

7. Finding and getting money

7.4.6 Europe



This information sheet seeks to provide an overview of the main sources of European Union Structural Fund Programmes during the period 2007-2013.

Convergence programme

West Wales and the Valleys (WW&V) qualified for Convergence funding, the highest level of EU funding support available under the successor programme to Objective One. This will bring into the region approximately £1.4 billion of investment during 2007-2013.

WW&V covers the following unitary authorities: Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Bridgend, Carmarthenshire, Conwy, Ceredigion, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea, Torfaen and Ynys Mon.

Regional Competitiveness and Employment

The remaining local authority areas (Cardiff, the Vale, Monmouthshire, Newport, Powys, Wrexham and Flintshire) qualify for the Regional Competitiveness and Employment programme, the successor to the Objective 2 and 3 programmes, with an approximate funding allocation of £97 million during 2007-2013.

Territorial co-operation programmes

Parts of Wales will also be eligible for Territorial co-operation programmes covering cross-border (between the West coast of Wales and the East coast of Ireland); trans-national and inter-regional programmes.

Convergence Operational Programme

Structural Fund programmes will be delivered through projects for which there is a demonstrated strategic need, and in line with the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas to create sustainable economic growth and employment. There will be emphasis on regional collaboration and partnership working, taking account of the Welsh Assembly Government's Wales Spatial Plan. There will be an emphasis on pre-match funding and on co-financing.

The priorities and themes for the Convergence Operational Programme are:

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) priorities and themes:

- 1. ERDF Priority 1: Building the knowledge based economy**
Theme 1: R&D, innovation and technology.

Theme 2: ICT Infrastructure and Information society for all.

2. ERDF Priority 2: Improving business competitiveness

Theme 1: Entrepreneurship.

Theme 2: Business finance.

3. ERDF Priority 3: Developing strategic infrastructure

Theme 1: Sustainable transport.

Theme 2: Strategic infrastructure.

4. ERDF Priority 4: Creating an attractive business environment

Theme 1: Energy.

Theme 2: Tackling environmental opportunities and risks for sustainable economic growth

Theme 3: Environment for growth.

5. ERDF Priority 5: Building sustainable communities

Theme 1: Physical regeneration.

Theme 2: Community economic development.

European Social Fund (ESF) priorities and themes:

1. ESF Priority 1: Supplying young people with the skills needed for employment

Theme 1: Tackling underachievement.

Theme 2: Raising skills and aspirations.

2. ESF Priority 2: Increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity

Theme 1: Helping people into sustainable employment.

Theme 2: Helping people to remain in work.

3. ESF Priority 3: Improving skill levels and improving the adaptability of the work force

Theme 1: Raising the skills base of the workforce and supporting progression in employment through basic, and intermediate level skills.

Theme 2: Skills for the Knowledge Economy: higher level skills and systems for workforce development

Theme 3: Promoting gender equality in employment.

4. ESF Priority 4: Making the Connections – modernising our public services

Theme 1: Transforming public services through more effective collaborative working.

Theme 2: Supporting collaborative working between public services.

Cross cutting themes

Equal opportunities for all and environmental sustainability are cross-cutting themes for the new programmes and these should be reflected in the planning and delivery of projects. WEFO has produced guidance on the cross-cutting themes for each priority of the Operational Programmes.

Priorities for equal opportunities for all:

- Decreasing the number of people who are inactive and support them into training and employment.
- Increasing the numbers of women, Black and Minority Ethnic people and disabled people, securing training and employment in higher paid and higher skilled sectors and self-employment.
- Challenging gender role stereotyping by increasing the numbers of women and men into non-traditional areas of employment.

Increasing the numbers of employers and training organisations to develop equality and diversity strategies, including monitoring systems and methods for feeding in improvements.

Priorities for environmental sustainability:

- Reduce greenhouse gases/adapt to the effects of climate change.
- Promote sustainable transport.
- Efficient use of natural resources.
- Promote biodiversity and sustainable land management.
- Improve local built environment, access to green space and biodiversity.
- Minimize environmental hazards, thereby safeguarding health.

Financial allocations

The Convergence programmes for West Wales and the Valleys will comprise approximately £856 million of ERDF and £570 million of ESF funding. Combined with match funding, this will bring a total investment of £3.2 billion into the region.

The Regional Competitiveness and Employment programmes for East Wales will comprise £49 million ERDF and £43 million ESF. Together with match funding from the private, public and voluntary sectors, the total investment of the Programmes will be around £232 million.

Accessing funding

There will be three ways to access funding:

1. Strategic Frameworks

WEFO defines a strategic framework as *'a fully developed plan to achieve a*

particular strategic purpose by means of a number of project interventions that are strategically linked'. There are 15 thematic strategic frameworks and 5 spatial frameworks.

Strategic frameworks are planning instruments rather than financial instruments and their aim is to strengthen strategic alignment with Welsh Assembly Government policies, to encourage more joined up activities, to reduce the overall volume of projects.

2. Single projects

A single project may be funded by Convergence where it does not fit into an existing strategic framework but it addresses priorities and themes within the Operational Programme.

3. Commissioned projects

WEFO and the programme monitoring committee (PMC) will have the ability to commission project activity where a gap in delivering the programme objectives is identified. Services to fill these gaps will be put out to tender.

Process of applying for funding

The new application process has three stages: project information form (PIF); expression of interest (EOI) and business planning.

All potential project sponsors are asked to post a PIF on the WEFO website. Whilst this is not formally part of the application process, the purpose is to share information about project ideas and to promote partnership working and collaboration.

The next step is for project sponsors to “request to submit an expression of interest (EOI)”. The EOI acts as the initial gateway into the system and is the start of the formal project handling process. At this stage WEFO will allocate a unique reference number to the project idea and a Project Development Officer (PDO) will contact the prospective project sponsor to work with them to develop the project. WEFO will use the EOI in order to make an initial assessment as to whether the project should proceed to business planning stage.

Information for the third sector on the development of the new programmes can also be seen in *Network Wales* magazine and the weekly *e-briefing*. Detailed information up-dates can also be found on the WEFO website under the section ‘2007-2013 Programmes’: www.wefo.wales.gov.uk

What can the third sector do locally to prepare for the new programmes?

Organisations wishing to be involved in convergence programmes, and see the proposed priorities as being relevant to their areas of work, are encouraged to undertake independent evaluations of current activities in terms of outcomes and impact against national strategies, links with statutory initiatives e.g. Job Centre Plus, New Deal; links with other

voluntary and or public sector partners and synergies with other Objective One projects.

WEFO has introduced a facility on its website for organisations to register their interest with project ideas and provide a short description of the proposed activity; this will allow WEFO to start to join up project activity. The contact details for the strategic framework co-ordinators should also appear on the website and groups are encouraged to contact the co-ordinators at an early stage to discuss project ideas.

Organisations are also encouraged to contact their local county voluntary councils (CVCs) and/or WCVA to make them aware of project ideas, so that links can be made with other relevant local projects and information can be fed into the relevant partnerships.

Organisations looking to develop larger scale projects, operating across one or more spatial plan area, should contact:

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For further information contact

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