operational Programmes for the BMW and the Southern and Eastern regions and one national ESF Operational Programme. The BMW Regional Assembly has been designated by the Government to be the Managing Authority for the BMW Regional Operational Programme and is responsible for its preparation and delivery.

The legal basis for the Operational Programme is provided in Article 3 of Council Regulation (EC) 1083/2006 laying down the general provisions of the ERDF, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund. This states that “*the action taken by the Community under Article 158 of the Treaty “shall be designed to strengthen the economic and social*

¹⁰ Government of Ireland (2007) National Strategic Reference Framework for Ireland, 2007 – 2013

cohesion of the enlarged Community in order to promote the harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of the Community”. This action shall be taken with the aid of the Funds, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and other existing financial instruments. It shall be aimed at reducing the economic, social and territorial disparities which have arisen particularly in countries and regions whose development is lagging behind, to the speeding-up of economic and social restructuring, and to the aging of the population.”

Pursuant to Article 160 of the Treaty, the ERDF shall contribute to the financing of assistance towards the reinforcement of economic and social cohesion by redressing these main regional imbalances. The BMW Regional Operational Programme for 2007 to 2013 and has been developed in accordance with the Council and the ERDF Regulations.

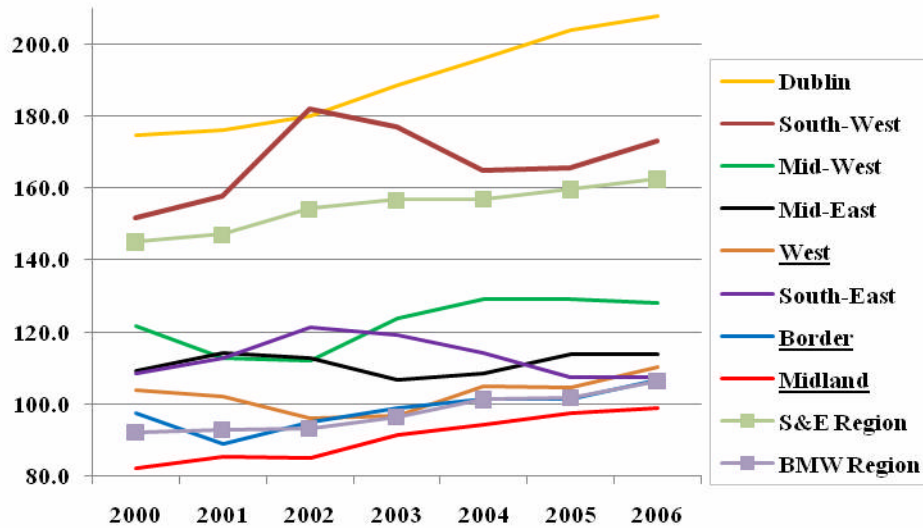
2.2 Developments and Trends in Socio-Economic and Territorial Disparities

Regional GVA Trends

Over the period 2000 to 2006, the latest period for which GVA data is available, the output from the BMW Region grew by 15.2% compared to 12.1% for the S&E region, it is important to note however that the BMW Region grew from a much lower base. The BMW Region contributed 18.9% of total national GVA in 2000. This figure has fluctuated within one percentage point over the period under consideration and stood at 19.3% in latest figures released from the CSO¹¹. What is clear from the figures below is that while Ireland’s economy during 2000-2006 and all regions have benefited, the BMW has struggled to make any significant gains outside its historical share of national output. In fact the BMW Region’s economy continues to demonstrate low levels of ‘value-added’ activity and this is borne out by the fact the Region contributed just 19.3% of national output despite employing 26% of Ireland’s workers.

¹¹ Central Statistics Office (2009). County Incomes and Regional GDP 2009.

GVA per Person at Basic Prices 2000-2006 by NUTS II & III Regions: (EU27=100)

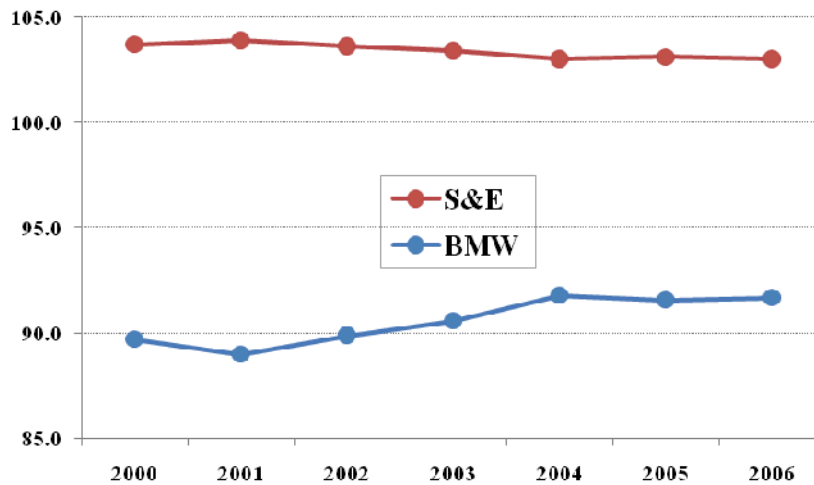


Source: Central Statistics Office (2009), County Incomes and Regional GDP 2006

Regional Income Trends

There has been a slight convergence in regional incomes at NUTS II level. Incomes (as measured by disposable income per person) rose by 51.4% between 2000 and 2006 in the BMW Region, while the S&E region experienced a 47.0% rise in disposable income over the same period. Average disposable income per person in the BMW Region in 2006 was €18,965, compared with €21,304 in the S&E region. These figures mask wide variations within both regions. For example the Dublin Region averaged 12.3% above the national average in 2006, while incomes in the Midland Region were 9.4% below the average. These figures are further illustrated in the following figure.

Disposable Income by NUTS II Region 2000-2006 (State=100)

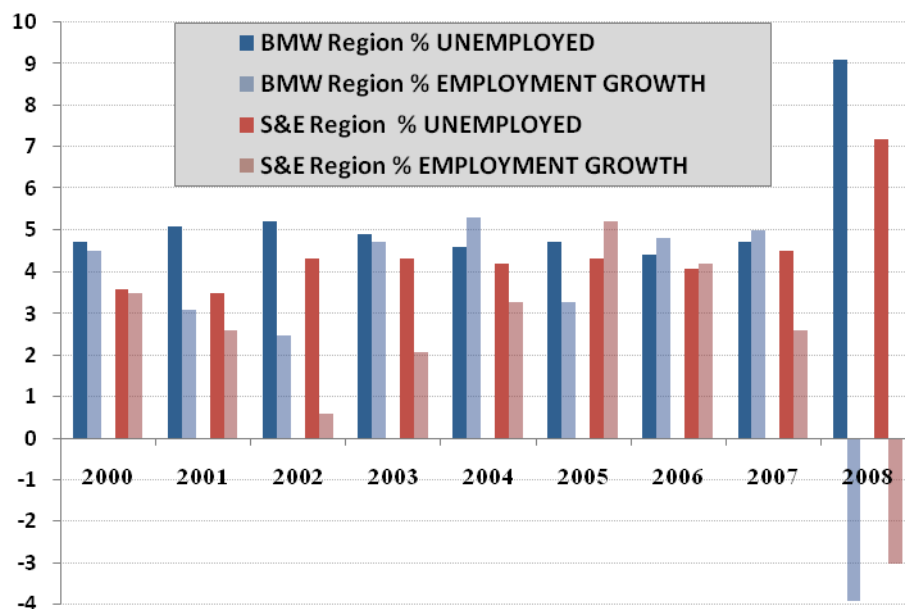


Source: Central Statistics Office (2008), *County Incomes and Regional GDP 2006*

2.3 Regional Labour Market Trends 2000 – 2008

Employment dropped by 6.5% in 2008 in the BMW Region and by 3.2% in the S&E region. The rates of unemployment in the BMW Region have been consistently higher than the S&E region and this remains the case. In the 4th quarter of 2008, unemployment had reached 9.1% in the BMW Region compared to 7.2% in the S&E region. These trends are illustrated in the following figure.

Annual Unemployment & Employment Growth Rates by NUTS II Regions 2000-2008



Source: Central Statistics Office, *Quarterly National Household Survey 2000-2008*

This is also reflected in the differences that exist in the educational attainment levels of the labour force, a corollary of the level and sectors of employment in the Region. In the BMW Region 18.5% of the labour force have a third level degree or above - this compares to 24.5% for the S&E region and 34.1% within the Dublin region. Contained within these

figures in the BMW region is a large gender gap – wherein 24.0% of females in the labour force have reached this educational level compared to just 14.3% of male. This is likely to have challenging consequences for redeployment for males in a changed economic environment.

2.4 Impact of the Current Economic Climate

The scale and speed of the impact of the changed economic circumstances is very much evident in the data from 2009. Employment fell by 41,700 (-7.8%) in the Border, Midlands and Western Region and by 143,000 (-9.1%) in the Southern and Eastern region in the year to the third quarter of 2009¹². There were increases of 35,000 (+75.3%) and 85,400 (+75.6%) in the numbers unemployed in the Border, Midlands and Western and Southern and Eastern regions respectively.

The participation rate in the Border, Midlands and Western was 60.9% compared with a participation rate of 63.0% in the Southern and Eastern region.

At NUTS3 level, employment fell by over 6% in each region with the South-East (-10.5%) and Dublin (-10.2%) regions showing the largest percentage decreases. This equated to an annual decrease of 23,800 in the numbers in employment in the South-East and an annual decrease of 63,200 in the Dublin region. All regional data is based on the location of the respondents' usual address.

The most up-to-date regional data for Ireland in relation to output is only available up to 2006 and therefore a true reflection of this economic downturn on the performance of BMW Region's GVA cannot currently be measured.

2.5 Implementation of BMW Regional OP

The main focus of the BMW Regional Assembly since the beginning of the programming period has been the continued development of implementation arrangements and the early implementation of the Operational Programme 2007 – 2013. This involved the completion of selection criteria processes and implementation plans, administrative agreements and systems descriptions in partnership with intermediary bodies. The BMW Regional Assembly was also engaged in the development of the Department of Finance Circular on Financial Management and Control (12/2008) the National Eligibility Rules (Department of Finance Circular 16/2008); the Structural Funds IT System and the guidance on information and publicity.

¹² http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/labour_market/current/qnhs.pdf p4

2.6 Contribution of Operational Programme to Objectives of the NSRF

The National Strategic Reference Framework has two ERDF strategic objectives:

1. Supporting Innovation, Knowledge and Entrepreneurship in the Regions
2. Strengthening the competitiveness, attractiveness and connectivity of the NSS gateways and hubs through improved access to quality infrastructure and promoting environmental and sustainable development

The Contribution of the BMW Operational Programme to the objectives of the NSRF is outlined by Priority below.

2.6.1 Priority 1 Innovation, ICT and the Knowledge Economy

Priority 1 of the BMW Regional Operational Programme - Innovation, ICT and the Knowledge Economy, contributes to the achievement of the first strategic objective of the NSRF. The objective of this priority is to enhance the research, innovation and ICT infrastructure and capacity of the BMW region, to promote entrepreneurship and enterprise development and to support collaboration and technology transfer between research institutions and the business sector that responds to the economic development needs of the region. It includes the following interventions:

- Applied Research, Incubation and Collaboration
- Building Research Capacity
- Programme of Research in 3rd Level Institutions (PRTLII)
- Marine Research
- Science Foundation Ireland actions
- Broadband Provision and Demand Stimulation
- Micro-enterprise innovation and entrepreneurship
- Experimental Innovation Actions

The priority level output and result indicators for Priority 1 of the BMW Regional OP are presented in the following table. These demonstrate the level of progress up to September 2009 in respect of the co-funded interventions by priority theme.

Some highlights to date include:

- The award of funding to seven Applied Research Centres in Athlone (1), Dundalk (1), Galway (2), Letterkenny (2) and Sligo (1);
- Under the Incubation Centre Development sub theme; Letterkenny Institute of Technology construction is nearing completion and there are now 61 enterprises located in supported Incubation centres;

- There are an additional 819 work spaces being provided through the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions, Cycle 4, with 483 replacement places also being provided - bringing the total number to 1,302;
- Of the total projected expenditure on the Marine Research Sub-Theme of €8 million over its lifetime, €3.6 million was committed in 2007. A further €1.63 million was committed in 2008;
- Over 81,000 training days have been provided to micro-enterprises and 3,294 enterprises have been supported by the County Enterprise Boards;
- The National Broadband Scheme is running on schedule with 15/21 month roll-out. 38% of scheduled areas have been provisioned by the end of September 2009. A separate case study has been attached on this.

Priority 1: Innovation, ICT and the Knowledge Economy			
		Actual 2009	Expected 2013
Output	1. No. of Regional Incubation Centres	6	9
	2. No. of collaborative research projects approved	7	4
	3. No. of Principal Investigator Awards	12	12
	4. No. of Research Centres (SRC & CSET)	2	4
	5. No. of training days provided to microenterprises (of which): Male Female Companies	81,821 38,792 42,917 112	119,572
	6. No. of microenterprises supported (of which): Male Female Companies/Joint	3,294 2,406 707 121	5,011
	7. No. of initiatives to enable broadband infrastructure and service provision	2	3
Result	1. Total employed in Incubation Centres	173	218
	2. No. of researchers engaged in the approved projects	140 of which 42 Marine 20 PRTLI 78 SFI	170 of which: 100 PRTLI 70 SFI
	3. No. of enterprises collaborating with SRCs	14	15
	3. No. of enterprises in Incubation Centres	61	68
	4. No. of recipients of micro-enterprise training (of which): Male Female Companies/other	42,732 19,556 22,885 2 91	61,530 of which: 27,562 Male 33,668 Female 300 Other
	5. No. of jobs created in assisted microenterprises (of which): Male Full Time Female Full Time Male Part Time Female Part Time	17,175 10,676 4,569 1,313 2,548	20,884
	6. Additional users with broadband available	24,275 1,411 7,623	89,377 Residential 5,348 Commercial 28,261 Residential & Commercial

2.6.2 Priority 2 Environment and Risk Prevention

Priority 2 of the BMW Regional Operational Programme – Environment and Risk Prevention contributes to the second strategic objective of the NSRF. The objective of Priority 2 is to contribute to the sustainable development of urban and rural areas and the protection and enhancement of the urban and rural environment and the protection of surface and groundwater from pollution. The priority will also stimulate energy efficiency, renewable energy deployment and the integration of sustainable energy practices into public policies. It includes the following interventions:

- Rural Water Source Protection
- Pilot Village Sewerage
- Water Conservation
- Water Services Investment
- Renewable Energy
- Natural and Cultural heritage
- Waste Management

The priority level output and result indicators for Priority 2 of the BMW Regional OP are presented in the following table. These demonstrate the level of progress up to September 2009 in respect of the co-funded interventions by priority theme.

Some highlights to date include:

- The introduction of 4 schemes to promote energy efficiency and the deployment of renewable energy, including ocean energy deployment with 429 organisations engaged to date;
- Sustainable Energy Zones (SEZs) - one zone in progress in Dundalk involving public sector, businesses and consumer population; and
- The construction of two new national park visitor centres with 35,000 visitors expected to visit.

Priority 2: Environment and Risk Prevention			
		Actual 2009	Expected 2013
Output	1. No. of rural water source protection projects	0	12
	2. No. of STEDS projects supported	0	12
	3. No. of energy schemes introduced ¹³	4	8
	4. No. of visitors to 2 new National Park Visitor Centres	5,900	35,000
Result	1. Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) Reduction in protected sources	N/A	75%
	2. Population equivalent served by STEDS schemes	0	2,800
	3. No. of organizations substantially engaged in energy-related projects ¹⁴	429	972
	4. Additional jobs created at National Park Visitor Centres	5	10

2.6.3 Priority 3 Urban Development and Secondary Transport Networks

Priority 3 of the BMW Regional OP – Urban Development and Secondary transport networks also contributes to the second strategic objective of the NSRF (above). The objective of Priority 3 is to strengthen the **spatial structuring** of the BMW Region by investing in integrated sustainable initiatives in order to enhance the competitiveness, accessibility and social cohesion of the region’s urban growth centres and to modernise the region’s transport infrastructure. It includes the following EU co-funded interventions:

- Urban Regeneration – Gateway and Hub Fund
- Public Transport
- Key Linking Routes
- Arts Capital
- RAPID – designated disadvantaged urban areas.

The priority level output and result indicators for Priority 3 of the BMW Regional OP are presented in the following table. These demonstrate the level of progress up to September 2009 in respect of the co-funded interventions by priority theme.

Some highlights to date include:

- Approval of 12 strategic projects under the ERDF co-financed Gateway and Hub Fund

¹³ This refers to the number of intervention schemes introduced by Sustainable Energy Ireland in promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy deployment

¹⁴ This refers to the number of public and private organisations that have engaged with SEI funded schemes to undertake energy audits or invest in energy efficiency or renewable energy technologies

- Completion of both the N52 Tullamore Bypass and M6 Athlone to Ballinasole Major projects
- Orders placed for 33 railcars, 24 of which will serve stations in the BMW region
- 2 playgrounds have been built in the BMW region RAPID area in Cavan Town with funding from the RAPID Playgrounds sub theme.

Priority 3: Urban Development and Secondary Transport Networks			
		Actual 2009	Expected 2013
Output	1. No. of strategic applications approved	12	10
	2. No. of secondary linking routes improved	2	2
	3. Km of improved linking routes	33	33
	4. No. of new railcars serving destinations in the BMW Region	0	24
Result	1. Time savings on improved key linking routes	15.5 8.7	15.5 mins peak-time 8.7 mins off-peak
	2. Daily services on Dublin – Galway Dublin – Westport	7 4	10 5
	3. Increased annual capacity on railcars, per passenger journey	0	76,440
	4. Gateway Development Index Score	Dundalk 2.7 Letterkenny 3.2 Sligo 5 Galway 5.6 Midlands 3.6	All 5 to show improvement ¹⁵ against a weighted index of 5.0

2.6.4 Priority 4 Technical Assistance

Under Priority 4 – Technical Assistance, funds are being used to finance the preparatory, management, monitoring, evaluation, and information/publicity and financial control activities of the OP together with activities to reinforce the administrative capacity for implementing the Funds, subject to an overall limit of 4% of the total funds allocation to the OP. The Technical Assistance Priority also covers the cost of recoupment of approved costs of the EU Operational Committees of the Regional Authorities (at NUTS III Level). The Technical Assistance Priority will cover the appropriate costs of the ERDF Financial Control Unit, Information Unit, ICT Unit and the costs of the management controls undertaken by the Managing Authority. The Priority is administered by the BMW Regional Assembly under the general control of the OP Monitoring Committee.

¹⁵ Relative to 2008 baseline score

The priority level output and result indicators for Priority 4 of the BMW Regional OP are presented in the following table. These demonstrate the level of progress up to September 2009.

Priority 4: Technical Assistance			
		Actual 2009	Expected 2013
Output	1. Number of Monitoring Committee Meetings held	3	7
	2. Number of Evaluations & Studies conducted	1	3
	3. Verification Audits & Closure audits	1	7
	4. Number of annual publicity events	3	7
Result	1. % Achievement of Physical and Financial Targets	N/A	100%

2.7 Context Indicators

The following table provides an update on the context indicators that were selected for inclusion in the BMW Regional Operation Programme.

Category	Indicator	Baseline Indicators	Updated Indicators (as at April 2009)	Source
Macro-economic	GDP/Capita, BMW Region (EU27=100)	102.9 (2004)	106.4 (2006)	CSO, County Incomes and Regional GDP
	Total Employment in BMW Region (000s)	555.5 (2006)	496.5 (Q2, 2009)	CSO, Quarterly National Household Survey
	Net Output per person Engaged in Industry in BMW Region	€133,800 (2004)	€162,059 (2006)	CSO, Census of Industrial Production
Priority 1	Innovation Activity Rate ¹⁶	50.8% (2002-2004) BMW Region	47.2% ¹⁷ (2004-2006) Ireland	COS/Forfás, Community Innovation Survey
	Entrepreneurial Activity Rate in Ireland ¹⁸	17.9% (2005)	17.2% (2007)	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
	% of Businesses with Broadband in Ireland	48% (2005)	83% (2008)	Eurostat, Internet Usage by Enterprise
Priority 2	Average Drinking Water Compliance Level in BMW Region ¹⁹	95.6% (2004)	97.0% (2007)	Environmental Protection Agency, The Provision and Quality of Drinking Water in Ireland
	Energy Efficiency in Ireland ²⁰ (1995=100)	85.0 (2005)	84.0 (2007)	Sustainable Energy Ireland, Energy Efficiency in Ireland
Priority 3	Population of Gateways and Hubs	215,288 (2002)	237,467 (2006)	CSO, Census of Population

¹⁶ The latest figures are not provided at a regional level from the 2006 survey, the BMW Regional Assembly is actively seeking that this be readdressed in the next Community Innovation Survey.

¹⁷ This refers to the innovation rate for companies with 10 or more employees.

¹⁸ This is a sum of *Total Early Stage Entrepreneurs & Established Firm Entrepreneurs*.

¹⁹ This is the average of the 14 administrative areas in the BMW Region.

²⁰ This refers to the *Industrial Energy Efficiency in Ireland Rating*.

2.8 Contribution of the ESF to the implementation of guidelines and recommendations under the European Employment Strategy (as set out in Article 2.1 of Regulation No. 1081/2006).

The BMW Regional Operational Programme is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and the Irish Exchequer. However, it is intended to utilise the flexibility provided for under Article 34(2) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 which allows an ERDF Programme to finance actions which fall within the scope of the ESF, subject to a limit of 10% of Community funding for each priority of the Operational Programme for the training element of the Entrepreneurship in Micro-enterprises Theme. In accordance with Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006, such expenditure will be reported to the Commission through the EU SF IT system.

2.9 Outcomes of Evaluations

2.9.1 Evaluation Plan – BMW Regional OP

An Evaluation Plan 2007-13 for the BMW Regional Operational Programme has been prepared by the Managing Authority and adopted by the OP Monitoring Committee at its meeting in October 2009. The plan envisages two thematic evaluations – a Gateway Development Index and a further thematic evaluation on the impact of the research actions under priority 1 on regional competitiveness and employment. In addition a comprehensive performance-related evaluation in 2010 is proposed.

2.9.2 Gateway Development Index

The Southern and Eastern (S&E) and the Border, Midland and West (BMW) Assemblies commissioned the construction of a Gateway Development Index (GDI), to determine how the nine Gateway cities and towns are performing against their objectives as set out in the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 (NSS). It's the first such study of its kind in Ireland to focus solely on the effectiveness of Ireland's regional development strategy in the context of Gateways as drivers of economic development in the regions. The first GDI report was published in the Spring 2009 and the index will be replicated again in 2010 and 2013. The study is 40% co-funded by the European Regional Development Funds with the balance coming from Irish exchequer funding. The Gateway Development Index helps capture the impact of investment in the Gateways under the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs) for the period 2007-2013. It will complement the monitoring of the NDP, NSS and ROPs.

2.10 Expenditure Declared and Committed at 30th September 2009

The position in relation to public beneficiary-level expenditure and known funding commitments at 30/09/09 for the BMW Regional OP is presented in the detailed table below. This shows aggregate expenditure and commitments representing over 80% of the planned financial profile of the OP over the full 2007-13 period. Notwithstanding the challenging economic and fiscal environment in which the programme is being implemented, significant progress is being made in reaching the planned commitments.

The expected contribution of the priority themes to the Lisbon integrated guidelines (earmarking) can be determined based on the data presented in the table. This indicates that 67.5% of expenditure and commitments to date are in activities that are eligible for Lisbon earmarking.

Priority	Theme	Categorisation Code	Paid/Committed by 30/09/09 € millions	Lisbon Earmarking
Priority 1: Innovation, ICT & the knowledge economy	Applied Research, Incubation & Commercialisation	02	4.18	Yes
	Building Research capacity - PRTL	01	28.8	Yes
	Building Research Capacity - Marine	01	5.48	Yes
	Micro-enterprise	08	16.5	Yes
	National Broadband Scheme	10	42.12	Yes
	SFI Research	01	2.26	Yes
Sub-Total			99.34	
Priority 2: Environment & risk prevention	Rural Water Source Protection & Pilot Sewerage	45,46	0	No
	Sustainable Energy	43	9.3	Yes
	Rural Water Services	45	24.3	No
	Built Heritage	58	0.31	No
	Natural Heritage	56	5.65	No
	Waste Recycling	44	2.097	No
	Water Conservation	45	8.8	No
Sub-Total			50.45	
Priority 3: Urban development	Public Transport	16	68.8	Yes
	National Roads	20,22	136.6	Partly
	RAPID	61	0.565	No

and secondary transport networks	Arts Capital	59	0	No
	Gateway Fund	61	28.5	No
Sub-Total			234.45	
Priority 4 Technical Assistance	Technical Assistance	85,86	1.5	No
Overall Total			385.74	67.5%

2.11 Contribution to the tasks of the funds

Both ERDF co-financed Regional Operational Programmes and the ESF co-financed Human Capital Investment Programme are funded under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective. The task of the funds under this objective is to strengthen the competitiveness and attractiveness of the regions as well as employment by anticipating economic and social changes, including those linked to the opening of trade, through the increasing and improvement of the quality of investment in human capital, innovation and the promotion of the knowledge society, entrepreneurship, the protection and improvement of the environment and the improvement of accessibility, adaptability of workers and businesses as well as well as the development of jobs markets.

The National Strategic Reference Framework for Ireland is consistent with these tasks.

ERDF Priority 1 - Supporting Innovation, Knowledge and Entrepreneurship in the Regions, will support the following Community Strategic Guidelines:

- Improving knowledge and innovation for growth (1.2)
- facilitating innovation and promoting entrepreneurship (1.2.2)
- promoting the information society for all (1.2.3)
- improve access to finance (1.2.4)

ERDF Priority 2 - Strengthening the competitiveness, attractiveness and connectivity of the NSS gateways and hubs through improved access to quality infrastructure and promoting environmental and sustainable development, will support the following Community Strategic Guidelines:

- Making Europe and its regions more attractive places to invest and work
- Expand and improve transport (1.1.1)
- Strengthen the synergies between environmental protection and growth (1.1.2)

- The contribution of cities to growth and jobs. (2.1)

2.12 Contribution to the National Reform Programme

The implementation of the development strategy, priority objectives and selected interventions as outlined in the Regional Operational Programmes will contribute to Ireland meeting its commitments as set out in the National Reform Programme and in accordance with Article 29(1) of the General Regulation, the Annual Report on the implementation of the National Reform Programme includes a concise section on the contribution of the OP to the implementation of the National Reform Programme. The following table sets out the correlation between the priorities in the Regional OPs and the Lisbon Agenda Guidelines.

Priority	Guideline Reference	Guideline
Priority 1: Innovation, ICT and the Knowledge Economy	Guideline 7	Increase and improve investment in research and development, in particular in the private sector, with a view to establishing a European area of knowledge
	Guideline 8	Facilitate all forms of innovation
	Guideline 9	Facilitate the spread and effective use of ICT and build a fully inclusive information society
	Guideline 15	Promote a more entrepreneurial culture and create a supportive environment for SMEs
Priority 2: Environment and Risk Prevention	Guideline 11	Encourage the sustainable use of resources and strengthen the synergies between environmental protection and growth
Priority 3: Urban Development and Secondary Transport Networks	Guideline 16	Expand, improve and link up European infrastructure, and complete priority cross border projects
Priority 4: Technical Assistance	n/a	n/a

2.13 Main measures taken and Elaboration of major projects

A significant modification of the Border, Midland and Western Regional Operational Programme was submitted on 15th July 2009 following the approval of the OP Monitoring

Committee. Following detailed discussion with the Commission Services, the modification was approved on 8th October 2009.

New and additional actions and categories of expenditure were added in respect of the introduction of an ERDF Gateways and Hubs investment fund; the inclusion of Science Foundation Ireland Research Awards; inclusion of Water Supply and Waste Water Treatment; inclusion of additional strategic road projects; investment in railcars; and the provision of additional investment in ocean energy technologies.

In addition, a revised overall OP financial plan was approved with an increase in the ERDF co-financing rate. Revised performance indicators in three priorities were also agreed along with a new paragraph (5.3.1) on the geographical scope and eligibility of environmental actions moved to Priority 2.

In order to accelerate implementation, three major project proposals are being elaborated under the BMW Regional OP, as follows:

- N52 Tullamore Bypass – approved by Commission Decision
- M6 Athlone to Tullamore Motorway – deemed admissible
- Purchase of 33 railcars – under preparation

2.14 Developments in National and Regional Policy

The principal framework for national investment is the National Development Plan (NDP) 2007-2013, launched in Dublin Castle on January 23rd, 2007. This is a high level strategic document which set out within a sustainable economic and budgetary framework indicative investment allocations for the various sectoral areas.

The NDP with an emphasis on improving quality of life in a sustainable manner will took account of the National Spatial Strategy, environmental sustainability, and impact on Social Inclusion, the all-island dimension, value for money considerations and the requirements of the EU Lisbon process. The NDP sets out a framework for the promotion of regional development with a particular focus on investment in the NSS-designated Gateways.

On Budget Day, 9th December 2009, the Government announced 2010 Exchequer investment allocations which will support investments to take account of the new economic realities. These investments are directed at economic recovery, the development

of a productive and internationally competitive economy, the development of the Smart/Green economy, sustainable long-term employment and modern social infrastructure.

2.15 Coherence and Synergies between Priorities

The selected priorities and proposed interventions under the ERDF co-financed Regional Operational Programmes have been designed to be broadly complementary to each other, reflecting the priority axes of the ERDF regulations as they apply to regions under the Competitiveness and Employment objective. A number of specific interventions have potential for explicit complementarity with each other. For example:

- There is a potential strong relationship between the ICT intervention and microenterprise, e.g. by boosting the capability of enterprise and of promoting the establishment of ICT-based microenterprise;
- There is a strong complementarity between interventions to boost the role of the designated growth centres and the RTDI interventions, since the main RTDI related institutions are located in the Gateways and Hubs in the regions;
- There is scope for complementarity between the RTDI interventions and those to protect the environment, e.g. by appropriately promoting environmental related RTDI as set out in the respective SEA reports; and
- There will be complementarity between the investment in public transport under Priority 3 and the deployment of clean energy public transport vehicles under Priority 2.

Chapter 3 Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme

3.1 Overview of S&E Region

The Southern and Eastern region covers a total of 20 local authority areas (including 4 cities) and encompasses the five S&E Regional Authority areas. These are classified as NUTS III regions and their component counties are set out in the table below. The S&E region consists of 53% of the land area, 73% of the population and the average value added per person generated in the S&E region was 10.2% above the state average in 2006. At NUTS III level the Dublin region had the highest GVA per person in 2006 at 140.9%²¹ of the state average. The region extends from the south west of the country (Kerry) up to county Meath and it includes the capital, Dublin. The other main cities of the region are Cork, Limerick and Waterford.

The Irish Government, as set out in the National Strategic Reference Framework²² (NSRF) has decided that Cohesion policy under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective will be delivered through separate Regional Operational Programmes for the BMW and the Southern and Eastern regions and one national ESF Operational Programme. The S&E Regional Assembly has been designated by the Government to be the Managing Authority for the S&E Regional Operational Programme and is responsible for its preparation and delivery.

3.2 Developments and Trends in Socio-Economic and Territorial Disparities

Please see section 2.2-2.4 for regional impact of economic downturn

3.3 Contribution of S&E Regional Operational Programme to Objectives of the NSRF

The National Strategic Reference Framework has 2 ERDF strategic objectives:

1. Supporting Innovation, Knowledge and Entrepreneurship in the Regions
2. Strengthening the competitiveness, attractiveness and connectivity of the NSS gateways and hubs through improved access to quality infrastructure and promoting environmental and sustainable development

The Contribution of the S&E Operational Programme to the objectives of the NSRF is outlined by Priority below.

²¹ Central Statistics Office (2009) County Incomes and Regional GDP 2009

²² Government of Ireland (2007) National Strategic Reference Framework for Ireland, 2007 – 2013

Class	Indicator	Baseline	Final target	Outturn to 30 September 2009
Output	No. of Incubation Centres	9	16	9 ²³
Result	Total employed in Incubation Centres	284	520	444
	No. of additional researchers employed in the region's HEIs	0	560	465
Output	No. of training days provided to SMEs	74,294	249,294	150,075.3
	No. of micro-enterprises supported	4,029	8,029	5,198
Result	No. of recipients of training in micro-enterprises theme	57,178	141,159 Of which: 56,184 Male 84,275 Female	100,449 Of which 40,515 Male 59,475 Female
	No. of jobs created in micro-enterprises theme	24,858	32,558	26,193.5
	No. of enterprises created in incubation centres	62	165	118
Class	Indicator	Baseline	Final target	Outturn to 30 September 2009
Output	No. of rural water source protection projects supported	0	12	0
	No. of STEDS projects supported	0	12	0
Result	Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) Reduction in protected sources	Not applicable	75%	0
	Population equivalent served by STEDS schemes	Not applicable	4,200	0
Output	No. of energy schemes introduced	Not applicable	6	4
Result	No. of energy efficient/renewable energy buildings supported	Not applicable	900	Not available at present
Output	No. of initiatives to enable broadband infrastructure and service provision	0	3	1
Result	Additional businesses with broadband available	0	23,125	10,489
Class	Indicator	Baseline	Final target	Outturn to 30 September 2009
Output	No. of Integrated growth centre strategies approved	0	10	0
	No. of public transport projects supported	0	5	0
	Increased public transport usage in the Gateways	To be determined	20%	
Class	Indicator	Baseline	Final target	Outturn to 30 September 2009

²³ Outturn for the 2000-2006 S&E ROP

Output	Number of Monitoring Committee Meetings held	0	7	3
	Number of Evaluations & Studies conducted	0	3	1
	Verification Audits & Closure audits	0	Annual	0
	Number of annual publicity events	0	7	1
Result	% Achievement of Physical and Financial Targets	0	100%	12.5%

3.4 Context Indicators

The following table provides an update on the context indicators that were selected for inclusion in the S&E Regional Operation Programme.

Category	Indicator	Baseline Value	Updated Indicators (November 2009)	Source
Macro-economic	GDP/Capita, S&E Region	€35,727 (2004)	€40,326 (GVA) (2006)	County Incomes and Regional GDP (29 February 2009)
	Total Employment in S&E Region	1,539,800	1,441,900 (Qtr 2 2009)	QNHS Qtr 4 2008 CSO (2008)
	Gross Output per person engaged in Industry in S&E Region	€ 385,575	€571,166 (2006) ²⁴	CSO, Census of Industrial Production (2006)
Priority 1	Innovation Activity Rate, S&E Region ²⁵	52.2%	47.2% ²⁶ (2004-2006) Ireland	CSO/Forfás Community Innovation Survey
	Entrepreneurial Activity Rate in Ireland ²⁷	9.8% (2005)	7.4 % (2007)	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2006)
Priority 2	Average Drinking water compliance level in S&E Region ²⁸	96.4% (national)	97.6% (Regional level)	Environmental Protection Agency (2007/2008)
	Energy Efficiency in Ireland ²⁹ (1995=100)	85.0 (2005)	84.0 (2007)	Sustainable Energy Ireland, Energy Efficiency in Ireland
	% of Businesses with Broadband in Ireland	48% (2005)	83% (2008)	Eurostat, Internet Usage by Enterprise
Priority 3	Population of Gateways and Hubs	Gateways: Dublin 112m Cork 123,062 Limerick 54,023 Waterford 44,594	Gateways: Dublin 1.19m Cork 119,418 Limerick 52,539 Waterford 45,748 (2006)	CSO, Census of Population (2006)
	Public Transport Usage (000s) (Bus, Train & Luas)	298,183 (2005)	307,504 (2006)	CSO, Transport 2006

²⁴ Census of Industrial Production 2006, Table 2

²⁵ The latest figures are not provided at a regional level from the 2006 survey, the S&E Regional Assembly is actively seeking that this be readdressed in the next Community Innovation Survey.

²⁶ This refers to the innovation rate for companies with 10 or more employees.

²⁷ The total early stage entrepreneurial activity rate for Ireland in 2006, 21 September 2007

²⁸ This is the average of the 22 administrative areas in the S&E Region

²⁹ This refers to the *Industrial Energy Efficiency in Ireland Rating*, Energy Efficiency in Ireland Report May 2009

3.5 Outcomes of Evaluations

Gateway Development Index

The Southern and Eastern (S&E) and the Border, Midland and West (BMW) Assemblies commissioned the construction of a Gateway Development Index (GDI). Further information is contained in Section 2.8.2.

Mid Term Evaluation

The Managing Authority intends to conduct a mid term evaluation on the S&E Regional Operational Programme in 2010.

3.6 Financial Plan of the Operational Programme

	Community Funding (a)	National counterpart (b) = ((c) + (d))	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total funding (e) = (a)+(b)	Co-Financing rate (f) = (a)/(e)	For Information	
			National Public funding (c)	National private funding (d)			EIB contributions	Other funding ³⁰
Priorities	€	€	€	€	€		€	€
Innovation and the Knowledge Economy	96,000,000	144,000,000	144,000,000	0	240,000,000	40%	0	37,000,000
Environment and Accessibility	26,000,000	39,000,000	39,000,000	0	65,000,000	40%	0	150,000,000
Sustainable Urban Development	20,000,000	30,000,000	30,000,000	0	50,000,000	40%	0	127,000,000
Technical Assistance	4,603,534	7,396,466	7,396,466	0	12,000,000	38%	0	0
Total	146,603,534	220,396,466	220,396,466	0	367,000,000	40%	0	314,000,000

³⁰ Including national private funding where priority axes are expressed in public costs

3.7 Contribution to the tasks of the funds

The S&E Regional OP continues as approved by the Commission in December 2007 to contribute to the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objectives as set out in the the National Strategic Reference Framework for Ireland as follows:

ERDF Priority 1 - Supporting Innovation, Knowledge and Entrepreneurship in the Regions, will support the following Community Strategic Guidelines:

- Improving knowledge and innovation for growth (1.2)
- facilitating innovation and promoting entrepreneurship (1.2.2)
- promoting the information society for all (1.2.3)
- improve access to finance (1.2.4)

ERDF Priority 2 - Strengthening the competitiveness, attractiveness and connectivity of the NSS gateways and hubs through improved access to quality infrastructure and promoting environmental and sustainable development, will support the following Community Strategic Guidelines:

- Making Europe and its regions more attractive places to invest and work
- Expand and improve transport (1.1.1)
- Strengthen the synergies between environmental protection and growth (1.1.2)
- The contribution of cities to growth and jobs. (2.1)

3.8 Contribution of the ESF to the implementation of guidelines and recommendations under the European Employment Strategy (as set out in Article 2.1 of Regulation No. 1081/2006).

The Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and the Irish Exchequer. However, it is intended to utilise the flexibility provided for under Article 34(2) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 which allows an ERDF Programme to finance actions which fall within the scope of the ESF, subject to a limit of 10% of Community funding for each priority of the Operational Programme for the training element of the Entrepreneurship in Micro-enterprises Theme. In accordance with Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006, such expenditure will be reported to the Commission through the EU SF IT system.

3.9 Contribution expected or realised to other priorities of the National Reform Programmes under the Lisbon Agenda.

The implementation of the development strategy, priority objectives and selected interventions as outlined in the S&E OP will contribute to Ireland meeting its commitments as set out in the National Reform Programme and in accordance with Article 29(1) of the General Regulation, the Annual Report on the implementation of the National Reform Programme will include a concise section on the contribution of the OP to the implementation of the National Reform Programme. The following table sets out the correlation between the priorities in the S&E Regional OP and the Lisbon Agenda Guidelines.

Priority	Guideline Reference	Guideline
Priority 1: Innovation, ICT and the Knowledge Economy	Guideline 7	Increase and improve investment in research and development, in particular in the private sector, with a view to establishing a European area of knowledge
	Guideline 8	Facilitate all forms of innovation
	Guideline 9	Facilitate the spread and effective use of ICT and build a fully inclusive information society
	Guideline 15	Promote a more entrepreneurial culture and create a supportive environment for SMEs
Priority 2: Environment and Risk Prevention	Guideline 11	Encourage the sustainable use of resources and strengthen the synergies between environmental protection and growth
Priority 3: Sustainable Urban Development	Guideline 11	Encourage the sustainable use of resources and strengthen the synergies between environmental protection and growth
Priority 4: Technical Assistance	n/a	n/a

Based on the cumulative breakdown of allocations presented above, it is possible to provide an indication of the achievement of the earmarking targets to date. This is presented in the following table:

Priority	Theme	Categorisation Code	Reported Expenditure	Lisbon earmarking
Priority 1	Development of Region's RTDI Capacity	01 & 02	38,378,000	Yes
	Entrepreneurship in Micro Enterprise	08	11,668,800	Yes
Priority 2	CHP & Bioheat Programme	43	2,318,000	Yes
	Renewable Energy Development & Deployment	43	1,151,600	Yes
	Ocean Energy Development	43	356,000	Yes
	Broadband Provision and Demand Stimulation	15	3,088,651	Yes
Priority 4		85	99,671	No
Total			57,060,722	99%

3.10 Information on the Physical Progress of the Operational Programme

Information on the physical progress of the Operational Programme is presented below. Physical Indicators are at priority level for this Operational Programme. An update of the context indicators is set out in section 3.3 above

The main focus in 2008 was on the on putting in place of the necessary implementation and financial management and control arrangements. Implementation has commenced on aspects of the four priorities.

Priority 1: Innovation and the Knowledge Economy

The overall objective of this Priority is to develop further, in accordance with the Lisbon Agenda objectives, the knowledge, R&D, innovation and innovation and entrepreneurial base of the Region's economy and to support collaboration and technology transfer between research institutions and the business sector in order to boost the Region's growth and competitiveness. This Priority is divided into three separate but related Themes as follows:

1. Development of the Region's RTDI capacity
2. Entrepreneurship in MicroEnterprise
3. Experimental Innovative Actions

The choice of Themes reflects the importance of ensuring the continued development of the Region's research and development and innovation capacity as key contributors to the achievement of innovation and knowledge economy objectives and of enhancing the entrepreneurial skills of small firms.

Overall, Priority 1 (Innovation and the Knowledge Economy) has reached **45%** expenditure of the amount budgeted for in the financial tables for the period 07-13 and **121%** of the forecasted expenditure for the period '07-'08. The 3 Themes are at varying states of progress compared to their annual forecasted expenditure (see tables at 3.3 and 3.5)

Theme 1: Development of Regions RTDI Capacity

Theme 1 consists of 4 sub-themes:

- Sub – Theme 1: Applied Research Enhancement (ARE)

Up to December 2008, funding has been awarded to 9 Applied Research Centres and a joint Centre with two locations in the S&E Region. These centres were funded under the Productive Sector Operational Programme 2000-06. In 2008, Enterprise Ireland has

restructured the Applied Research Enhancement Programme. The programme was expanded into three phases: PIONEER, NEW CENTRE START and ARE+. The Pioneer and New Centre Start phases operation commences with open calls, whereas the ARE+ phase is only open to existing ARE Centres. Projects were approved in 2007 and 2008 under this theme; however no incurred expenditure has been reported.

- Sub – Theme 2: Commercialisation Fund

In 2008, 38 projects were approved under the Commercialisation Fund. Projects were approved in 2007 and 2008 under this theme; however no incurred expenditure has been reported because expenditure for above activities have been reported.

- Sub – Theme 3: Incubation Centre Development

Up to 31st December 2008, 9 Incubation Centres have been established, comprising 114 companies. These 9 centres were funded under the S&E Regional Operational Programme 2000-‘06. Any expenditure relating to the 2000-2006 programming period has been reported under the 2000-06 programme. No eligible expenditure has been reported to the end of December 2008 in the 2007-2013 programming period. This is in line with the annual forecasts received and due to the fact that Enterprise Ireland has not funded any new approvals in the Incubation Programme in the S&E region in 2008.

- Sub – Theme 4: Building the Research Capacity & Capability within Higher Education Institutions

Approval for Cycle 4 (2007-2010) the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions was given in August 2007 and drawdown of funds by institution began in 2008. Funding is spread over 12 institutions in the S&E Region. Of a total exchequer capital allocation of c. €109 million, some €100 million was approved for the S&E Region. €77.2 million in eligible public expenditure were forecasted for 2007 and 2008. By the end of 2008, approximately €96 million have been spent, which is 124% of the amount forecasted for the period. Cycle 5 is 5-year programme from 2010-2014 and was launched in 2009 with a total fund of €300 million, with approximately €200 million for capital development and €100 million for recurrent costs.

Theme 2: Entrepreneurship in Microenterprise

The operational period for the Micro-Enterprise sub-theme commenced with effect from 1st January 07. In the third year of programme, the theme is well under way and the performance indicator outturn to 30 September shows that 60% of the final target for

training days provide to SMEs and 64% of the final target of the no. of microenterprises has been achieved. The acceleration in the achievements of these targets can be attributed to the downturn in the economy and is providing a means to address the needs of small businesses in this crisis. €26.23 million in eligible public expenditure were forecasted for 2007 and 2008. The expenditure reported exceeds this forecast by 11%. Compared to the financial plan for Priority 1, the expenditure reported by this theme is 10% of the total funds allocated to the Priority.

Theme 3: Experimental Innovation Actions

Theme 3 has yet to commence, as exchequer funding has not been provided to date.

Priority 2: Environment and Accessibility

One of the key aims of this priority is to contribute to the sustainable development of the rural areas of the region. Funding is provided under the priority for protecting surface and groundwater from pollution. Funding is also provided to stimulate energy efficiency and renewable energy production, the development of efficient energy management systems. The Renewable Energy Theme is designed to assist Ireland in devising and implementing the most efficient means to reduce its reliance on imported fossil fuels. A key objective of the priority is to increase broadband take-up throughout the region in order to contribute to the sustainable development of the Region.

The priority objectives will be pursued under three separate Themes as follows:

- Environment and Risk Prevention
- Renewable Energy
- ICT Accessibility

During 2008 sub-themes in the Renewable Energy and the ICT Accessibility Themes reported expenditure. The National Broadband Scheme (NBS) was launched in January 2009; half of the NBS coverage area will be enabled by the end of 2009. A total of 485 electoral districts in the S&E Region will be enabled under the scheme. In relation to the Environment and Risk Prevention Theme which covers water source protection and pilot village waste-water initiatives, the roll out will commence once the two pilot projects have been completed and assessed. The cumulative Priority level expenditure to end December 2008 is reported as **€17.286 million** which represents 6.21% of Priority level expenditure. Cumulative Expenditure reported for this report is €20.133 million or 7.24% at end September 2009.

Overview of Priority Progress

Theme 1: Environment & Risk Prevention

There was no expenditure reported under this Theme in 2008. The Department, in partnership with the National Federation of Group Water Schemes has implemented a national pilot source protection scheme with the objective of putting in place a national strategy for the protection of surface and ground water sources from agricultural pollution, commercial/industrial and residential sources. The pilot programme is being co-ordinated through the Science Dept, Dundalk Institute of Technology. The Wastewater Treatment Pilot Projects advanced by the Department, the National Rural Water Monitoring Committee and the local authorities was completed in 2007. The objective of the project is to assess new cost effective ways of providing a wastewater collection and treatment systems for small rural villages and to test a range of innovative technologies for collecting and treating domestic wastewater and include conventional and membrane based package treatment plants as well as vacuum sewers as opposed to traditional gravity and pumped systems. It is expected that liaison with local authorities on the identification and selection of schemes for inclusion in this intervention will commence in 2009 for both of these sub-themes and will be reported on in the 2009 progress report to the Monitoring Committee.

Theme 2: Renewable Energy

Cumulative Eligible Expenditure reported in 2009 for the Renewable Energy Theme is €9.56 million representing 7.13% of forecast. Sustainable Energy Ireland reported additional commitments and contractual commitments to 30 September 2009 which shows a total of €25.36 million expended and committed for this theme to date. Implementation has commenced on the Renewable Energy, Research & Development and Deployment Programme, the CHP & ReHeat (Bioheat) Programme & the Energy for Business Programme. The Ocean Energy Development Unit (OEDU) has been established to implement the Government's policy decision to accelerate the development of Ocean Energy (Wave and Tidal) in Ireland. It was established to advance the deployment of ocean energy technologies in Ireland by increasing the capacity for research and development both with academic institutions and commercial entities developing devices in Ireland. The expanding remit of SEI has enabled them to shape the development and delivery of a number of core initiatives, additional to the ones foreseen at the commencement of the National Strategic Reference Framework as is instanced with the inclusion of the Ocean Energy Development strand.

Theme 3: ICT Accessibility

Cumulative expenditure for the ICT Accessibility Theme is €7.779 million, representing 6.54% of forecast. Implementation has commenced on the National Broadband Scheme. Following the conclusion of a technology neutral procurement process, the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources on 23 December 2008 entered into a contract with Hutchison 3G Ireland Ltd (trading as “3”) for the implementation of the NBS. The National Broadband Scheme (NBS) was launched in January 2009; half of the NBS coverage area will be enabled by the end of 2009. The NBS will be rolled out on an electoral division basis and will address electoral divisions (1,028) that are deemed to be without adequate broadband services. 47% of the Electoral Divisions to be covered under the NBS are located within the S&E Region. Almost half of the entire NBS coverage area will be enabled by end 2009 while all residential and business premises within the NBS Coverage Area will have broadband connectivity by end September 2010.

Priority 3: Sustainable Urban Development

This Priority seeks to enhance the attractiveness of the designated Gateways and Hubs in the Region as places to live in, to work in and to invest in. It is intended to complement Priorities 1 and 2 as well as any other investment strategies which are supporting the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy. A central aim is to support and complement efforts to ensure that the cities and towns maximise their potential. In particular this Priority will complement the substantial investment which is planned under the new National Development Plan 2007 – 2013 in support of the objectives of the NSS for urban areas, and in particular the Gateways Innovation Fund. In respect of Public Transport, it is reported that some work has taken place in respect of removal of speed restrictions at Limerick Junction station. In 2008, expenditure reported was €4.879 million bringing total expenditure under this sub theme to date to €8.469 million. However, due to a demand on resources, there has been a delay in completion of this and it is intended that the next phase of the Limerick Junction Rationalisation will recommence towards the end of 2009 with a completion date of end 2010. In respect of the Swimming Pool Capital Programme it is reported that a new round of funding was intended to be launched however, due to economic circumstances, this has been postponed. Activity is not expected to commence until late 2010 at the earliest. (See tables at 3.3 and 3.5)

The review of public expenditure programmes has impacted on the themes under priority 3. However, the ERDF Gateways Grant scheme an initiative introduced by the Managing Authority to the Monitoring Committee will serve to stimulate activity under the priority and projects are expected to commence in Quarter 4 2009. In the case of the Southern &

Eastern Region, €11 million in ERDF grants have been awarded by the Steering Committee in October 2009 to the Gateway cities of Cork, Dublin, Limerick and Waterford to co-finance a variety of projects from public realm improvements to green transport routes, from arts centres to tourist visitor attractions. A number of themes have commenced implementation in 2007- 2008 and the Managing Authority mindful of the pressures on public expenditure arising from the current economic downturn is working closely with the Government Departments to ensure that the composition and integrity of the Operational Programme is maintained. (See tables at 3.3 and 3.5 above)

3.11 Conclusions

Overall implementation of the Operational Programme is progressing satisfactorily, and notwithstanding the very challenging economic environment, no amendments have had to be made to the Programme to date arising from the economic crisis. Generally the level of commitments is sufficiently strong to ensure financial targets will be met. However performance across the Programme has not been uniform, with the review of public expenditure programmes impacting in particular on the Sustainable Urban Priority. However, the Managing Authority has proactively responded to this situation by utilising the three ERDF advances provided to the Programme, to launch a Gateways Grant Scheme targeted at the four Cities within the Southern & Eastern Region.

Chapter 4 Human Capital Investment Operational Programme

4.1 Overview

The Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2007-2013 (HCI OP) is Ireland's only ESF-supported programme in the 2007-2013 round of Structural Funds with a total of €375 million in ESF aid allocated to the Programme.

The main objectives of the programme are:

- To provide education, training and other supports necessary to train the workforce as a means of enabling it to respond to the challenges posed by international competition, to enhance worker productivity and to assist in meeting the evolving needs of industry and the economy
- To provide for increased activation and participation with certain groups who can contribute to Ireland's workforce but who face barriers to employment, progression and participation

This Operational Programme is the successor to the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2000-2006 (EHRD OP). Whereas the EHRD OP was only one of the Operational Programmes that received European Social Fund co-financing in the 2000-2006 period, this successor programme is the sole vehicle through which the ESF will be applied in Ireland during the 2007-2013 programming period.

The Irish Government, as set out in the National Strategic Reference Framework³¹ (NSRF) has decided that Cohesion policy under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective will be delivered through separate Regional Operational Programmes for the BMW and the Southern and Eastern regions and one national ESF Operational Programme.

The legal basis for the Operational Programme is provided in Article 3 of Council Regulation (EC) 1083/2006 laying down the general provisions of the ERDF, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund. This states that *“the action taken by the Community under Article 158 of the Treaty “shall be designed to strengthen the economic and social cohesion of the enlarged Community in order to promote the harmonious, balanced and*

³¹ Government of Ireland (2007) National Strategic Reference Framework for Ireland, 2007 – 2013

sustainable development of the Community”. This action shall be taken with the aid of the Funds, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and other existing financial instruments. It shall be aimed at reducing the economic, social and territorial disparities which have arisen particularly in countries and regions whose development is lagging behind, to the speeding-up of economic and social restructuring, and to the aging of the population.”

The Human Capital Investment Operational Programme for 2007 to 2013 has been developed in accordance with the Council and the ESF Regulations.

4.2 Developments and Trends in Socio-Economic and Territorial Disparities

Labour Market trends

There were 1,922,400 persons in employment in the third quarter of 2009, an annual decrease of 184,700 or 8.8%. This compares with an annual decrease in employment of 8.2% in the previous quarter and a decline of 2.0% in the year to the third quarter of 2008.

There was an annual decrease of 142,400 or 12.0% in the number of men in employment, while the number of women in employment decreased by 42,300 or 4.6%. Almost 55% of the fall in male employment is attributable to a decline of 77,900 in the number of males employed in the Construction sector.

The overall employment rate among persons aged 15-64 fell by 5.6 percentage points to 62.1%, down from 67.7% in Q3 2008. The largest decrease in the employment rate occurred for those aged 20-24, which showed a decrease of 11.2 percentage points over the year to the third quarter of 2009.

There were 279,800 persons unemployed (192,000 male and 87,900 female) in the third quarter of 2009, an increase of 120,400 (+75.5%) in the year. Male unemployment increased by 89,200 (+86.8%), with the number of unemployed females increasing by 31,300 (+55.3%). When seasonal factors are taken into account there was a quarterly increase of 13,100 in the numbers unemployed with the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increasing from 11.6% to 12.4% over the quarter.

The total number of persons in the labour force in the third quarter of 2009 was 2,202,300, representing a decrease of 64,300 or 2.8% over the year. This compares with an annual

labour force growth of 0.6% or 13,500 in the third quarter of 2008. The overall participation rate declined from 64.2% in Q3 2008 to 62.5% in Q3 2009.

Employment fell on an annual basis in 9 of the 14 economic sectors. The largest decline in employment was recorded in the *Construction* sector where the numbers employed fell by 80,800 (-34.8%) over the year. The next largest annual decreases in employment were recorded in the *Industry* (-41,100) and *Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles* (-31,400) sectors.

Full-time employment fell by 202,400 (-11.8%) on an annual basis with declines in both male (-162,000) and female (-40,300) full-time employment. The largest decreases in full-time employment occurred in the *Construction* (-86,800), *Industry* (-43,500) and *Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles* (-32,500) sectors.

There was an increase of 17,700 in the numbers employed part-time, with male part-time employment increasing 19,600 over the year while female part-time employment fell by 1,900 over the same period.

With the exception of *Associate professional and technical* all occupational groups showed a decline in employment over the year. The largest decreases were in the *Craft and related* (-72,200), *Other* (-35,900) and *Plant and machine operatives* (-33,600) groups.

On a seasonally adjusted basis the number of persons unemployed increased by 13,100 between Q2 2009 and Q3 2009.

Short-term unemployment increased by 88,500 (+75.4%), while long-term unemployment increased by 33,300 (+87.4%) over the year. The increase in short-term unemployment comprised an increase of 61,500 for males and 26,900 for females, while male and female long-term unemployment increased by 27,300 and 6,000 respectively. In previous quarters the proportional increase in short-term unemployment had been greater than the proportional increase in long-term unemployment. All age groups showed an increase in unemployment with those aged 25-44 showing the largest increase (+71,200).

The unemployment rate increased from 7.0% to 12.7% over the year. This brings the unemployment rate back to levels last recorded in 1994 and 1995 when the unemployment

rates were 14.7% and 12.2% respectively. The male unemployment rate was 15.6% and the female unemployment rate was 9.1% in Q3 2009. Seasonally adjusted, the male and female unemployment rates stood at 15.5% and 8.4% respectively. The long-term unemployment rate was 3.2% in Q3 2009 compared to a rate of 1.7% in Q3 2008³².

4.3 Contribution of Operational Programme to Objectives of the NSRF

The contribution of the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme to the objectives of the National Strategic Reference Framework is outlined below.

(a) Achievements of targets and analysis of the progress

The Indicators established for the HCI OP 2007-2013 are as follows

- (i) *Total number of persons supported (Output Indicator)*
- (ii) *Total number of persons successfully completing accredited programmes (Result Indicator)*

The results for the year 2008 for the Operational Programme level Indicators are shown on the Table below. The first Indicator (Output Indicator) related to the “total number of persons supported” under the HCI OP during 2008 and this target amounted to 142,310 persons, which comprised 59,526 males and 82,784 females respectively.

In relation to the second Indicator (Result Indicator), “*Total number of persons successfully completing accredited programmes*”, the total was 54,327, made up of 23,955 males and 30,372 females. The total for this Indicator was low compared with the number of participants; the primary reason for this imbalance in the numbers is that most school, college and academic courses in Ireland commence in the autumn (September/October) and end in May/June of the following year; thus many courses that commenced in 2008 will not reach completion until mid 2009.

³² http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/labour_market/current/qnhs.pdf

TABLE showing combined Indicators at Operational Programme Level

Indicators:	Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Cumulative Total:
Indicator 1- Output Indicator											
Total no. of persons supported	Achievement	91,918	142310	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	234,228
	Target*	-		-	157695	-	-	160609	-	-	
	Male	34,148	59526	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	93,674
	Female	57,770	82784	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	140,228
Indicator 2- Result Indicator											
Total no. of persons successfully completing accredited programmes	Achievement	12,347	15,843	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28,190
	Target*	-		-	89003	-	-	98877	-	-	
	Male	3,695	4,645	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8,340
	Female	8,652	11,498	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20,150

COMMENTARY ON OUTPUT INDICATORS

Under Priority 1 (Upskilling the Workforce), physical indicators reported contain data relating to all four areas of activity (the In-Company Training Activity commenced in 2008). The increase in the number of participants relates partly to the inclusion of the In-Company Training Activity and partly to increased activity by the other three Activities.

Under Priority 2 (Activation and Participation of Groups outside the workforce) all the Activities within this Priority have now commenced operations with the exception of one, namely (*ESF 2.8) Positive Actions to Promote Gender Equality*.

COMMENTARY ON RESULT INDICATORS

The level of Result indicators has increased fourfold since 2007 thus reflecting the fact that most of the projects had commenced by 2008. However, the larger of the projects within the Priority are either multi-annual or are delivered across a calendar year resulting in lower result figures for the year 2008.

Information required by Article 10 of Regulation (EC) 1081/2006

- Gender mainstreaming and gender specific actions

Specific ESF supported activities promoting Equality Mainstreaming and Gender Equality did not commence during 2007 but will be reported on in subsequent Annual Reports

- **Increasing the participation of Migrants in employment and strengthening their social integration**

The ESF is supporting a project that is aimed at the most vulnerable of legally resident migrants that are having difficulty accessing employment because of language difficulties, health issues, lack of training or social skills or non-recognition of their qualifications. This project proposes to promote and extend initiatives to increase the levels of employability of the target group. No expenditure was recorded for this project in 2007.

- **Increasing the participation of Minorities in employment and strengthening their social integration**

The ESF continues to support Senior Traveller training programmes provided by the Department of Education through local vocational Educational Committees. Over 439 students entered this programme in 2007.

- **Increasing the participation of other disadvantaged groups in employment and strengthening their social integration**

During the 2007-2013 period the ESF is supporting two specific areas of activity supporting people with a disability. One activity (described under Innovative Actions below) has not commenced in 2007, the other, provided through Irelands National Training Authority, FÁS, trained 1502 persons in 2007.

- **Innovative activities**

An innovative programme aimed at developing and testing a comprehensive employment strategy based on individual case management of people on disability welfare payments that will have the capacity to increase their employment rate will commence in 2008.

- **Transnational/Interregional actions**

No Transnational/Interregional actions took place in 2007. Expenditure under this theme is profiled to take place from 2008-2012.

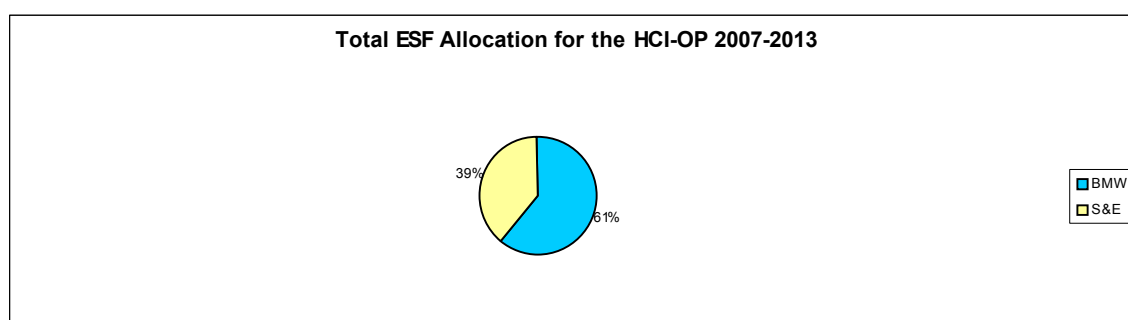
4.4 Evaluation planning

Proposals for the formal adoption of an Evaluation strategy/plan will be brought forward for consideration in 2010.

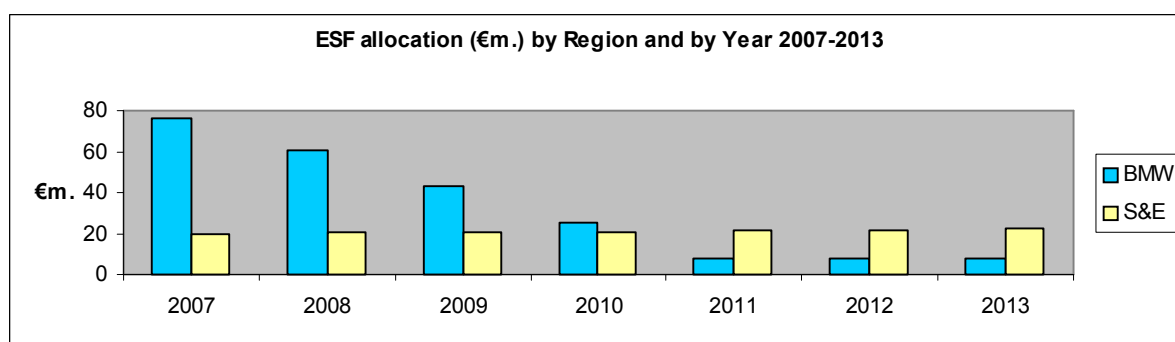
4.5 Funding and Expenditure

The funding for the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme (HCI OP) is approximately €900 million, €375 million of European Social Fund with the balance of €525 million financed by the Exchequer, a significant ongoing commitment to the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme on behalf of the Irish Government.

The ESF is divided between the BMW Region, €228.759 million (or 61%) and the S&E Region €146.604 million (39%).



The total ESF allocation is further sub-divided by year as shown on the following chart. For instance, the BMW Region receives approx 79% (or €76 million) of the first year's allocation from the Programme, tapering off to 27% (€7.8 million approx) for each of the last three years. The allocation for the S&E Region remains fixed at about €20 million per year. This financial allocation poses a considerable challenge particularly in the BMW Region during the first three years of the programme.

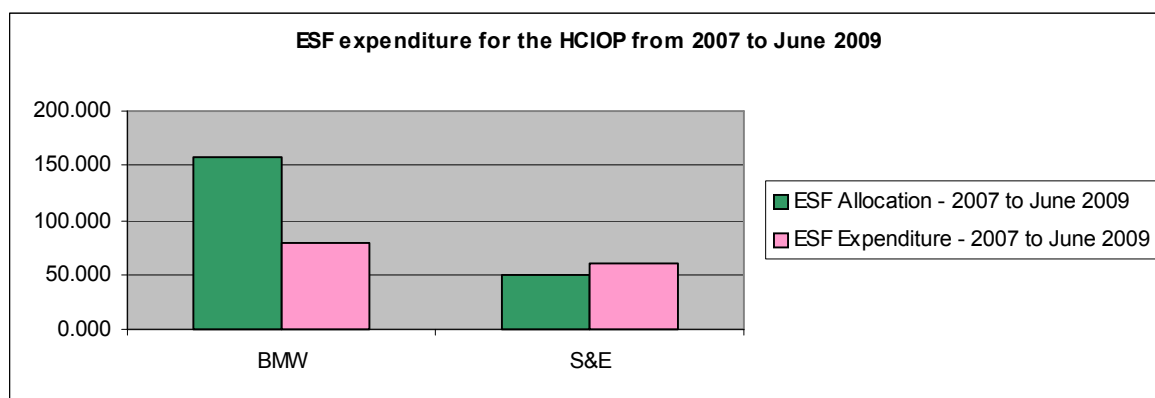


Commentary on expenditure at OP level

Total expenditure for the HCI OP for the first six months of 2009 amounted to €134.211 million. European Social Fund expenditure for the period was €32 million.

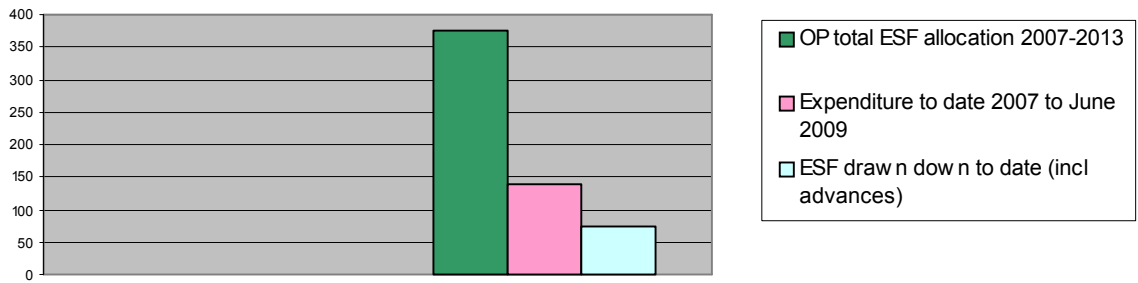
At regional level, expenditure reached just over €66.179 million in the BMW region (or 59.0% of forecast), and in the S&E region it reached €68.032 million (or 72.25% of forecast). ESF expenditure for the BMW Region was €17.6 million (40.68% of forecast) and for the S&E Region the figure was €14.44 million (or 70.19% of forecast).

The table below shows the total ESF allocation for the period 2007 to June 2009 for the OP, broken down by Region i.e., BMW €157.718 million and S&E €50.092 million with total ESF expenditure for the BMW of €78.408 million and the S&E of approx. €60.219 million. The BMW allocation for this period equals 68.9% of the total programme allocation for the Region during the lifetime of the Operational Programme. By contrast, the S&E allocation equals only 34.2% of the Region's allocation for the duration of the OP.



The second table shows the total ESF allocation (€375.362 million) of funding for the lifetime of the Programme, the proportion of ESF spent to date (€138.627 million) and the ESF drawn down from the Commission (€64.448 million, including three advances received totalling €28.15 million)

HCI OP 2007-2013 ESF total allocation and expenditure



Financial information – 2008

	Total Expenditure paid out by the beneficiaries included in the payment claims sent to the Managing Authority 2008	Of which Corresponding public contribution – 2008	Private expenditure	ESF Expenditure paid by the body responsible for making payments to the beneficiaries – 2008	Total ESF payments received from the Commission (including Advance payments) *
Priority Axis 1 Upskilling the Workforce ESF	€120.972m.	€91.552m.	Nil	€29.420m.	€40.399m.
Priority Axis 2 Activation & Participation of Groups outside the workforce ESF	€54.127m.	€37.867m.	Nil	€16.260m.	€33.208m.
Priority Axis 3 Technical Assistance ESF	€0.	€0	Nil	€0	€0.225m.
Grand Total	€175.099m.	€129.419m.	Nil	€45.680m.	€73.832m.
Total in transitional regions in the grand total	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total in non-transitional regions in the grand total	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
ERDF type expenditure in the grand total where the OP is co-financed by the ESF	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

* Includes a third advance received from the Commission in April '09.

Information about the breakdown of use of the funds

Categorisation of ESF Expenditure by Region

.6 Compliance with the Lisbon Agenda

Code	Dimension	Lisbon Agenda Compliant	ESF Expenditure			ESF Expenditure		
			2008			Cumulative		
			BMW	SAE	NAT	BMW	SAE	NAT
64	Development of specific services for employment, training and support ...	Yes -1,2, 3.	€1.511m.	€4.447m.	€5.958m.	€1.511m.	€4.447m.	€5.958m.
69	Measures to improve access to employment and increase sustainable participation and progress of women in employment ...	Yes - 3	€0.100m.	€0.21m.	€0.310m.	€0.100m.	€0.21m.	€0.310m.
70	Specific action to increase migrants' participation in employment and thereby strengthen their social integration	Yes - 3	€0	€0.073m.	€0.073m.	€0	€0.073m.	€0.073m.
71	Pathways to integration and re-entry into employment for disadvantaged people; combating discrimination in accessing and progressing in the labour market and promoting acceptance of diversity at the workplace	Yes -3.	€0.269m	€0.362m.	€0.631m.	€7.618m	€4.677m	€12.30
72	Design, introduction and implementation of reforms in education and training systems	Yes - 3.	€15.347m	€4.748m.	€20.095m.	€30.114m	€9.255m	€39.369m
73	Measures to increase participation in education and training throughout the lifecycle...	Yes - 3.	€14.213m	€13.280m.	€27.493m.	€27.401m	€30.871m	€58.271m
85	Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection.		€0	€0.242m.	€0.242m.	€0	€0.248m.	€0.248m.
86	Evaluation and studies; information and communication		€0	€0	€0	€0	€0.006	€0.006
	Totals:		€31.441m	€23.362m	€54.803m	€66.745m	€49.787m	116.531m

The primary requirements under the European Commission's 'Lisbon Agenda' are:

1. Knowledge and Innovation
2. Attractive Place to Invest and Work
3. Creating More and Better Jobs

All of the Activities contained in the HCI OP are Lisbon compliant, and the amount of ESF expenditure for 2008 is €54.803m. As all of the expenditure was for Lisbon related activities, the targets of Article 9(3) of Regulation 1083/2006 have been achieved in 2008.

4.7 Contribution of the ESF to the implementation of guidelines and recommendations under the European Employment Strategy (as set out in Article 2.1 of Regulation No. 1081/2006).

The Employment Guidelines (2008-2010)

Guideline No.17: Implement employment policies aiming at achieving full employment, improving quality and productivity at work, and strengthening social and territorial cohesion

Guideline No.18: Promote a lifecycle approach to work

Guideline No.19: Ensure inclusive labour market, enhance work attractiveness, and make work pay for job-seekers, including disadvantaged people, and the inactive

Guideline No.20: Improve matching of labour market needs

Guideline No.21: Promote flexibility combined with employment security and reduce labour market segmentation, having due regard to the role of the social partners

Guideline No.22: Ensure employment-friendly labour cost developments and wage-setting mechanisms

Guideline No.23: Expand and improve investment in human capital

Guideline No.24: Adapt education and training systems in response to new skill requirements

THE HCI OP AND THE EMPLOYMENT GUIDELINES 2008-2010

The table on the following page shows the links between the Activities that comprise the Human Capital Investment OP and the European Strategy Employment Guidelines for 2008 to 2010. The table also shows the amount of expenditure by Activity and by Priority in relation to the Guidelines.

Priority Level Table	No.	June 2009 Total Expend. (€m)	June 2009 ESF Expend. (€m)	Employment Guidelines							
				NO.17	NO.18	No.19	NO.20	NO.21	NO.22	NO.23	NO.24
Upskilling the Workforce Priority											
Skills Training	1.1	160.547	50.346	X						X	X
In-Company Training	1.2	43.188	7.256	X						X	X
Back to Education Initiative	1.3	37.941	10.305	X						X	X
Undergraduate Skills	1.4	47.011	8.424	X						X	X
Transnational	1.5	0	0								
PRIORITY TOTAL:		288.687	106.494								
Activation & Participation of Groups Outside the workforce											
Disability Training	2.1	145.562	0	X						X	X
Disability Activation Project	2.2	0.380	0.190	X		X				X	X
Adult Literacy	2.3	52.602	26.301	X						X	X
Third Level Access	2.4	34.098	9.309	X						X	X
YouthReach and Travellers	2.5	71.062	22.292	X						X	X
Garda Youth Diversion - IT Skills/Personal Development	2.6	0.520	0.260	X						X	X
Garda Youth Diversion – Additional Workers	2.7	3.756	2.655	X		X				X	X
Positive Actions to Promote Gender Equality	2.8	0	0	X	X					X	X
Equality Mainstreaming Approach	2.9	1.147	0.574	X	X					X	X
Social & Employ Integration of Migrants	2.10	0.592	0.296	X		X				X	X
Transnational	2.11	0	0								
PRIORITY TOTAL:		309.719	61.877								
Technical Assistance Priority											
Technical Assistance	3.0	0.871	0.419								
TOTAL:		599.277	138.627								

4.8 Contribution of the ESF to the relevant objectives and targets of the National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion and to other community priorities and objectives in the field of education and training.

The contribution of the ESF to the relevant objectives and targets of the National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion and to other community priorities and objectives in the field of education and training is outlined below by priority;

Social Inclusion

PRIORITY 1 – UPSKILLING THE WORKFORCE:

SKILLS TRAINING (ESF 1.1)

One of the responsibilities of FÁS is to ensure that its policies and services reflect best social inclusion and equality practice and thereby increase the participation and progression of disadvantaged groups into the labour market. A key aspect of social inclusion is achieving and maintaining a focus on providing services to relatively disadvantaged people in mainstream FÁS programmes. FÁS undertook a variety of actions in 2008 to enhance equality and social inclusion in the provision of its services.

The FÁS Equality Policy for its Customers

The FÁS ‘Equality Policy for its Customers’ was launched in August 2008 following extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders and staff, and with the full commitment of the FÁS Board. It signals the commitment of FÁS to its obligations under Equality legislation. This policy reflects what FÁS has done in the past, and what the organisation must do in the future. The new Policy was distributed to all staff in 2008, together with a training programme which accompanied the introduction of the ‘FÁS Equality for its Customers Guidelines’, which supports and provides practical guidance on the implementation of the policy.

Equality proofing (originally mainstreamed in FÁS Employment Services in 2007), commenced in FÁS Training and Community Services in 2008, with the first workshops completed in seven regions. Community Services has agreed the process and designated groups and selected grounds to be studied.

The collection of data for effective performance measurement and quality assurance in social inclusion

All organisations that provide services directly to customers need to know how well they are doing. This is particularly important for a public service provider such as FÁS. Through the use of appropriate Performance Measurement Indicators, FÁS can provide information to benchmark itself against national and international best practice. One of the key goals of the FÁS Social Inclusion Unit in recent years has been to develop, monitor and analyse reporting systems to inform labour market policies in relation to social inclusion, equality and diversity. Specifically the Unit has been working on the systematic collection of data, using the FÁS MIS system, to ascertain the extent of FÁS services to ‘marginalised’ groups. Through this process a more informed understanding of the engagement of marginalised groups with FÁS services has emerged. This collection of data has evolved in two parts: monitoring and benchmarking.

The FÁS Social Inclusion Monitoring Report is produced bi-annually and data is presented in three sections: 1) registration; 2) programme completion and 3) placement. This information is used to provide data information and overviews to FÁS and Government Departments on patterns of usage of FÁS Services for Lone Parents³³, Disabled People, Travellers and Refugees.

Lone Parents pilot project

During the period 2005-06, FÁS undertook an initiative to test approaches, and to identify potential barriers, in activating individuals in receipt of One Parent Family Payments through a proactive and flexible support process. There was a very low response to this initiative and FÁS carried out an evaluation in order to examine the reasons why individuals chose not to respond to the initiative.

Community Services activities to promote social inclusion

One of FÁS Community Services key priorities is to assist in the progression of socially excluded groups and clients e.g. Travellers, People with Disabilities and Drug addicts. Measures to achieve these objectives were identified, while establishing a process for Equality Proofing FÁS Community Services Programmes and reviewing recommendations in key national reports such as the Indecon Report on Disability and the National Drug Strategy Rehabilitation Report. In 2008, FÁS advisory and working groups were established, and appropriate training identified, in order to increase participation of these

³³ FÁS data on Lone Parents refers to lone parent recipients of the One Parent Family Payment (OPFP); this is an administrative rather than a self-declared description of status.

targeted groups in FÁS Community Services programmes and to develop policy responses to these reports.

Early School Leavers

Community Training Centres (CTCs) play an important role in addressing labour market access and equality for younger persons. They look after the training and employment needs of early school leavers, primarily aged between 16 and 21 years of age. The training is certified, leading to awards on the National Framework of Qualifications. There are currently 41 CTCs with a national capacity of 2,300 places and a total of 2,179 participants completed training during 2008.

CTCs are the FÁS response to the Youthreach Programme, and FÁS Community Services has recently developed a strategy for early school leavers (ELS) based on a learner-centred approach to address the needs and potential of this client group. This strategy is being implemented in Community Training Centres (CTCs) over the period 2008-2010. The delivery of training and related services for ESLs focuses on supporting the learner to achieve a major award on the National Framework of Qualifications as a route to sustainable employment. To date, the following elements of the FÁS Strategy for ESLs have been achieved:-

- New FETAC major awards are currently being rolled-out to provide all ESLs with opportunities to undertake quality-assured programmes leading to major awards at foundation level on the NFQ, and accordingly to create a pathway for progression to higher-level qualifications.
- FÁS is currently undertaking a review of the provision of flexible progression pathways for ESLs in CTCs, including easier access to mainstream training in FÁS training centres and reviewing pre-apprenticeship programmes to optimise progression for ESLs into apprenticeship.
- Improved tracking measures are being developed to optimise progression of early school leavers and to monitor agreed targets and outcomes.
- A pilot project to test an innovative approach to developing learners' conceptual skills relating to science and engineering occupations has been completed in five CTCs, and is currently being evaluated.

- A learner support framework is being developed for CTCs to enhance and develop a learner-centred approach for learners and a system of ‘Individual Learning Plans’ (ILPs) have been implemented in all CTCs.
- FÁS has worked with the Department of Education and Science (DES) to develop a proposal for FÁS to submit a number of its programmes as ‘programmes of education and training’ under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. This will ensure FÁS meets legislative requirements in the provision of programmes to those defined as children under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

Literacy Programmes

A review of FÁS provision of Literacy commenced with the aim of ensuring that vulnerable FÁS clients are supported to achieve their career and employment aspirations through training and employment programmes. FÁS has supported the professional development of CTC instructors to integrate literacy and numeracy support into all centres and across all programmes including those for ESLs. A Return to Education Literacy Programme has been also finalised and launched in conjunction with the IVEA. Over eight hundred Community Services participants attended this Programme.

Childcare Training Strategy and Participant Survey

FÁS has participated on a Sub-Group of the Expert Advisory Group set up to progress the National Childcare Training Strategy, which forms part of the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP 2006-2010). The aim of the Strategy is to promote a more uniform and co-ordinated approach to childcare training and its delivery, and a target of 17,000 childcare training places has been set for 2010. FÁS will continue to play an important role, together with the childcare sector, in delivering these training places, and will continue to review and ensure adequacy of provision of childcare training through its representatives on National and County Childcare Committees.

Older Workers

FÁS undertook an analysis of the issues affecting older workers, current training provision and the specific needs of this client group, with a view to developing a FÁS strategy. In addition, the findings from the ‘Senior Select, Retain and Retrain’ EQUAL Initiative will also be reviewed. Work is currently underway on the FÁS Management Information System to present age bands in a uniform way. When this work is complete, FÁS will set targets and report on participation of older people (over 50).

National Drugs Strategy

FÁS continued to support the work of the National Drugs Strategy and developed a number of specific initiatives to support the integration and re-integration of people recovering from substance misuse into the labour market. Primary amongst these is the Community Employment programme with 1,000 places on dedicated programmes. Such programmes have proved to be a significant element of the FÁS response to rehabilitation and FÁS continues to be represented on, and supportive of, local and national drug rehabilitation groups. During the year FÁS made submissions for the development of the new National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016. It also identified a number of projects for mainstreaming as part of the national strategy.

Carers

In December 2007, the Government agreed to establish a working group to develop a National Carers Strategy to cover the period 2008-2016. FÁS has participated on this group, which includes representatives from the Departments of Finance, Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Health and Children as well as the Health Service Executive (HSE). A draft report is under review.

Mainstreaming EQUAL Projects

FÁS has continued to support the mainstreaming of two EQUAL projects in 2008; 'Equal Youth' and 'You are Equal'. The 'Equal Youth' project comes under the Employability pillar of the EQUAL initiative (2005-2007), whose theme is facilitating access and return to the labour market for those who have difficulty in integrating into the labour market. The aim of the project was to ensure that early school leavers obtained and sustained employment through access to quality services that enabled them to secure appropriate training and educational supports. The two main objectives of the project were to develop a model of inter-agency co-operation among organizations that work with early school leavers in both urban and rural locations, and to develop and promote the use of a common profiling system among service providers.

Ex-offenders Protocol

A protocol for the referral of ex-offenders between FÁS and the Probation Service was developed in 2006 and has been in place since. As a result of a review that was undertaken between FÁS, the Probation Service, the Irish Prison Service and Linkage, a revised protocol was developed in 2008. The purpose of this protocol is to provide a seamless referral process to FÁS for ex-offenders, by the Probation Service and the Irish Prison

Service through the Linkage programme, taking into consideration the development and training needs of the client group and safe-guarding the work of service provider staff. The revised Protocol has been improved in a number of ways and streamlines the referral process in the best interests of the client and the community. Ex-offenders are eligible for the full range of FÁS services, even if they are not referred to FÁS through the Linkage programme.

A Garda Vetting Policy and Guidelines

FÁS developed a Garda Vetting Policy and Guidelines in consultation with internal and external stakeholders. The policy is concerned with the FÁS role as a provider of training and employment programmes, in particular in relation to the eligibility and recruitment of potential participants or trainees working or training to work with children and/or vulnerable adults. The consultation process aimed to provide policy and guidelines and it was followed by organisation-wide staff training workshops, supported by the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU).

IN-COMPANY TRAINING (ESF 1.2)

FÁS has recognised for some time that training of employed people is highly skewed to employees with higher qualifications. Yet persons with poor qualifications are very vulnerable to economic down-turns. Unfortunately, training of low-skilled employees is typically not a priority for either the employer or the individuals concerned. The main activity report on In-Company Training reported on the suite of Strategic Alliance initiatives that FÁS-funded in 2008, including several aimed at low-skilled employees. Presented below are some further programme initiatives that aim to tackle social inclusion issues of low-skilled employees.

The Workplace Basic Education Programme (WBEF) continued in 2008. This programme provides literacy and numeracy programmes for people in employment and specifically targets employees with less than Junior Cycle qualifications. Workers are identified through a network of WBEF co-ordinators. Training is principally delivered in co-operation with the VECs and qualified literacy tutors. Efforts are ongoing with the National Adult Literacy Association (NALA), VECs, the BelFÁS Unemployed Resource Centre (BURC), local authorities and large employers in an effort to promote WBEF training, and to address issues regarding motivating lower-skilled employees and/or their employers to participate. In 2008 two programmes were developed to meet the needs of employees in the

retail sector and these were rolled out nationally in 2008. The total number of participants trained in 2008 was 921. A regional breakdown of the figures is presented below.

Region	West	South West	Dublin	Dublin Central	South East	Midlands	Mid-West	Totals
Trainees	119	193	43	218	252	17	76	918
Training Days	717	975	261	1400	1323	85	444	5205

Research was undertaken by FÁS, in co-operation with ForFÁS, in 2007 on the possible use of Individual Learning Accounts to encourage take-up of training by low-skilled and low-qualified employees. In 2008 FÁS Services to Business in the South-West region piloted a new initiative called Individual Learning Options (ILOs). The ILOs aimed to respond to the needs of low-skilled/vulnerable employees who would benefit from training but whose needs could not be addressed by training courses being run under the Competency Development Programme. Courses up to Level 5 were eligible and grant aid of up to €1,300 (or 70% of the cost) was provided. The pilot was small-scale with take-up of just about a dozen persons during the year. Most of the participants were female employees with poor educational qualifications who wished to acquire training. Training covered a variety of areas including Special Needs, Legal Secretary and Accounts.

The use of ‘Paid Learning Leave’ was also examined by FÁS and in 2007 two pilot programmes targeting low skilled employees utilising this approach commenced in Sligo and Wicklow. However, despite the support of two learning leave project promoters, who worked with local companies and representative organisations such as the Sligo Leader Partnership and the Wicklow Rural Partnership, to market this initiative, the take-up on these programmes was slow. Of the 147 companies contacted in the North West, only 9 companies and 13 employees availed of training (in I.T. and CNC). Of the 224 companies contacted in the South East, only 5 companies availed of the paid learning leave provision and a total of 5 employees received training in Retail Sales and I.T. The pilots were completed by the end of August 2008 and the future of this type of initiative will be considered following a final review. STB has considered alternative, smaller-scale, Paid Learning Leave projects for small to medium sized enterprises.

BACK TO EDUCATION INITIATIVE (ESF 1.3)

The overall aim of the Back to Education Initiative (Part-time) is to increase the participation of young people and adults with less than upper second level education in range of flexible learning options. A high priority is to target individuals and groups that experience particular and acute barriers to participation in education and the Guidelines for the BTEI (Part-time) identify a number of specific target groups including disadvantaged men and women, lone parents, homeless people, substance misusers, ex-offenders. The Guidelines also set out principles to underpin planning and provision at local level which include innovation, learner centredness, equality, accessibility and inclusiveness, the recognition and accommodation of diversity, quality assurance, local consultation and an area based approach. Provision and delivery (e.g. timing, location, duration, methodologies and learner supports) are adapted to meet a wide range of learner needs.

With regard to social inclusion a number of actions are particularly of note:

- Providers engage in a wide local consultation process on an annual basis to identify priorities for course provision. This consultation process involves the target groups of the BTEI (Part-time), the local community, groups and organisations representative of particular interest groups.
- Outreach and predevelopment strategies are used to recruit and encourage participation by those least likely to take part in educational programmes.
- Guidance and mentoring are integrated into programmes to support completion and progression.
- Training allowances (including meal and travel allowances) are available to those who meet specific eligibility criteria e.g. participants between 16-20 years of age who would be eligible for such allowances if participating in a full-time programme under Youthreach.
- Childcare support is provided to enable participation by those with childcare needs and courses are often organised at times when children are at school.
- Flexible budget management enables providers to consider specific strategies to meet special needs e.g. building in extra tuition, use of artistic and other creative elements to encourage and support participation.
- BTEI eligibility criteria were amended with effect from September 2007 to allow free tuition to any adult with less than upper second level education. This change encompassed those who were previously eligible (people with a social welfare entitlement or medical card), and extended eligibility for free tuition to unwaged

people and those in employment. In making this change, the key priority was to remove barriers to access by adults who do not have the Leaving Certificate or its equivalent, and so increase participation by this group in further education without incurring tuition costs. In particular, this change in eligibility criteria extends access to free tuition to women in the home and men in low paid employment.

Indicator	Baseline Position 2007	Latest Position 2008	Male	Female
Number participating with less than upper second level education and dependent on social welfare support	15,054 (58% of all participants in 2007)	14,899 (55% of all participants in 2008)	4,115	10,784

As a % of total 2008 BTEI (Part-time) participants 27,104

A further 3,312 participants were reported as having less than upper second level education but not dependent on social welfare support. Therefore 67% (18,211) of all participants in BTEI in 2008 had less than upper second level education on entry. A total of 80% (21,774) of all participants in 2008 were reported as dependent on social welfare support of which 14,899 had less than upper second level education on entry to BTEI.

A significant contribution is the provision of opportunities to learn through part-time mode in a wide range of locations and settings and at a variety of times. This accommodates provision for those who find full-time programmes inaccessible and are least likely to take part in courses in formal education settings. A high priority is to target individuals and groups that experience particular and acute barriers to participation and the Guidelines for the BTEI (Part-time) identify a number of specific target groups.

UNDERGRADUATE SKILLS (ESF 1.4)

HEA funding for access has underpinned baseline infrastructure and programmes of action which support equity of access for under-represented groups to all undergraduate programmes. Funding is not course specific but it has allowed for providing core services to students.

The latest National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013, which was launched in July of last year, sets the following targets for participation in higher education:

- All socio-economic groups will have entry rates of at least 54% by 2020
- mature students will comprise at least 20% of full-time entrants by 2013

- The number of students with sensory, physical and multiple disabilities in higher education will be doubled by 2013.

The plan also emphasises support for a range of diverse routes to higher education including access courses, the Higher Education Access Route, the supplementary admissions route for students with a disability and to support the NQAI and HETAC in the development of a national plan for the recognition of prior learning.

Many HEA institutions have developed links and outreach programmes with schools as well as with the adult community education sector through organising pre-entry activities, which can encourage under-represented students participation in higher education. This work involves a range of activities including guidance, familiarisation and learning support which can contribute to increased enrolments in engineering and ICT along with other disciplines in higher education. Many access offices of higher education institutions also coordinate post-entry supports for students, which would include supporting students on designated courses under the undergraduate skills programme.

PRIORITY 2 – ACTIVATION AND PARTICIPATION OF GROUPS OUTSIDE THE WORKFORCE

ADULT LITERACY (ESF 2.3)

A 14 week intensive literacy and basic education programme, targeted at the most disadvantaged groups, was developed in 2006 in conjunction with NALA and the IVEA. The initiative, in which six hours of tuition is provided per week instead of the usual two hours, is currently being delivered by the VECs throughout the country.

A family literacy initiative under DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) - An Action Plan in Educational Inclusion, has been developed. It commenced with a pilot initiative in 2007. Seven projects were approved under the initiative for funding. The projects have been requested to adopt a three pronged approach in developing their projects, parents, children and parents and children together. The project was again funded in 2008 and a further 12 projects received funding under the initiative.

The Department of Education and Science hosted a Family Literacy seminar for these projects in cooperation with the Family Literacy Working Group in December 2008. A total of 40 people attended, with representation from 18 of the 19 projects funded for 2008/9. The aim of the seminar was to disseminate good practice in relation to family literacy by providing information about current initiatives both in Ireland and the United

Kingdom. A secondary aim was to give local projects an opportunity to network. The seminar also aimed to stress the importance of partnership approaches to this area of work.

There are workplace literacy schemes in operation around the country. A workplace literacy programme, called Return to Learning Scheme, has been introduced in all Local Authority areas for outdoor workers. Under the FÁS/VEC Return to Education Scheme, participants on the Community Employment Scheme operated by FÁS can be released from their work experience programmes to avail themselves of intensive literacy tuition provided by the Vocational Education Committees.

The expansion of provision across the VEC sector includes family literacy, themed literacy, literacy for homeless families (CDVEC), and provision for people with special needs.

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Indicator	Baseline Position	Latest Position
No of participants in Adult Literacy	35,000	49,000

Targeted provision is aimed at certain client groups (men only, women only, family learning, workplace, Travellers, deaf people, dyslexic people), expanded range of provision, development of linkages with other agencies dealing with social disadvantage. ESOL provision now comprises over 25% of literacy client numbers, and there is some concern that nationals with literacy difficulties may have been displaced. This situation is under review, with an independent report into the provision of ESOL underway.

THIRD LEVEL ACCESS (ESF 2.4)

National Access Plan

In July 2008 the National Access Office published the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013. The plan provides an evaluation of progress, identifies challenges, outlines policy objectives and sets challenging but realistic targets for the participation of under-represented student groups, which are consistent with the timeframe and objectives of the current National Development Plan. The National Access Office will be monitoring and reporting on progress in the implementation of the Action Plan and the reaching of national and institutional targets on equity of access to higher education.

Data Collection

At the beginning of the 2007-08 academic year the National Access Office initiated the collection of data on the social, cultural and ethnic background of new entrants to higher education. This followed the establishment of annual access data collection as part of the registration process of twenty-six higher education institutions. First year undergraduate entrants are invited to respond, on a voluntary basis, to questions on socio-economic background, disability status and on ethnic and cultural background. The questions are based on the wording used in the 2006 national census by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). For 2007-8, the overall response rate among new entrants was 72%, which is very encouraging. It is hoped that the response level can be further improved for the current academic year.

Advocacy

In December 2008 the Head of the National Access Office, Peter Brown, opened the new Assistive Technology (AT) Centre in the Boole Library, University College Cork. The Assistive Technology Centre has been established to provide opportunities to students with disabilities to enhance their learning experience within an integrated environment. The National Access Office will continue to encourage similar initiatives led by higher education institutions, which support further increases in the participation of students with disabilities in higher education.

Transition Year unit on access to higher education

The National Access Office is currently working with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) on the development of a Transition Year unit on access to higher education. Work on the drafting of the content of the unit began in 2008, in consultation with representatives from second-level schools and higher education institutions. It is anticipated that the unit will be established on a pilot basis in a number of schools in September 2009.

Inclusion and the creation of a more inclusive society are identified as one of the major challenges facing Ireland. The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) sets out to address poverty and exclusion insofar as it affects particularly vulnerable groups including children and young people, people with disabilities and Travellers. The NAPS attaches particular importance to the need for equality of access to educational opportunities recognising that the lack of educational experience and related qualifications militates against one's ability to participate fully in the economy, in employment and in society.

The Third-Level Access Sub-Priority Programme supports the above objectives in promoting and facilitating social inclusion through its support for students with disabilities and students from disadvantaged backgrounds as well as mature students in further and higher education.

Student Assistance Fund

The Fund offers support to students who find themselves in financial hardship during their course of study. The fund is targeted equally at male and female students. The final number of students in receipt of funding under the Student Assistance Fund grant in 2006-7 was

9,198 of whom 5,982, or 65%, were female. The final numbers for the 2007-8 academic year are currently being collated.

Fund for Students with Disabilities

The Fund offers support to students with a serious sensory, physical or learning disabilities in order to participate in and complete their course of study. The Fund is equally targeted to male and female students. The number of students in receipt of funding under the Fund for Students with Disabilities in 2007-8 was 3,099 of whom 1,509, or 49%, were female. The final number of students approved in 2006-7 was 2,444 of whom 1,248, or 51%, were female

The National Office in its administration of three funding programmes continues to provide financial support to students from underrepresented groups studying in further and higher education, thereby promoting and enhancing social inclusion.

YOUTHREACH AND TRAVELLERS (ESF 2.5)

On going actions to incorporate the principle in the measure include:

1. Training allowances
2. Travel and meal allowances
3. Childcare allowances
4. Guidance, counselling and psychological services
5. National training for staff in programmes assessment and certification arrangements.
6. In-service training and programmes for continuing professional development
7. Availability of National Co-ordinators – in Youthreach, in Senior Traveller Training and Guidance, Counselling and psychological services.
8. Flexibility in the management and curriculum of the centres.
9. A learning environment, which is safe, structured and challenging.
10. A process which, is both participant-centred, where the programme followed reflects trainees' identified interests and needs
11. Methodology/pedagogy, which begins with the young person
12. An emphasis on recognising and rewarding achievement rather than reinforcing failure.
13. Programmes organised on the basis of a curricular matrix in which each teacher or trainer is implementing a range of trans-disciplinary curricular objectives (such as communications skills development, health and safety).

Education plays a key role in the promotion of equality of opportunity and determines to a large extent the life chances of people. Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training are designed as part of an integrated strategy to address educational disadvantage in the context of a continuum of provision. The measure ensures that young people who have left school with no qualifications have a second chance to gain access, participate in and benefit from education of sufficient quality to allow them to find employment or to progress to further education and training. Support services are provided in recognition of the practical, emotional and social problems that many of the participants have. Their aim is to increase

the capacity of the centres to cater for the needs of their participants and to provide links with community based health and social services.

GARDA YOUTH DIVERSION – IT SKILLS/PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT (ESF 2.6)

Funding for the I.T. Skills / Personal Development courses was provided to 80 Garda Youth Diversion Projects in 2008. These courses are delivered to young people at risk of offending. The activities will help to prevent marginalisation and help to increase participation and reduce barriers to workforce access. They are delivered to both male and female youths. The courses provide further education to participants, which facilitate social inclusion. In some cases the client base for I.T. courses does not have the literacy level to enable ECDL level courses to be run lower level I.T. courses are therefore run.

GARDA YOUTH DIVERSION – ADDITIONAL WORKERS (ESF 2.7)

The additional worker funding was made available to all 100 Garda Youth Diversion Projects in 2008. By year-end additional workers had commenced employment in 53 projects. The additional worker provides support for participants in accessing further education and training by working with young people, relevant agencies and employers. The sub-measure will also improve participation in sustainable employment by identifying pathways, including further and second chance education, for individual participants towards the labour market, combating discrimination in accessing and progressing in the labour market and promoting acceptance of diversity in the workplace. The projects provide courses for whatever clients (male or female) they engage with. There are no social inclusion barriers within a project to young people's participation in activities.

EQUALITY FOR WOMEN (ESF 2.8)

The Equality for Women Measure 2008 – 2013 builds on the achievements of its predecessor, the Equality for Women Measure 2000 – 2006. The EWM is a positive action initiative designed to address areas of inequality within the labour force and is divided into two phases – from 2008 – mid 2011 and from mid 2011 to the end of 2013. The first phase of the Measure is organised around four separate strands. Strand 1, which was officially launched in May 2008, has as its target audience women who are socially disadvantaged

and women who are outside the labour market with the social skills, education and training to enable them to enter or return to the labour market.

- Official launch of Equality for Women Measure 2008 – 2013 took place in May 2008.
- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform provided funding of €60,000 towards the National Women's Enterprise Day which was held in Mullingar on 26 November 2008

EQUALITY MAINSTREAMING APPROACH (ESF 2.9)

The objective of this activity is to contribute to addressing labour market gaps for specific groups that are experiencing barriers to participation and employment, including those created by gender inequality and wider inequalities. The programme aims to put in place measures to improve labour market access and participation of groups experiencing inequality across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation. It is likely that many of the groups across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation will experience a combination of poverty and inequality.

A Measure Advisory Committee was set up to advise the Unit on its work. It includes representation from across the nine grounds of the equality legislation. Gender, age, disability and ethnic minority participation data will be collected on employees of companies availing of the SME grant scheme. Equality mainstreaming approaches across the nine grounds are being supported in three VECs. The EMU published and launched Positive Action for Traveller Employment. This is a report by Damien Peelo, Aodh O'Connor and Grainne O'Toole on positive action initiatives in the public and community sectors to promote access to employment by members of the Traveller community. 122 small to medium enterprises were supported during 2008 to put in place equality infrastructures such as equality policies and training.

Increasing The Participation Of Migrants In Employment And Strengthening Their Social Integration

INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS (ESF 2.10)

The EPIC Programme has identified barriers, which inhibit the ability of our client group to become employed and thus social included into Irish society. These include:

- Poor grasp of the English language
- Qualification recognition by Irish employers
- Skills/experience recognition by Irish employers
- Childcare

- Orientation to the labour market
- Interpersonal skills
- Lack of Irish work experience
- Poor interview skills and poor CV's
- Gaps in CV's
- Fear of losing social welfare benefit
- Poor language and communication skills
- Lack of confidence

The entire operation of the Programme is set toward identifying and targeting the target group as well as assisting them to overcome the obstacles as outlined above. Such actions undertaken during 2008 to meet this end include:

Promotions

A proactive approach identifying and targeting those appropriate for the Programme. A number of select avenues are pursued to ensure that the target group have the best possible opportunity of being exposed to information about the Programme.

- Editorials and articles in specialised media including newspapers published in native language
- In cooperation with the Department of Social and Family Affairs in Dublin information letters send to immigrants receiving jobseekers benefit. Open days were also held in Social Welfare Offices

Cultural/workplace orientation

- Lifeskills training course including presentation on a range of issues which are helpful to immigrants settling and looking for employment in Ireland.
- Psychosocial support from a dedicated Social Support Officer
- Interpersonal skills
- Interview skills

English Language

- English for Employment classes which is language orientation focusing on language used during interviews/employment
- Staff interpreting for clients who have severe English language difficulties

Career support Activities/Training and Employment Officer Service

- One-on-one career guidance and career path development sessions with TEOs
- Assistance with access to employment or further training or education placement
- Individual needs assessments

- Individual job ready assessment
- Motivation for clients to regain confidence and energy lost during period of unemployment
- Preparation for interviews/placement
- Suite of profiling tools including Psychometric assessment
- Development of a network of employers and advocating on behalf of the target group to ensure employment is secured and appropriate for each individual person.

Referrals to other agencies

- Clients presenting with an insufficient standard of English to engage with the Programme are referred to other free English classes in their local area to ensure that, despite not engaging with the Programme, they are offered alternative support from other agencies.
- The Social Support Officer also refers to other agencies where appropriate, during 2008 25 other agencies were referred to, these included Threshold, Focus Ireland, Women's Aid and St. Vincent de Paul

Gender proofing

A gender sensitive approach is undertaken by the Programme with particular regard given to those with primary responsibility for childcare, the vast majority of whom are women.

- Provision of a childcare payment to single parents
- Overall flexibility of the Programme, it's part-time nature takes into account the need of women to care for their children
- Flexibility of the TEO in meeting their clients, which takes into account the client's childcare needs.

New initiatives with partners in both the business and community sectors continue to work towards social inclusion for our target group. (Details of these initiatives are outlined in question 3 of the Progress Report Template). Mock interviews are provided as part of cultural/workplace orientation, this allows the target group a unique opportunity to test their interview skills in an Irish setting before presenting for a real interview. Mentoring from recruiters who are experts in their field gives additional guidance and support to mentees, ensuring that they are given the best possible opportunity to successfully find employment in their profession.

EPIC has also partnered with agencies/organisation within the community sector who provide guest speakers sessions on topics relevant to immigrants settling in Ireland. The provision of such information, alongside direct exposure to these organisations and contact with these organisations assists the target groups’ cultural orientation and ensures that the target group themselves are equipped with the relevant information to make independent decisions around these issues. Furthermore, they are aware that they can access these organisations as support structures independently of the EPIC Programme.

Indicator	Baseline Position (Target for 2008)	Latest Position
Referrals	300	374
Engaged	270	245
Employment Placements	105	116
Training/Education Placements	105	52
Total Placements	210	168

Increasing the participation of other disadvantaged groups in employment and strengthening their social integration

DISABILITY TRAINING (ESF 2.1)

All actions under this Activity support social inclusion. Thus, the main report on this Activity includes many actions to support social inclusion. Presented below are some actions.

One of the responsibilities of FÁS is to ensure that its policies and services reflect best social inclusion and equality practice and thereby increase the participation and progression of disadvantaged groups into the labour market. A key aspect of social inclusion is achieving and maintaining a focus on providing services to relatively disadvantaged people in mainstream FÁS programmes. FÁS undertook a variety of actions in 2008 to enhance equality and social inclusion in the provision of its services for people with disabilities.

The FÁS Social Inclusion Benchmarking Report

The FÁS Social Inclusion Benchmarking Report is formulated to develop a system to benchmark progress in key areas of customers’ engagement with FÁS services and progression within FÁS. This report is produced and sent quarterly to the FÁS Regions and it monitors and benchmarks progress against set targets for FÁS services provided to disadvantaged groups including people with disabilities. For 2008, the target was a minimum increase of 2% over the 2006 figures.

The Indecon Study on the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Training for People with Disability ‘

Following the publication of the Indecon Report, commissioned by FÁS and the Departments of Enterprise, Trade, and Employment, and Health and Children, which reviewed the effectiveness and efficiency of rehabilitative and vocational training for people with disabilities, a working group with four subgroups, representing FÁS and key service providers, was established to examine and develop mechanisms to implement the 19 recommendations from this report. Key areas identified for improvement were: -

- Current and future funding.
- Selection and assessment of applicants.
- Transparency and accountability.

To date, two of the subgroups have completed their work and the final implementation report will be available by mid-2009. Work will then be monitored on a quarterly basis to ensure all aspects of the report are being implemented.

One of the Indecon report recommendations was “That a joint bridging programme should be developed to assist making the transition from rehabilitative training to vocational training and other mainstream options”. FÁS, in response to this and similar recommendations from the Department of Health and Children’s, National Co-ordination Committee (NCC), has undertaken a test project, in conjunction with St Joseph’s Foundation, Cork, to determine if people with disabilities can make the transition from rehabilitative training to vocational training. If successful this project will provide a framework for the transition of people with disabilities to mainstream vocational training with a view to entering the open labour market.

Research into employers’ attitudes to employing people with disabilities Research by consultants REDc was commissioned by FÁS to determine private sector employers’ attitudes to employing people with disabilities. This research set out to:-

- Measure employers’ knowledge, understanding, experience and attitude to inclusion of those with disabilities in the work place.
- Provide guidance on employers’ needs and desires for information and assistance in the area of employing those with disabilities.
- Determine Irish businesses’ experience and attitude to serving customers with disabilities.
- Measure the awareness by employers of organisations engaged in supporting the employment of disabled people.

Significantly, one of the outcomes of this research showed that while having certain other reservations about employing people with disabilities e.g. health and safety issues, the employers surveyed generally did not see disabled employees impacting negatively on their costs or profits.

The FÁS Mental Health Working Group

As part of the implementation of the FÁS Vocational Training Strategy for Disabled People, the organization is currently developing initiatives and supports for clients with mental health disabilities, including 'Resource Handbooks' to help in identifying local supports and the provision of appropriate in-service training for Employment Service and Community Services Officers to assist staff working with the people with mental disabilities. A Working Group, which is due to report in mid-2009, has also been established to develop a protocol for FÁS mainline training provision for people with mental health disabilities based on the Mental Health Forum Report (July 2007).

The Blue Teapot Theatre Company

A FÁS Local Training Initiative (LTI) course was established at the end of 2007 to assist the Blue Teapot Theatre Company in Galway to help adults with learning disabilities grow and develop their skills through the medium of theatre and acting. Those participating in the course received training from professionals in different acting disciplines including:

- Acting skills and singing.
- Mask making.
- Costume design and fabrication.

The FÁS programme has facilitated the recruitment of a co-ordinator to assist the company engage in long-term planning, and to move from its former location into the middle of Galway, where it has become part of the Galway Arts Festival. When participants have completed the course they will be awarded appropriate FETAC awards.

Supports for Learners

The existing administrative system for the Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant, the Personal Reader Grant, the Job Interview Grant and Employee Retention Grant schemes, were amalgamated into a Reasonable Accommodation Fund in 2008. New Brochures have been prepared for the implementation of the Fund in 2009. 'Reasonable Accommodation' is the term used in equality legislation to define the framework, which places an obligation on employers and training bodies to take appropriate measures to accommodate people with a disability. The purpose of the FÁS Reasonable Accommodation Fund was to amalgamate the existing systems for the four FÁS employment supports for disabled people, to merge them under one financial budget and streamline the application procedure

DISABILITY ACTIVATION PROJECT (ESF 2.2)

The DAP endeavours to ensure that economic participation and tackling exclusion go hand in hand. The objective of the project is development of a comprehensive employment strategy which is based on individualised progression path planning ensures that each participant in the DAP has a

tailor made route to economic participation which encompasses their unique skills, personality, values and interests. (To date 30 people have developed individualised progression plans through a programme entitled 'Enable for Life')

Helping people with disabilities overcome multiple barriers to employment, education and training and enable them to realise their full potential. The DAP liaises with other relevant agencies and stakeholders to improve the way in which services are provided in order to help people overcome multiple barriers to employment, education or training, and enable them to realise their potential. To date, this has involved working with FÁS, the VEC, HSE, ICTU Centre, Open Door Project, Counselling services, MABS, Co Council, TEAM (emergency housing) Partnership Company, Employment Pact (75 + people have been referred to date). The project also procured Career Decisions Ltd., to provide specialist guidance and career/personal development training.

The Project will liaise closely with Westmeath Employment Pact who have carried out extensive research into the areas of marginalised groups and employment. In this particular instance and bearing in mind the nature of the activity the focus will be on people with disabilities. As the DSFA's Disability Allowance is payable from the age of 16 the Project will be engaging closely with educational providers for teenagers with disabilities in the area.

The target group for the Project is people in receipt of an Illness/Disability Payment from DSFA. The progress of these participants is being monitored on an ongoing basis and the findings will be used in the context of the development of a comprehensive employment strategy. Meaningful engagement is taking place with disability groups and other relevant agencies to address the issues of access and barriers to progression.

Chapter 5 - Territorial Cooperation Objective

5.1 Ireland's participation in Territorial Co-operation Objective Programmes

Under the Territorial Cooperation Objective, not covered by the NSRF, Ireland is participating in ERDF-funded cross-border, transnational, and interregional Interreg programmes as follows:

Country	Programme	Managing Authority
Northern Ireland	PEACE III	Special EU Programmes Body
Northern Ireland/Scotland	INTERREG IVA (Ireland –Northern-Ireland and Scotland Programme)	Special EU Programmes Body
Wales	Ireland-Wales Programme	Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly
EU trans-national cooperation	Atlantic Area	Managed by authorities in other Member States
EU trans national cooperation	North-West Europe	Managed by authorities in other Member States
EU trans national cooperation	Northern Periphery Programme	Managed by authorities in other Member States

This chapter has been included in the National Strategic Report in response to the invitation from the Commission to include a chapter on the Territorial Co-operation Objectives.

5.2 PEACE III PROGRAMME

Introduction

The PEACE III Programme was approved in November 2007 and since then has progressed towards full implementation. By the 27 November 2009, a total of 318 applications had been received by the PEACE III Programme and 110 projects recommended for approval with a total value of €164.8m. A total of 103 Letters of Offer have been issued with a combined value of €151.2m. €18.3m has been recorded on the Systems 2007 database as expenditure by Friday 27 November 2007.

5.2.1 Progress on implementation to date in each theme is outlined below.

Priority 1, Theme 1: Building Positive Relations at the Local Level

There are two elements to this theme the Local and the Regional. Letters of Offer have been issued for all 14 Local Action Plans with the total allocation for them of €50.2m. Implementation has now progressed and commitment has occurred in 13 of the cluster areas. A total of €2.5m in expenditure has been recorded on the database as of 27 November 2009. Within the Regional element, a total of 61 applications have been received. Twenty one Letters of Offer have been issued to date to the value of €26.5m. Seventeen have been rejected, two withdrawn and one deferred. A total of €3.7m has been recorded as expenditure on the database as of 27 November 2009.

Priority 1, Theme 2: Acknowledging and Dealing with the Past

By 27 November 2009, across all three Strands there had been 143 applications received, 58 approved, 53 rejected, 14 withdrawn and 18 still under assessment. Letters of Offer have been issued to 55 projects and 45 projects have processed their first claims. A total of €3.9m has been recorded as expenditure on the database as of 27 November 2009.

Priority 2, Theme 1: Creating Shared Space

By 27 November 2009 a total of 61 applications have been received under this theme. Thirty one of these have been received through the second call which closed on 13 November 2009. Nine applications have been approved to the value of €53.4m with eight Letters of Offer issued to the value of €48.9m. A total of €4.9m has been recorded as expenditure on the database as of 27 November 2009.

Priority 2, Theme 2: Key Institutional Capacities

A total of thirty-nine full applications have been received by 27 November 2009, fifteen under Area 1 and twenty-four under Area 2. Thirty-seven applications have been considered by Steering Committee. Ten applications have been approved to the value of €10.4m with five Letters of Offer issued with a total value of €3.4m. No expenditure has been recorded to date.

Priority 3 Technical Assistance

€19.9m budget allocated to the programme to fund Technical Assistance. This has been subdivided across a number of budget headings and phased throughout the lifetime of the programme. A total of €3.4m has been recorded as expenditure on the database as of 27 November 2009.

Summary of Progress on Implementation

Therefore, the overall progress made in implementing the PEACE III Programme is summarised in the table below.

Table 1 – Summary of all Themes

	Priority / Theme	Allocation (€m)	Projects Approved (No)	Projects Approved (Value) (€m)	Commitment (%)
1.1	Building Positive Relations at the Local Level (Local)	90	14	50.2	55.8
1.1	Building Positive Relations at the Local Level (Regional)	50	21	26.5	53
1.2	Acknowledging and Dealing with the Past.	50	58	24.3	48.6
2.1	Creating Shared Space	82	9	53.4	65.1
2.2	Key Institutional Capacities	40	10	10.4	26
	Sub – Total	313	112	164.8	52.7
3.	Technical Assistance	20	4	14.7	73.5
	Grand Total	333	116	179.5	53.9

5.2.2 Integration of cooperation dimension in implementation of national or regional policies

NSRF Ireland/Border Region

The NSRF in Ireland aims to support and enable dynamic regional development and outlines a number of overarching strategic priorities that are to be addressed under three Programmes. Two of these Programmes (Regional Programme BMW and the Employment Programme) are relevant to the Border Region; the other Programme (Regional Programme S&E) is only relevant to the Southern and Eastern Region of Ireland.

The Strategic focus of the NSRF reflects the National investment priorities contained in the NDP 2007-2013 and the niche and complementary position EU Regional Policy will play in Ireland over the period.

The Human Capital Investment Priority addresses the issues of Ireland's competitiveness challenges and changing economic and demographic structure by up skilling the workforce and increasing the participation and activation of groups outside the workforce.

ERDF Priority 1 allows the Regional Operational Programmes to focus investment on the particular weaknesses and build on the strengths of their region in the RTDI field. This Priority also supports the development of knowledge and innovation and help foster entrepreneurship in Ireland through targeted interventions in each Region.

ERDF Priority 2 has been designed to address the weaknesses in the BMW and S&E Regions in strategic infrastructure, in particular focusing investment on strengthening the Gateways and Hubs as drivers of the regional economies and improving strategic Gateway and Hub inter-connectivity in a niche and complementary manner to the NDP 2007-2013. ERDF Priority 2 also promotes environmental and sustainable development.

On a similar basis to the Programmes in Northern Ireland, the Regional Programme and the Employment Programme creates synergies with PEACE III by promoting economic and social change in the Border Region and providing a supportive environment for addressing peace and reconciliation. In particular, by providing support and skills and removing the barriers to the labour market for those that may have difficulty in seeking employment, the Employment Programme can complement the PEACE III Programme by addressing issues of marginalisation and exclusion. By seeking to address sectarianism, racism and segregation, the PEACE III Programme also complement activities in the NSRF by encouraging inclusion in society and facilitating greater social and economic engagement on a cross-border and cross-community basis.

5.2.3 Examples of Projects

5.2.3.1 Rural Community Network - Rural Enabler Project

The Rural Enabler is a programme that aims to tackle conflict issues, such as historic sectarian problems and modern day racial issues, in rural communities across Northern Ireland and the border region. The Rural Enabler programme will be targeted at Rural areas i.e. areas with a population of less than 4,500, across the six counties of Northern Ireland and the six Border Counties of the Republic of Ireland. In regard to the strategic context of the project, the

following stakeholder strategies/policies have been identified as ‘fitting’ with the Rural Enabler project:

- Northern Ireland Priorities and Budget 2008-2011
- OFMDFM: A Shared Future
- OFMDFM: Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland
- OFMDFM: Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2005-2010
- DARD: Rural Strategy 2007-2013
- Rural Community Network: Strategic Plan 2007-2013
- CRC-Sharing Over Separation: Actions towards a Shared Future
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive: Rural Homes and People Policy
- Planning for Diversity: The National Action Plan Against Racism
- Strategy for Rural Development in Ireland: White Paper on Rural Development
- Irish Rural Link: Strategic Plan 2007-2009

5.2.3.2 INCORE - Journeys Out Project

The overall goal of the proposed Journeys Out project is to advance a bottom-up approach to dealing with the past in Northern Ireland and the Border Region by:

- Building the capacity of community leaders to engage in the debate about dealing with the past on an inter-community basis;
- Assisting local communities in identifying and addressing their needs in terms of dealing with the past; and
- Documenting community leaders’ journeys from conflict to participation and sharing lessons from these journeys locally, nationally and internationally.

In regard to the strategic context of the project, the following stakeholder strategies/policies have been identified as ‘fitting’ with the Journeys Out project:

- NI Programme for Government 2008-2011 (NI Executive)
- A Shared Future – Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland. (OFMDFM)
- Lifetime Opportunities – Government’s Anti-poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland (OFMDFM)
- Victim Strategy Document – Strategic Approach for Victims and Survivors (OFMDFM)
- Blueprint of Ireland’s Future 2007-2012 (Department of the Taoiseach)

- Strategy Statement 2008-2010 (Department of the Taoiseach)
- Sharing the Space Strategy (International Fund for Ireland)
- National Development Plan 2007-2013
- National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 (Department of Family and Social Affairs).

5.2.3.3 Mediation NI - The Most Project

The Most Project – International Dialogue for Civic Leadership is a European and international learning and networking project, aimed at addressing issues of segregation, sectarianism and racism, through the creation and development of international linkages, the exploration of good practice in service delivery by key institutions and the up-skilling of local mediation practitioners to work on an international and cross-cultural basis. In regard to the strategic context of the project, the following stakeholder strategies/policies have been identified as ‘fitting’ with The Most Project:

- Northern Ireland Executive - Programme for Government 2008-2011;
- Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) - A Shared Future - Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland;
- OFMDFM - A Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2005-2010;
- OFMDFM - Lifetime Opportunities - Government’s Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland; and
- National Development Plan 2007-2013.

5.3 IRELAND/N. IRELAND/SCOTLAND INTERREG IVA PROGRAMME

5.3.1 Introduction

The INTERREG IVA Programme was approved in November 2007 and since then has progressed towards full implementation. By 27 November 34 projects had been approved to the value of €152.5m. Nineteen Letters of Offer have been issued to the value of €108m and 12 of the projects have become operational over the past few months. Recorded expenditure on the Systems 2007 database as of 27 November 2009 is €16.3m which is well above the N+2 target for 2009.

Priority 1 Theme 1 – Enterprise (€70 million)

By 27 November 2009 11 applications had been recommended for approval to the value of €33.7m. Ten Letters of Offer have been issued to the value of €27m and five of those projects are operational. One project is awaiting a Letter of Offer and is currently going through the approval process.

Priority 1 Theme 2 - Tourism (€30 million)

By 27 November 2009 seven applications had been recommended for approval to the value of €29.9m, three of those have been issued with Letters of Offer to the value of €10.5m and one of the projects has moved to implementation stage. No expenditure has been recorded within this theme to date.

Priority 2 Theme 1 – Collaboration (€65 million)

By 27 November 2009, 12 applications have been recommended for approval to the value of €49.3m. Three Letters of Offer have been issued to the value of €28.3m and all three are operational. By 27 November 2009, €98,578 of expenditure has been recorded on the Systems 2007 database.

Priority 2 Theme 2 – Infrastructure (€75 million)

By 27 November 2009, four applications have been recommended for approval to the value of €40.2m, three of those have been issued with Letters of Offer to the value of €37.8m and all three projects are operational. By 27 November 2009, €14.7m expenditure has been recorded on the Systems 2007 database.

Technical Assistance (€15.36 million)

Technical Assistance (TA) is utilised by the Managing Authority for programme implementation, monitoring, administrative/technical support, verification, evaluation, audit and inspection. A total of €15,360,000 is allocated from the programme to fund TA. By 27 November 2009, a total of €1.4m expenditure has been recorded on the Systems 2007 database.

5.3.2 Summary

The overall progress made in implementing the INTERREG IVA Programme is summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Summary of progress in implementation

	Priority / Theme	Allocation (€m)	Projects Approved (No)	Letters of Offer issued	Number of projects operational
1.1	Enterprise	70	11	10	5
1.2	Tourism	30	7	3	1
2.1	Collaboration	65	12	3	3
2.2	Infrastructure	75	4	3	3
	Sub-total	240	34	19	12
3	Technical Assistance	15.36	2		

Table 2 below highlights the value of projects approved and with Letters of Offer issued by theme

Table 2 – Summary of value of projects

	Priority / Theme	Allocation (€m)	Projects Approved (Value) (€m)	Letters of Offer value (€m)	Value of projects operational (€m)
1.1	Enterprise	70	33.7	27.0	12.4
1.2	Tourism	30	29.9	10.5	4.0
2.1	Collaboration	65	49.3	28.2	28.6
2.2	Infrastructure	75	40.2	37.8	37.8
	Total	240	152.5	104	82.8

5.3.3 Integration of cooperation dimension in implementation of national or regional policies

NSRF / Ireland

Please see 5.2.2 which sets out an overview of Ireland's NSRF.

There are a number of commonalities between the INTERREG Programme and activities to be supported under the NSRF in Ireland. These areas, particularly include, improving technological development as is the case with Project Kelvin and providing economic infrastructure, particularly in the Priority 1 Themes of Collaboration and Tourism. During the assessment processes consideration is given in regards to the NSRF and in particular to activities that seek to complement and facilitate co-operation and promoting synergies between Northern Ireland and the Border Region.

5.3.4 EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS

5.3.4.1 BioMara

BioMara, a tripartite project incorporating project partners in Western Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland aims to demonstrate the feasibility and viability of producing mari-fuels from marine biomass derived from both macroalgal (Seaweeds) and microalgal (single celled plants) sources, as an alternative to agri-fuels production from terrestrial land plants. The project seeks to develop cross border scientific collaboration to produce low cost locally produced sustainable transport biofuel, safe from hazards associated with oil transport and nuclear fuel production. In regard to the strategic context of the project, the following stakeholder strategies/policies have been identified as ‘fitting’ with the BioMara project;

- EU – Lisbon Agenda (2000)
- UK Government – Energy White Paper (2003)
- UK Government – Marine Bill (2007)
- Irish Government – Energy White Paper “Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland” (2007)
- UK and Irish Governments – Comprehensive Study of an All-Island Economy (2006)
- Northern Ireland Executive – Northern Ireland Priorities and Budget 2005 – 2008

5.3.4.2 Tradelinks II

The Tradelinks 2 Programme is a wide-ranging suite of business support measures which is aimed at addressing barriers to trade by providing a framework for a co-ordinated approach to support micro enterprises and owner managed businesses based in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland. This approach is designed, to support businesses displaying entrepreneurial flair, but which do not have access to a continuous programme of company development, to become more sustainable and competitive and to generate greater added value, earnings and wealth within their host communities.

Tradelinks 2 aims to assist 1,200 businesses across the 12 county region, with 800 participating actively in identifying cross border trade linkages of which 75% or 600 will be developed into actual linkages. In regard to the strategic context of the project, the following stakeholder strategies/policies have been identified as ‘fitting’ with the Tradelinks II project;

- Lisbon Agenda (2001-2010); and

- ERDF Competitiveness Programme (2007-2013).
- National Development Plan (2007-2013);
- Enterprise: Unlocking the UK's talent (March 2008); and
- Comprehensive Study of an All-Island Economy (2006).
- Rural Development Programme (2007-2013);
- Economic Vision for Northern Ireland (2005-2015);
- Northern Ireland Programme for Government (2008-2011);
- New Targeting Social Need/Tackling Social Exclusion; and
- Section 75.

5.3.4.3 Putting Patients, Clients and Families First

This project works with partners within the health and social care sector and the community and voluntary sector to tackle recognised inequalities in health care and provide better access to health and social care on a cross-border basis. The project is sub-divided into a number of key thematic areas which underpin the sub projects within the plan, namely;

- Improved Access to Information and Services – Patients and Professionals;
- Reform and Modernisation;
- Promotion of Independent Living and Citizenship;
- Promoting Health and Well-Being;
- Workforce Mobility; and Supporting Vulnerable Families.

12 sub projects are operational as follows;

- Acute Hospital Services
- Clinics for Sexually Transmitted Infections
- Development of Eating Disorder Services
- Multi Level Alcohol Harm Reduction
- 'Turning the Curve' – Autism Support Project
- 'How are our Children doing?'- Outcomes planning
- Support for Older People
- Preventing and Managing Obesity
- Support for People with a Disability
- Tackling Social Exclusion and Health Inequalities
- Tackling Diabetes in High Risk Clients

- Workforce Mobility

In regard to the strategic context of the project, the following stakeholder strategies/policies have been identified as ‘fitting’ with the Putting Patients, Clients and Families First project;

- National Development Plan Ireland 2007-2013 – Transforming Ireland, a Better Quality of Life for All
- Northern Ireland Programme for Government 2008-2011
- Programme for Government 2007-2012 – Ireland
- Social Partnership Agreement – Towards 2016 – Ireland
- European Health Strategy
- Ireland Health Strategy
- Northern Ireland Health Strategy
- All Ireland Health Policy
- The North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) – Health Policy
- Equality Agenda

5.4 IRELAND WALES PROGRAMME

5.4.1 Progress on Implementation

The Programme has three Priorities and is worth over €70.3 million with more than €52 million of that available in ERDF grant support. The first two Priorities are broken down into themes which focus the investment in specific areas which closely correlate with the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas.

Priority 1 – Knowledge, Innovation and Skills for Growth (Total Budget €39.6 million)

Theme 1 – Innovation and Competitiveness

Theme 2 – Skills for Competitiveness and Employment Integration

Priority 2 – Climate Change and Sustainable Regeneration (Total Budget €26.4 million)

Theme 1 – Climate Change and Sustainable Development

Theme 2 – Sustainable Regeneration of Communities

Priority 3 – Technical Assistance (Total Budget €4.2 million)

The Programme operates by open calls for proposals and has closed three rounds, one in each of January 2008, September 2008 and September 2009. It has resulted in the submission of 56 grant applications. The Steering Committee has met for Rounds 1 and 2 and considered 41 of these applications and approved 18 of them. One offer has since been withdrawn due to lack of match funding on the part of one of the sponsors in a project. The Joint Technical Secretariat is in the process of appraising the 13 Round 3 projects and the Steering Committee for this Round is due to meet on March 4th 2010.

Table 1 below shows the level of ERDF grant commitment to the programme in November 2009.

Priority and Theme	ERDF Allocation	ERDF Round 1 and 2 Approved	% of allocation	Total Number of Projects	Balance of ERDF Remaining
P1 T1		9,960,248		8	
P1 T2		2,017,699		2	
P1 Total	29,720,147	11,977,947	40.30%	10	17,742,200
P2 T1		6,833,138		5	
P2 T2		3,005,398		2	
P2 Total	19,813,431	9,838,536	49.66%	7	9,974,895
P1/P2 Total	49,533,578	21,816,483	44.04%	17	27,717,095

The figures in Table 1 demonstrate that the level of interest in the programme is strong and is reflective of the partnerships that have been built up at both beneficiary and programme management level over a long number of years. Round 3 will increase the level of commitment further and the programme management team is focusing its efforts on demand management over the remaining life of the programme and ensuring that the best possible quality projects are developed and supported in future years.

5.5 Transnational Programmes

5.5.1 Overview

Ireland participates in three cross border programmes including the Peace programme, three transnational programmes and four interregional programmes in the 2007-2013 period. The BMW Regional Assembly is the National Contact Point for two transnational programmes over the period 2007-2013. These are the **Atlantic Area** and **Northern Periphery** Programmes. The **North-West Europe** programme involves the whole country.

5.5.2 North West Europe

On 26th September 2007, the European Commission approved a European Territorial Cooperation Programme for transnational cooperation between Belgium, Germany, Ireland, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom with the participation of Switzerland for the period 2007-2013. The total budget of the NWE Programme is €696 million. Community investment through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) amounts to around €355 million. Projects can apply for a grant rate of up to 50% ERDF.

The main goal of the Programme is to capitalise on the cooperation between key actors and to address territorial issues across the North West Europe area. The Programme seeks to contribute to the economic competitiveness of the region, thereby equally promoting regionally balanced and sustainable development.

The Programme priorities are:

Priority 1: Developing the NWE knowledge-based economy by capitalising on our capacity for innovation

Priority 2: Sustainable management of natural resources and of natural and technological risks

Priority 3: Improving connectivity in NWE by promoting intelligent and sustainable transport and ICT solutions

Priority 4: Promoting strong and prosperous communities at transnational level

Following the completion of five successive open calls for proposals, in excess of €170 million ERDF has been committed to projects across the four Priorities, which represents 51% of the Programme budget. During 2009 a total of 19 No. new projects were approved, including 6 No. projects involving Irish partners. A sixth call will open in March, 2010.

5.5.3 Atlantic Area

The **Atlantic Area** Programme supports projects in Spain, Portugal, France, the United Kingdom and Ireland. The programme has a total ERDF budget of €104m for the period 2007-2013. To date, 24 projects have been approved throughout the area totalling some €39.5m in ERDF. Of these 24 projects, 19 involve 28 Irish Partners. The total approved ERDF to Irish Partners is €4.45m. The Innovation and marine/coastal environment priority account for 68% of Irish participation to date. Irish Projects supported include initiatives that promote research, innovation & enterprise networks including higher

education/industry collaboration, access to venture capital in rural regions of the Atlantic Area, SME internationalisation and local tourism development.

5.5.4 Northern Periphery

The **Northern Periphery** Programme supports transnational co-operation projects in very peripheral regions of Northern Europe and Scandinavia, Northern Ireland and counties along the Atlantic coastline from Cork to Donegal. 27 projects have been approved totalling €21m in ERDF, representing a 64% commitment level. Of these, eleven involve a total of seventeen Irish partners.

5.6 Interregional cooperation

Ireland also participates in all four interregional cooperation programmes under the European Territorial Cooperation objective (with a total ERDF budget of 443 M€):

• URBACT II	53.3 M€	Adopted 02/10/2007
• ESPON II	34 M€	Adopted 06/11/2007
• INTERACT II	34 M€	Adopted 04/12/2007
• INTERREG IV C	321.3 M€	Adopted 11/09/2007

The total allocation for Ireland 2007-2013 is around €85m which is slightly less (7%) than for the previous programming period. Added to this is the €65.7m allocated to the Peace programme. €70.5m (83%) has been allocated to cross border cooperation and €14.4m (17%) to transnational cooperation.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions and Future Policy Perspectives

6.1 Future Prospects

There is some evidence that while activity will remain at lower levels in the near-term, the worst of the decline may have passed. Externally, a global recovery appears to be underway, although there is a broad consensus among the main international forecasting institutions that this will be fairly modest. While Ireland will lag the global economic recovery, it is expected that economic growth will re-emerge during 2010, although it is expected that it will be 2011 before we experience positive growth for the year as a whole. The latest forecast from the Department of Finance is set out in table 2 below.

Table 2 – Macroeconomic Prospects

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP growth % change at constant market prices	-7.5	-1.3	3.3	4.5	4.3	4.0
GDP Value at current market prices (€m)	164,600	160,925	169,900	181,250	192,975	204,800
GNP growth % change at constant market prices	-10.4	-1.7	3.0	4.1	3.9	3.6
GNP Value at current market prices (€m)	133,175	129,100	135,375	143,750	152,275	160,700

Source: Ireland – Stability Programme Update – 9th December 2009
<http://budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2010/Documents/Final%20SPU.pdf>

The impact of the economic downturn on the implementation of Ireland's EU Structural Funds Programmes under the NSRF is dealt with in more detail in subsequent chapters.

6.2 Real and Expected contribution of Cohesion Policy

In total since 1973 Ireland has received approximately €18 billion in EU Structural and Cohesion Funding. Cohesion Policy has played a significant role in the development and revitalisation of Ireland's economy. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI, 1997) estimated that Structural Funds interventions over the first two programming periods combined (1989-93 and 1994-1999) will lead to a permanent increase in GNP of 2%. They also estimated that funding for the first three years of the 2000-2006 programmes will add a further 0.7% of GNP (ESRI, 2003). Overall the long run macro-economic impact of the

Structural funds, therefore, has been to raise the level of real GNP by about 2.7 percentage points over and above what it would otherwise have been. One of the key elements in the Irish achievement has been the ability to align domestic national and regional policy with the EU strategic dimension. This has allowed policy makers in Ireland to concentrate on a number of key clearly defined objectives aimed at increasing economic potential.

As well as these direct economic benefits the EU Structural Funds have added in value in other ways. The programming approach for Regional Policy requires Member States to take a more strategic longer term approach to their investment programmes. This is now replicated in our multi-annual capital framework and the Government has drawn up the new NDP for 2007-2013 on this basis because of the strategic value of such an approach.

Reinforcing the value for money approach has also been another important contribution made by EU Regional Policy. In the areas of monitoring, financial control and evaluation national expertise and tools have been built up that now are applied in non-EU supported areas. Cost benefit analysis and capital appraisal techniques have been improved and are more widely applied to capital programmes. We are moving in the direction of measuring outputs of expenditure programmes as well as better accounting for inputs.

EU Regional Policy also provides funding to explore innovative actions with projects that will identify and pilot a number of strategic initiatives or themes that have the potential to address deficiencies in the existing regional innovation systems. In this programme, actions which lead to greater collaboration among the NSS gateways and hubs will be considered.

Consequently, the impact of EU Regional Policy goes beyond the direct macroeconomic benefits. Its impact can be seen across a number of areas of strategic and financial planning and management in Ireland. Although the funding available to Ireland has decreased in recognition of our improved economic position, the effects of the Funds will continue to be felt beyond the end of this programming period.

6.3 Coherence/Synergies between Priorities

The selected priorities and proposed interventions under the ERDF co-financed Regional Operational Programmes have been designed to be broadly complementary to each other, reflecting the priority axes of the ERDF regulations as they apply to regions under the Competitiveness and Employment objective. A number of specific interventions have

potential for explicit complementarity with each other. For example:

- There is a potential strong relationship between the ICT intervention and microenterprise, e.g. by boosting the capability of enterprise and of promoting the establishment of ICT-based microenterprise;
- There is a strong complementarity between interventions to boost the role of the designated growth centres and the RTDI interventions, since the main RTDI related institutions are located in the Gateways and Hubs in the regions;
- There is scope for complementarity between the RTDI interventions and those to protect the environment, e.g. by appropriately promoting environmental related RTDI as set out in the respective SEA reports; and
- There will be complementarity between the investment in public transport under Priority 3 and the deployment of clean energy public transport vehicles under Priority 2.

6.4 Mission of Cohesion Policy

The mission of cohesion policy is defined in the Treaty without ambiguity; to promote balanced and harmonious development, in particular by reducing social and economic disparities between regions. Cohesion policy is a development policy aiming at promoting long-term sustainable growth and prosperity in European regions through removing barriers to growth and facilitating processes of structural adjustment. A further motivation behind a development policy run at EU level lies in the existence of strong cross-border interdependencies and the need for reinforcing linkages between leading and lagging areas, maximising cross-border spill-over effects and gearing investments towards EU priorities.

6.5 Goals of Cohesion Policy

The goals of European Cohesion Policy are to:

- Enhance competitiveness and employment at the regional level
- Facilitate growth in areas lagging behind; and
- Foster integration across borders

6.6 Debate on the Future of Cohesion Policy

The debate on the future of Cohesion Policy is linked to the larger debate on the future of the EU. In this regard, the Commission launched a consultation document EU2020 on 24th November 2009 on a successor to the Lisbon Agenda 2010. The strategy envisages a smarter, greener social market. The Commission is also undertaking a full and wide ranging review covering all aspects of EU Funding. The Lisbon Treaty gives explicit recognition to territorial cohesion as a fundamental objective of the Union.

Ireland welcomes and is contributing to the debate on the future of Cohesion Policy. There have been a number of developments on the future of cohesion policy since the beginning of the discussions in 2007 when the European Commission launched the 4th report on Economic and Social Cohesion. This report launched the reflection on the future of Europe's policy to promote greater economic, social and territorial cohesion and to foster regional development and competitiveness. It was followed by the 5th interim report in 2008, the “Regions 2020” report published in December 2008 and the Barca report³⁴ published in April 2009. Most recently the 6th interim report on economic and social cohesion entitled “Creative and Innovative Regions” was published by the European Commission in June 2009. In addition the Commission has established a high level group in October 2009 to reflect on future cohesion policy and Commission Sameki presented an orientation paper in October 2009.

6.7 Outcome of Consultation

There appears to be a consensus arising from the consultation process of the need for a more effective cohesion policy. This requires the following:

- Concentration of Strategy on key objectives in line with 2020 strategy
- Focus on performance and results
- High level political debate, for example by the European Parliament and Council
- Increased coordination with Sectoral policies at national and EU levels to create synergies
- More efficient and simpler management and control systems

³⁴ The Italian economist Dr Fabrizio Barca conducted, on behalf of the European Commission, an independent analysis of European cohesion policy, together with academics and experts from the field.

6.8 Irish Position

Cohesion Policy has contributed to Ireland's development. Both regions have made substantial progress. The BMW region has moved from 89.3% PPP per inhabitant in 2000 to 103.6% in 2006 while the S&E has moved from 145.9% to 163.4%. We support the thrust of Commissioner Samecki's Orientation Paper on Future Cohesion Policy in particular simplified financial management and control arrangements.

As outlined in Ireland's submission on the EU Budget review, the Irish Authorities consider that Cohesion Policy should focus on assisting poor regions and Member States in improving their relative economic position. There is also a role for funding objectives linked to the successor to the Lisbon Agenda.

Programme design and flexibility programming are key prerequisites to assist with changes over the course of a seven year programming period. Greater use of proportional control arrangement and greater simplification of the delivery and monitoring arrangements for the EU funds are a priority for any future cohesion policy. The Irish Authorities acknowledge the work being done in this area, in particular the amendments to the regulations that have taken place. We look forward to working in partnership with the EU Commission and other Member States to ensure the goal of a more effective cohesion policy is achieved.

Annex 2

Excel Table uploaded separately to SFC system

Annex 3

Excel Table uploaded separately to SFC system

Annex 4

Ireland Response to the proposals in the European Economic Recovery Plan

The Irish Authorities appreciate the efforts of the European Commission in instigating the Economic Recovery Plan. Ireland has benefited in three ways under the Recovery Plan.

Firstly, Ireland availed of the extension to the eligibility period for the 2000-2006 programming period to 30th June 2009.

Secondly Ireland has received €28 million in ERDF advances. These advances have been utilised to establish the ERDF Gateways and Hubs Investment Scheme. The objective of this scheme is to enhance the attractiveness of the Gateways and Hubs and how they can contribute to improving their development potential through enhancement of the economic, social and environmental conditions of the city/town. The Scheme is implemented in their respective NUTS II regions by the Regional Assemblies. A competitive open call was issued in July 2009 and all proposals were assessed by early October 2009 and contracts have been awarded as follows:

In the case of the Southern & Eastern Region, €11 million in grants have been awarded to the Gateway cities of Cork, Dublin, Limerick and Waterford to co-finance a variety of projects which include public realm improvements, green transport routes, arts centres and tourist visitor attractions.

In the Border Midland and West Region, the 5 designated Gateways: Dundalk, Galway City, Letterkenny, Midlands (Athlone, Tullamore, Mullingar) and Sligo have been awarded €10.85m, towards strategic transport, urban regeneration and cultural investments; while the Hub towns of Ballina, Castlebar, Cavan, Monaghan and Tuam will benefit from an investment of €6.3m in urban renewal, amenity provision, energy efficiency and cultural infrastructure investment.

Thirdly the Irish Authorities modified two Operational Programmes during 2009, i.e. the Border, Midlands and Western Regional Operational Programme and the Human Capital and Investment Operational Programme.

Border, Midland and Western Operational Programme modification

As provided for under Article 33 of Council Regulation 1083/2006, the Irish Authorities renegotiated the Border, Midland and Western Operational Programme with the agreement of the European Commission due to the changed socio-economic circumstances in 2009. The revised Operational Programme was drafted in conjunction with DG Regional Policy (DG Regio) and received European Commission approval on the 8th of October 2009³⁵. The overall strategic focus of the Operational Programme remains unchanged. The additional expenditures identified are consistent with the approved National Strategic Reference Framework and the Operational Programme strategy and were included on a prudent basis to ensure the important economic and social objectives of the Operational Programme would be met. The amendments included;

- a Gateway/Hub Investment Fund;
- the inclusion of Science Foundation Ireland Research Awards;
- the inclusion of Water Supply and Waste Water Treatment;
- the inclusion of additional Strategic Road Projects;
- Funding of environmental investments in non-gateway locations;
- an additional investment in railcars;
- the inclusion of ocean energy theme; and
- Increasing the co-financing rate from 40% to 50%.

The changes proposed will enable the programme to draw down its full allocation of €228.8 million in European Regional Development Funds over the programming period, consistent with the frontloaded profile of the region's allocation as a phasing-in region under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective. The Operational Programme is currently delivered through 4 priorities, 1) Innovation, ICT and the Knowledge Economy, 2) Environment and Risk Prevention, 3) Urban Development and Secondary Transport Networks and 4) Technical Assistance. Among the physical progress achieved thus far to end September 2009 include the construction of the M6 Athlone to Ballinasole motorway, the N52 Tullamore by pass, over 81,00 training days provided to Small and Medium Sized enterprises and 3,294 enterprises have been supported by the County Enterprise Boards.

Major Projects

³⁵ Commission Decision of 8/10/09 C(2009) 7759 amending Decision C(2007) 5162 adopting the operational programme "Border, Midlands and Western Regional Operational Programme" for Community assistance from the European Regional Development Fund under the Regional Competitiveness and employment objective in Ireland CCI: 2007 IE 16 2 PO 001

It is the intention of the Irish authorities to certify declared eligible expenditure in respect of the M6 Athlone to Ballinasole motorway, following the acceptance of its admissibility, while the detailed examination of the project by the Commission Services is pending. The total cost of the construction contract phase is > €80m and some of this incurred cost is required to avoid a possible decommitment of part of the 2007 commitment to the BMW Regional OP at 31st December 2009, under the N+2 rule.

Human Capital Investment Operational Programme Modifications

As outlined in Chapter 1 the Managing Authority proposed changes which involved the refocusing of the first two Priorities, the re-allocation of funds within each Priority and an increase in the co-financing rate to ensure that the important economic and social objectives of the Operational Programme were met despite the changed socio-economic and budgetary circumstances. The proposals were in line with the European Commission's own statements in response to the economic crisis in the EU. The size of the Operational Programme was reduced from €1.3 billion to approx €900 million, €525 million of which will continue to be financed by the Exchequer, a significant ongoing commitment to the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme on behalf of the Irish Government. The primary changes included placing a stronger emphasis on Priority I (to be called Increasing Activation Priority) with a greater emphasis on facilitating, the co-financing of new measures such as work experience, graduate placement, part-time third level study, short-time workers training scheme, wage subsidy measures, job retention schemes, provision for redundant apprentices interventions etc. ESF support totalling c. €100 million would be re-allocated from Priority II to Priority I to support these activities.

Annex 5 Examples of good practice 2007-2013

Case Study 1: Border, Midland and Western Operational Programme

Country	Ireland
Region(s)	Border, Midland and Western (NUTS II) Southern and Eastern (NUTS II)
Operation, Scheme, Policy	National Broadband Scheme (NBS)
Duration	2009-2013
Objective	Regional Competitiveness and Employment
Funding	Total Cost: est. €223m EU Contribution: €36.15m National: €43.65m Regional: €0 Private: est. €143.2m
Contact	Name: Finola Rossi Organisation: Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources Address: 29-31 Adelaide Road, Dublin 2, Ireland Email: Finola.Rossi@dcenr.gov.ie Web: www.dcenr.gov.ie/nbs
Operation / Policy Description	<p>The objective of the NBS is to secure the provision of affordable broadband services in certain designated target areas in rural Ireland (1,028 target Electoral Divisions in the NBS Coverage Area), where broadband coverage was deemed to be insufficient. The Irish authorities have granted financial support for building the necessary infrastructure and the provision of broadband services at a retail level to consumers and at the wholesale level to other operators.</p> <p>The winning service provider is required to provide services to all residences and businesses that are within the NBS Coverage Area and who seek a service. The introduction of the scheme reflects Government policy that everyone, irrespective of where they are, should have access to high quality, competitively priced broadband services.</p> <p>The policy objectives of the NBS which are a subset of wider economic policy are to (i) to provide broadband coverage to rural areas in the State, (ii) to address national economic and social exclusion concerns due to a lack of broadband access and (iii) to enhance the competitiveness of the regions for foreign and indigenous investment.</p> <p>This scheme is key element of the Government's infrastructure programme under the National Development Plan 2007-13 and it has been included in BMW and S&E EU co-financed Regional Operational Programmes 2007-13. The scheme has received state aid approval (no. N475/2007).</p>
Strategic Context	<p>Broadband connectivity is a key component for the development of knowledge-based economies and the development, adoption and usage of information and communication technologies. Broadband is of strategic importance because of its ability to accelerate the contribution of these technologies to economic growth, to facilitate innovation and in order to enhance social inclusion.</p> <p>Based on market assessments conducted by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources ("DCENR"), approximately 223,000 residential and business premises were identified as located within those Electoral Divisions which remained without access to adequate broadband services. Typically, the unserved areas of Ireland are rural and have low population density so that commercial providers have no economic incentive to invest in electronic communications networks to provide broadband. Although this figure indicates that a large part of</p>

	<p>the population are already benefiting from a competitive broadband market, the unserved parts of Ireland illustrate the ongoing presence of a "digital divide", where a number of communities in isolated areas are disadvantaged because they lack access to affordable broadband services.</p> <p>The DCENR considered that in the absence of intervention by the State under the NBS, service providers are unlikely to invest in these areas within a reasonable timeframe, in which case consumers and businesses in primarily rural and isolated areas will continue to lack access to broadband services with the consequence of being excluded from the social and economic benefits of such access.</p>
<p>Operation Design & Implementation</p>	<p>In order to identify the areas of the country where broadband deficits existed, a comprehensive mapping exercise was undertaken in 2008. Based on the information obtained during this exercise, the Department identified 1,028 target Electoral Divisions, which would be addressed by the scheme.</p> <p>Following the conclusion of a competitive tendering process, using the competitive dialogue procedure, the contract to implement and operate the NBS was entered into with "3" (a Hutchison Whampoa company trading as 3) on 23 December 2008.</p> <p>The company is progressing its network rollout and services have gone live in a number of areas. 3's NBS coverage map, which can be accessed at www.three.ie/nbs indicates the status of service availability in NBS areas. All residential and business premises within the NBS coverage area will have broadband connectivity by end September 2010.</p>

Case Study 2: The Territorial Dimension of Cohesion Policy

Country	Ireland
Region(s)	Border, Midland and Western (NUTS II) Southern and Eastern (NUTS II)
Operation	ERDF Gateways and Hubs Investment Scheme
Duration	2009-2011
Objective	Regional Competitiveness and Employment
Funding	Total Cost: €50m EU Contribution: €28m National: Regional: €22m Private:
Contacts	<p>Name: Mr. Gerry Finn, Director Organisation: BMW Regional Assembly Address: The Square, Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon, Ireland Email: gfinn@bmwassembly.ie Web: www.bmwassembly.ie</p> <p>Name: Mr. Stephen Blair, Director Organisation: Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly Address: Assembly House, O'Connell Street, Waterford, Ireland Email: sblair@seregassembly.ie Web: www.seregassembly.ie</p>
Operation Description	<p>The overall objective of the ERDF Gateways and Hubs Investment Scheme is to enhance the attractiveness of the Gateways and Hubs and how they can contribute to improving their development potential through enhancement of the economic, social and environmental conditions of the city/town.</p> <p>Under the scheme grant assistance has been provided to the designated Gateways and Hubs in the Border, Midland and Western (BMW) region and to the gateway cities in the Southern and Eastern (S&E) region for projects which will improve the Gateways and Hubs economically, environmentally, socially, and/or culturally, and which fall within the scope of Article 8 of the ERDF Regulation 1080/2006, and are consistent with the overall development strategy for the Gateway or Hub. The types of projects supported have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban infrastructure • Physical regeneration and renewal • Sustainable transport • Development of cultural and built heritage • Sustainable energy • Re-development of brown-field sites
Strategic Context	<p>The development of the designated Gateways and Hubs is critical to improving the overall performance of Ireland's regions and to the creation of a more balanced pattern of development across Ireland. In order to do this, the Gateways and Hubs must become more attractive and more dynamic in their contribution to entrepreneurship and innovation and in reducing social disparities.</p> <p>The Community Strategic Guidelines emphasise the contribution of urban centres to growth and jobs and recommends that supports should focus on the development of integrated participatory strategies to address environmental, economic and social issues.</p>

	<p>Further to this, the Commission Communication on the contribution of cities to jobs and growth emphasises that cities and regions need each other and regions will be successful if its cities flourish. Better spatial structuring of gateway cities and regions can engender a ‘city effect’ and maximise the economic advantages which can be derived from critical mass and increased collaboration. This requires improved mobility and accessibility, access to service facilities, an attractive physical environment, a vibrant and diversified culture, and promotion of social inclusion, integrated planning and mobilisation of key partners.</p>
<p>Operation Design & Implementation</p>	<p>The Scheme is implemented in their respective NUTS II regions by the Regional Assemblies. A competitive open call was issued in July 2009 and all proposals were assessed by early October 2009 and contracts have been awarded as follows:</p> <p>In the case of the Southern & Eastern Region, €11 million in grants have been awarded to the Gateway cities of Cork, Dublin, Limerick and Waterford to co-finance a variety of projects which include public realm improvements, green transport routes, arts centres and tourist visitor attractions.</p> <p>In the Border Midland and West Region, the 5 designated Gateways: Dundalk, Galway City, Letterkenny, Midlands (Athlone, Tullamore, Mullingar) and Sligo have been awarded €10.85m, towards strategic transport, urban regeneration and cultural investments; while the Hub towns of Ballina, Castlebar, Cavan, Monaghan and Tuam will benefit from an investment of €6.3m in urban renewal, amenity provision, energy efficiency and cultural infrastructure investment.</p> <p>Funding for this Initiative is being provided through the two Regional Operational Programmes out of the three ERDF advances paid over by the Commission to each respective Programme. The third such advance was an additional advance provided by the Commission as part of their recovery package to the current economic crisis, and the use of these funds to kick-start the implementation of the Sustainable Urban Development Priorities in the two Regional Programmes is entirely consistent with the broader community objectives of speeding up the delivery of the programmes to assist economic recovery.</p>

Case Study 3 Southern and Eastern Operational Programme

Country:	Ireland		
Region:	Southern & Eastern Region		
Operation, Scheme, Policy:	University of Limerick Incubation Centre		
Operational Programme	S&E Regional Operational Programme 2007-2013		
Priority	Innovation and the Knowledge Economy		
Theme	Development of the Regions' RTDI Capacity		
Sub-Theme	Incubation Centre Development		
ERDF Certifying Body	Department of Finance		
Managing Authority	S&E Regional Assembly		
Intermediate Body	Enterprise Ireland		
Level 1 Public Body	Universities and Institutes of Technology		
Grant Rate	Up to 100%.		
EU Co-financing Rate	40%		
Duration:	It is expected that construction will commence by the end of 2009. Its completion is estimated for Q1 2011, at which point the centre will become operational.		
Objective	Regional Competitiveness and Employment		
Funding:	Total Cost	€6,057,500	(Public Eligible amt €2.645m and UL contribution to the of €3.413)
	EU Contribution	€1,058,000	40% of the Public Grant Amount of €2.645 m
	National	€1,587,000	60% of the Public Grant Amount of €2.645 m
	Regional		
	Private	€3,412,500	(The contribution from UL is not private as the University is a publicly funded body)
Contact:	Brian Fitzgerald, Vice President Research		
	Organisation: University of Limerick		
	Address: Limerick, Ireland		
	Email: vpresearch@ul.ie		
	Website: www.ul.ie		
Operation/policy description	<p>Overall objectives – description of activities – beneficiaries – expected impact (or actual results)</p> <p>Description: This operation is concerned with the provision of supports and business space within the environment of a third level institution that will advance the development of emerging high potential start-ups.</p> <p>Objectives: With the provision of the Incubation Centre, University of Limerick aims to accelerate the development of high potential start-up companies through a combination of business support services, infrastructure and access to the expertise of the University.</p> <p>As such, its objectives can be seen as three-fold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fostering entrepreneurship and campus company activity - Providing a route to commercialisation of research underway in the University of Limerick, - Supporting balanced regional development. <p>The University of Limerick will be responsible for the maintenance and</p>		

	operation of the centre. They will also be responsible for management of the incubation process, including appropriate tenancy policies and development of links between the host institution and client companies. The University's responsibilities are also be in the areas of design/procurement of incubation space, grant administration, financial management and control, the scoping and submission of applications, the certification of eligible expenditure, compliance with issues such as public procurement and tax clearance along with providing expert advice on commercialisation through the technology transfer office. This support will be provided in conjunction with mirroring support from Enterprise Ireland's Research and Innovation Business Unit.	
	University of Limerick Incubation Unit Performance Indicators	
Indicator	Baseline (end 2006)	Final
No. of incubation centres in place/ extended	0	1
No. of companies in centres	0	12
No. employed in enterprises these companies	0	88
Strategic Context:	<p>Background information – link to challenge being addressed by operation/policy</p> <p>In June 2006, the Irish Government published a national Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (SSTI). In broad terms the SSTI sets out the plan to grow Irish research capability as a component of the European Union's drive to become the most competitive and dynamic, knowledge-driven economic unit in the world. As a component of the SSTI, there are commitments to regional economic development in Ireland. The SSTI acknowledges the concentration of scientific and technological resources in major cities, and the fact that companies in regional locations can find it more difficult to access support for innovation. As part of the Government's ongoing support for regional economic development, the framework set out by the SSTI will enhance the importance of regional innovation.</p> <p>The Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) represent a major resource in this context. Their multi-regional location and openness to working with industry provides a platform upon which real industrial impact can be built. The Strategy further acknowledges that the HEIs can develop into effective technology resources, focused on collaboration with local industry on the basis of strategic and/or applied research and technology development directed at the challenges facing companies. Focus on building up problem solving capabilities will not in itself be sufficient to achieve these objectives. Underpinning strength must also exist which can act as a 'pull' factor for businesses in the region.</p> <p>The progress made in developing the activities of the incubation/research centres under the Regional Innovation Strategies Measure in the Region's 2000-2006 Operational Programme where nine Incubation Centres were delivered will be continued under the 2007-2013 Programme.</p>	
Operation / policy design / implementation	<p>Design – management – monitoring – innovation or good practice elements</p> <p>University of Limerick's application for financial assistance was assessed by a combination of internal and external evaluators and brought to the relevant Committee of the Intermediate Body (the Industrial Research and Commercialisation Committee) for review and recommendation. This committee is composed of senior members of Enterprise Ireland, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, the Department of Agriculture, the IDA, senior academics and independent industrial experts and members of the business community. It was then presented to the Board of Enterprise Ireland for approval.</p>	

	<p>The application was assessed on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Strategic business case for the facility- Commitment of the host institution- Contribution to balanced regional development- Value for money <p>The centre in UL and those in the other HEIs will provide useful focal points for both incubation and research activities within the Region's HEIs and will complement other RTDI activities in the region.</p>
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Case Study 4 Human Capital Investment Operational Programme

Country: Ireland	
Region: The Centre is located in the South West Region; however training is available on a national basis.	
Operation, scheme, policy, project:	Title: Development of a Centre of Excellence for training in the Biopharmaceutical and Pharmaceutical Sector
Project duration:	<i>(Historic or planned)</i> The Centre was launched in April 2007 and was initially planned to be operational for approximately ten years.
Objective:	Competitiveness and employment objective
ESF funding:	Total cost: € 0.32 m per annum (approximately). EU contribution: € 0.12m per annum (approximately). National: € 0.2m per annum (approximately). Private: € 0 Note: - Set-up costs for the centre of approximately €3 million were entirely funded from domestic sources.
Contact:	Name: Mr Donal Kerr, Director South West Organisation: FAS Training and Employment Authority Address: Cork Training Centre, Rossa Avenue, Bishopstown, Cork.. Republic of Ireland. Email: Donal.Kerr@fas.ie Website: www.fas.ie
Operation / policy / project description:	<i>Overall objectives – description of activities – beneficiaries – expected impact (or actual results)</i> Ireland's future economic prosperity and job creation is dependent on increased productivity to underpin job retention in current manufacturing activity. The Bio-Pharma sector is a key area for future growth and it is essential that Ireland has the necessary education and training infrastructure to support employment in the sector. One of the key ingredients in attracting and retaining investment in high technology industry is the availability of skilled labour. Therefore the required knowledge, skill, and competencies must be available and be continually developed across all levels of employees. The FÁS Bio-Pharma facility in Carrigaline, Cork, was developed in response to an identified need for operator training in this sector. FÁS has developed a dedicated high technology training facility where

	<p>learners can gain the practical skills required for work in the Bio-Pharma sector and related process industries.</p> <p>The facilities of the Centre consist of a process training area, clean room and a range of industry specific process equipment and related services. The facility mimics a regulated manufacturing environment and provides learners with the associated behaviours required by these industry types. The training centre is available 360 days a year, 24 hours a day, if necessary, to support industry needs. The training facility is fully webcam enabled, allowing delivery of courses and the use of blended learning approaches, to facilitate learners from all parts of the country accessing the programmes.</p> <p>Learners typically are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those involved in manufacturing and maintenance and existing operators/ crafts people who require updating or cross skilling. • redundant workers from related industries, • New entrants to the labour market who aspire to work in these sectors. <p>Since the launch of the Centre in 2007, over 439 FAS jobseekers have received training for entry into the industry, together with 1,100 other persons already engaged in the sector.</p> <p>The facility is available to third level institutions to facilitate undergraduate and post graduate access to manufacturing scale equipment. The Centre focuses on practical training and fully complements the scientific education provided for example, in University College Cork and Cork Institute of Technology. This facility gives Ireland a significant competitive advantage in that it can demonstrate relevant education and training at all levels in the National Framework of Qualifications (NQAI).</p>
<p>Strategic context:</p>	<p><i>Background information – link to challenge being addressed by operation/ policy.).</i></p> <p>In an increasingly competitive environment, this FÁS facility greatly enhances Ireland's ability to attract new investment and will support existing industries as technologies change. The Centre of Excellence was awarded the prestigious Taoiseach's Public Service Excellence Award in 2008.</p>
<p>Operation / policy or project design/ implementation:</p>	<p><i>Design – management – monitoring – innovation or good practice elements.</i></p> <p>A partnership approach was used in developing the training facility. FÁS worked with all the major stakeholders in the Bio-Pharma sector to ensure the Centre meets identified present and future needs in Ireland. These stakeholders include the Industrial Development Authority, industry, unions and third level institutions.</p> <p>Both course provision and delivery are flexible. Training methodologies are adapted to meet different objectives and training is provided in a number of different ways to meet client needs. FÁS trainers, company dedicated trainers, external specialist trainers, and trainers from academic institutes or a combination of all may be used to provide training.</p> <p>The Programme contents (knowledge and skills) are continually reviewed in consultation with an Industry Advisory group drawn from the sector and other relevant education and training bodies.</p>

Case Study 5 Human Capital Investment Operational Programme

Country: Ireland	
Region: National	
Operation, scheme, policy, project:	Title: Third Level Access Activity
Project duration:	2007- 2013
Objective:	To contribute to addressing labour market gaps for specific groups that are experiencing barriers to participation and employment, including those created by gender inequality and wider inequalities
ESF funding:	Total cost: €19,000,000.00 EU contribution: €9,500,000.00 National: €9,500,000.00 Private: €0.00
Contact:	Name: Mr Alan Mc Grath Organisation: National Office for the Equity of Access to Higher Education Address: Higher Education Authority, Brooklawn House, Crampton Avenue, Shelbourne Road, Dublin 4. Email: amcgrath@hea.ie Website: www.hea.ie
Operation / policy / project description:	<p>The Third Level Access Sub-priority supports the participation in higher education of people who are traditionally under-represented at this level. Under the sub-priority, financial support is provided to institutions to support the retention of certain targets groups, namely students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, mature students, students with disabilities and those from Traveller and other ethnic minorities. It is managed on behalf of the Department of Education and Science by the Higher Education Authority's National Access Office and contributes to the achievement of the high level goals for Education and Training.</p> <p>The sub-priority comprises two funding programmes; namely the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) and the Student Assistance Fund (SAF). The FSD provides funding for technological, academic and personal supports for further and higher education institutions to support students with additional needs arising from a disability. In 2008-9 a total allocation of €11.7m supported 3,843 students with</p>

	<p>disabilities in these institutions.</p> <p>The SAF provides funding to higher education institutions to provide financial support to low-income students. The funding provided contributes to the costs of attending college such as rent, childcare and other living expenses. In 2007-8 an allocation of €6.2m supported approximately 9,800 students.</p> <p>Both funds have a very important strategic role in achieving the aims of the Third Level Access sub-priority (i.e. increase the participation, retention and completion of students from groups which are traditionally under-represented in higher education). The funding programmes complement national policies in place to widen access to higher education for these target groups.</p> <p>The participation of these students has increased significantly in recent years. In 2001 a Government appointed Action Group on Access to Higher Education set targets for 2006 for participation of certain groups of students. A target of participation for people with disabilities of 1.8% (of the total participants in full-time higher education) was set for 2006. In 2005 participation for these students was 3.5% and increased again to 4.2% by 2007, therefore clearly exceeding the target set.</p> <p>A similar target was set for participation of low-income students, or students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. A participation target of 27% was set for 2006. Data available in 2004 showed that this target had been exceeded, with participation of these students in 2004 at 33%.</p> <p>New national targets to further increase participation rates for under-represented groups have been set in the <i>National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013</i>.</p>
<p>Strategic context:</p>	<p>The thrust of national policy is very much centred on fostering inclusion and further strengthening economic prosperity through labour market and skills growth, driven in turn by enhancing educational progression for groups traditionally under-skilled and underrepresented in higher education. These policy imperatives are reflected in the Towards 2016 agreement and other key policy drivers such as the National Skills Strategy.</p> <p>The rationale for equity of access rests on two key pillars: social and economic. Poor educational attainment helps to fuel the cycle of disadvantage, exclusion and poverty, which in turn creates huge costs for society, not least in terms of the loss of human capital. There is thus a strong social rationale for investment in equity of access, as diversity in higher education promotes social cohesion and equality.</p> <p>There is a strong economic rationale also. As the level of skills required to compete in the global knowledge economy continues to increase, the supply of graduates from those groups traditionally associated with higher education will not be sufficient to meet demand. Ireland will therefore need to attract more students from traditionally underrepresented groups in order to keep pace with the national skills profile of other OECD countries.</p> <p>The Third Level Access Sub-priority (TLA) plays a key role in delivering on national policy and strategy for labour market expansion and social inclusion. It plays a fundamental role in enhancing access to</p>

	<p>further and higher education for key underrepresented groups: those facing social, economic and cultural barriers, students with a disability and mature students.</p> <p>While progress has been made (see data outlined above in previous section) the proportion of students from the lower socio-economic groups, those with a disability and mature students in higher education do not yet reflect their representation in society at large. Therefore, TLA will remain a key component in the coming years in further enhancing the national goals of social inclusion and economic development.</p>
<p>Operation / policy or project design/ implementation:</p>	<p>Applicants to both funding programmes under TLA are required to meet specific criteria before funding is provided for their supports. Institutions receive updated guidelines from the National Access Office on a yearly basis to ensure compliance with operating procedures of the funds. Recipient institutions are required to report on financial expenditure under both funds on a quarterly basis (based on the academic year) but also on a calendar year basis. In addition institutions are subject to audits as part of the financial control processes for TLA.</p> <p>Examples of innovation or good practice elements under TLA include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of an information management system for the Fund for Students with Disabilities. This allows for a range of data (numbers approved, approval by category of disabilities, approval by institution etc) to be collected and analysed as required. • The enhancement and progression of the application system for the Fund for Students with Disabilities. In recent years the timescales for approval under this fund have been increased by a number of months. In addition a new ‘renewal application system’ (for students approved in a previous year) has been developed to significantly improve the renewal of supports and make funding available to institutions at the beginning of the academic year. • The development (currently being undertaken) of a new data collection system for the Student Assistance Fund, which will enhance the data available on the profile of students in receipt of funding.

Case Study 6 Human Capital Investment Operational Programme

Country: Ireland	
Region: (BMW or S&E or National)	
National	
Operation, scheme, policy, project:	<p>Title: Equality Mainstreaming Approach Equality Authority</p> <p>Supporting equality mainstreaming within the Irish Hospitality Sector</p>
Project duration:	<p><i>(Historic or planned)</i></p> <p>The planned duration for this project was initially one year in 2008. However due to the success of this project it was extended into 2009. The total duration was 2 years.</p>
Objective:	<p><i>Competitiveness and employment objective</i></p> <p>Strategic Objective: Activation and Participation of Groups outside the Labour Force</p>
ESF funding:	<p><i>Total cost: €31,000</i></p> <p><i>EU contribution: €15,500</i></p> <p><i>National: €15,500</i></p> <p><i>Private: €</i></p>
Contact:	<p><i>Name: Carole Sullivan</i></p> <p><i>Organisation: Equality Authority</i></p> <p><i>Address: 2 Clonmel Street, Dublin 2</i></p> <p><i>Email: csullivan@equality.ie</i></p> <p><i>Website: www.equality.ie</i></p>
Operation / policy / project description:	<p><i>Overall objectives – description of activities – beneficiaries – expected impact (or actual results)</i></p> <p>The Equality Mainstreaming Unit provided support to the Irish Hospitality Institute for a project to assist hotels in incorporating equality considerations into employment practice and customer service. A series of 3 learning network events on equality-related issues were organised for IHI members (hotels, restaurants, recruitment agencies) during 2008. These interactive events that involved business people from the hospitality sector as well as equality experts had two purposes:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To raise awareness and deepen understanding of equality issues as they relate to employment and customer service; • To highlight the business benefits of a focus on equality and diversity. <p>The first event focussed on ‘Age-Equality: Untapped Potential’ provided training on developing age-friendly provision for customers and employees. The second learning network event focussed on the theme of ‘Promoting Equality and Diversity – the Lived Experience’. That event provided information and training on making reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities as customers and employees. The final event on focused on developing integrated workplaces. This event highlighted good practice on cultural diversity in the workplace and included inputs by Clement Esebamen, Senior Policy Adviser to the Minister for Integration, Ashok Ohri, an expert on workplace diversity and by Maebh Breathnach, Director of Human Resources at the Shelbourne Hotel</p> <p>The learning events promoted the business benefits to having a focus on equality in customer service demonstrating the potential increase in customer base from doing so.</p> <p>Following on from these Learning events, the Irish Hospitality Institute working with Dublin Institute of Technology also carried out research with the hospitality sector on equality issues. This report included case studies drawn from hotels that were displaying good practice in terms of equality. It also contained a set of equality guidelines for hotels and restaurants.</p> <p>These guidelines were subsequently developed into a resource for the sector called “10 Steps to Equality and Diversity for the Hospitality Sector”. These guidelines provide concrete and practical advice on how to incorporate equality and diversity into everyday work. This publication was launched at the IHI annual Human Resources conference was disseminated to all members of the IHI during 2009.</p> <p>Finally the work of this project culminated in the “10 Steps to Equality and Diversity for the Hospitality Sector” resource being mainstreamed as one of the selection criteria for the IHI Annual Diversity Awards which were held in November 2009. Traditionally these awards focused solely on the race ground but now include a broader equality focus.</p> <p>This project was also heavily profiled in the trade journal of the restaurant association in Ireland.</p>
<p>Strategic context:</p>	<p><i>Background information – link to challenge being addressed by operation/ policy</i></p> <p>The strategic context in which this project is placed is one of increasing job losses for the hospitality sector and the continued challenges of building planned and systematic approaches to equality in the workplace and in customer service. During the years of economic boom the hospitality sector’s workforce had become increasingly diverse with a growing number of Black and ethnic minority people, older people and women working in hotels and restaurants. This presented an</p>

	<p>equality challenge to the sector in terms of ensuring that all employment policies and practices were free from discrimination and had a capacity to accommodate diversity for groups from across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation.</p> <p>During a recession, this remains a core challenge and priority for the hospitality sector to ensure that workplaces can continue to accommodate diversity and that any employment opportunities or redundancies are implemented in a manner that is non-discriminatory.</p> <p>Also by providing businesses in the hospitality sector with equality tools for enhancing customer service and ultimately customer satisfaction, should also support employment in this sector during recessionary times.</p>
<p>Operation / policy or project design/ implementation:</p>	<p><i>Design – management – monitoring – innovation or good practice elements</i></p> <p>This project was initiated by the Irish Hospitality Institute in co-operation with the Equality Mainstreaming Unit. It was formally approved by the National Framework Committee of Equal Opportunities at the Level of the Enterprise- a social partnership committee that advises on the Equality Mainstreaming Unit’s work.</p> <p>The project was managed and monitored by the Equality Mainstreaming Unit with regular progress reports from the IHI. The research and the 10 steps publication were approved by the National Framework Committee.</p> <p>This project applied a multi-ground approach covering the nine grounds of the equality legislation. It also had an employment and customer service focus.</p>

Case Study 7 Ireland Wales

Project Title	CELTIC WAVE - Developing a Sea of Smiles		
Priority/ Theme	1.1		
Lead Partner	Isle of Anglesey County Council		
Other Partners	Milford Haven Port Authority, Swansea City Council, Dublin Port Company, Port of Waterford and Company Port of Cork Company		
Description	<p>Rising fuel costs are seriously affecting the profitability of cruise lines leading to a growing desire to become more fuel efficient. CELTIC WAVE aims to demonstrate how reduced fuel costs can be achieved on selected cruise itineraries by minimising steaming times between ports and therefore lowering the carbon footprint.</p> <p>The project will also address the added values of the brand, cultural synergy, location, shared values and unique selling points of the Ireland Wales connection. This will result in a globally competitive offering on the Irish Sea as a cruise destination which will raise its profile and contribute to the regeneration of both areas.</p>		
Project Ref.	18		
Approved	August 2009 - Round 2		
Grant Awarded	€928,789	Project Cost	€1,238,386

Case Study 8 Ireland Wales

Project Title	DEIS CYFLE! - Developing Skills for Employment and Educational Integration		
Priority/ Theme	1.2		
Lead Partner	Autism Cymru		
Other Partners	Irish Society for Autism		
Description	<p>The aim of this cross border partnership project between two national charities for autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) is to develop a raft of training and self evaluation mechanisms that will form a basis for increasing the employability of people with ASD.</p> <p>The synergy of professional expertise, knowledge, experience and understanding of both partners will further develop tiered training opportunities for practitioners working with young people and adults with ASD. This in turn will positively impact upon the secondary school experience of youngsters with ASD, enabling them to make realistic life choices and continue on into post school education and employment routes.</p> <p>Deis-Cyfle! Will develop cross-border training packages, self-evaluation tools and monitoring and evaluation materials for secondary schools; Colleges of Further and Higher Education; Job Centres and Employment Training/ Preparation Agencies, throughout North and West Wales and Eastern Ireland. These tools will act as the basis for increasing employability of people with ASD. The project also aims to develop bespoke training materials for a range of practitioners which is anticipated to lead to accreditation from cross border Higher Education establishments.</p>		
Project Ref.	29		
Approved	Round 3		
Grant Awarded	€711,900	Project Cost	€950,994

Case Study 9 Ireland Wales

Project Title	Green Communities		
Priority/ Theme	2.1		
Lead Partner	Keep Wales Tidy - Wales		
Other Partners	An Taisce - Ireland		
Description	<p>Green Communities is a community-based project operated by Keep Wales Tidy and An Taisce. The project will take a grassroots approach to undertaking practical environmental work by encouraging and supporting community groups. The project partners will assist and train groups to undertake practical environmental work which will lead to improved biodiversity value of the region and improved access to green spaces. 100 community groups will be assisted to focus on biodiversity enhancements and ideas will be shared with other community groups in Wales and Ireland. The project will encourage volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds to learn from each other through a joint biodiversity conference and via a project website which will contain guidance, case studies and networking opportunities. To encourage group sustainability, best practice on community group structures will be exchanged between Wales and Ireland and 5 new cross-border links will be developed as 10 community groups ‘twin’ across the Irish sea. GC will raise awareness of the issue of climate change and reduce its impact through local community action. It will develop a community carbon foot printing tool to assist groups assess their carbon production and encourage them to arrange events with carbon production in mind. Officers will identify actions to help groups reduce their impact and solutions will be shared between Wales and Ireland through group exchanges and via a joint climate change conference.</p>		
Project Ref.	13		
Approved	April 2008 – Round 1		
Grant Awarded	€1,132,758	Project Cost	€1,510,342