

HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME 2007-2013	
Priority:	ACTIVATION AND PARTICIPATION OF GROUPS OUTSIDE OF THE WORKFORCE
Theme/Dimension Code:	Measures to increase participation in education and training throughout the lifecycle, including through action to achieve a reduction in early school leaving, gender-based segregation of subjects and increased access to and quality of initial vocational and tertiary education and training.
Activity title:	<i>Third Level Access</i> (a) Student Assistance Fund (SAF) (b) Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD)
Overall 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
Certifying Authority:	ESF Certifying Authority
Managing Authority:	ESF Managing Authority
Intermediate Body:	Department of Education and Skills
Intended Beneficiaries:	National Access Office
EU Co-financing Rate:	50%

1. CONTEXT/ PROBLEM/ NEED:

This initiative aims to tackle:

- (a) Inequities in participation in higher education faced by students with limited economic resources
- (b) Inequities in physical, curricular and pedagogical access for students with disabilities in higher and further education.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTIVITY:

- (a) To support the retention in higher education of students facing social or economic barriers, either of a temporary or more entrenched nature Through the allocation of funding, on a per capita basis, to all publicly-funded higher education colleges for the purposes of disbursement at local level to those students most in need. Students eligible for consideration are those student registered with institutions participating on third level courses of not less than one-year duration leading to an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification.
- (b) To support the full participation in higher and further education of students with disabilities through the allocation of earmarked funding to colleges for the provision of a range of tailored supports and services to students with disabilities

3. ESF FUNDED ELEMENT OF ACTIVITY:

- (a) Financial assistance, in the form of direct payments to qualifying students, is awarded to students to assist them with expenses associated with their academic activities
- (b) Funding is allocated to colleges in respect of three categories of supports/services: Assistive Technology, Academic and Personal Support and Transport funding

4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF INTERMEDIATE BODY:

Intermediate Bodies shall be responsible in particular for:

- Submitting eligible expenditure in the format required by the Certifying Authority to the Managing Authority in order for payment claims to be prepared for submission to the Certifying Authority
- In respect of ESF funds the Intermediate Bodies will, for the purpose of drawing down EU funds, report expenditure to the Managing Authority
- Ensuring that all payment claims for Structural Fund expenditure submitted by beneficiaries are supported with receipted invoices, audit documents and that a clear audit trail exists
- Ensuring that only eligible expenditure actually incurred, in respect of co-financed measures/projects, is submitted to the Managing Authority
- Certification of all expenditure incurred by beneficiaries.
- Ensuring that public support under this programme complies with the procedural and material State aid rules applicable at the point of time when the aid is granted
- Ensuring that public contracts awarded, concerning projects benefiting from the assistance of the European Social Fund, comply with the provisions of Directives 2004/17/EC, 2004/18/EC and the Treaty principles where applicable
- Collection and submission of statistical data in relation to co-financed activities, in particular in relation to the requirements of Annex XXIII of Implementing Regulation 1828 of 2006 (see extract attached below)

5. CONTRIBUTION TO HORIZONTAL THEMES	
A. Social Inclusion	<p>Inclusion and the creation of a more inclusive society are identified as one of the major challenges facing Ireland over the course of the NDP. 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.</p> <p>The third-level access measure 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.</p>
B. Gender Equality & Wider Equality Opportunities	<p>While the fundamental criterion governing the allocation of funds under the third level access measure is one of need/merit rather than gender based, it is recognised that the measure can contribute to gender mainstreaming, as defined by the European Commission, by helping ensuring that the implementation process takes adequate account of the effects on the respective situations of men and women. In this context, regard will be had to the impact of the funds in promoting the equality of opportunity and participation of men and women in further and higher education.</p> <p><u>And Wider:</u></p> <p>The mainstream higher education grants schemes provide for assistance to be given, inter alia, to persons who have Official Refugee status or otherwise have been granted humanitarian leave to remain in the State. Such persons are, by definition, eligible to benefit from the Third-level Access Fund measures provided that they meet the criteria for the individual measures. A key objective of the Third-level Access Fund is to promote and facilitate increased participation by those who are socio-economically disadvantaged, members of the Traveller community and ethnic minorities, those with disabilities and mature students. The National Office for Equity has as a key goal the evaluation of the existing measures and the production of a framework of policies and initiatives for implementation in conjunction with the higher education institutions and with particular reference to the specific target groups.</p>
C. Sustainable Development	<p>The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government was invited to become a member of the OP Monitoring Committee</p> <p>The MA will report on Sustainable Development as an element of the Annual Implementation Report</p> <p>A thematic presentation and discussion on sustainable development issues will be made to the Monitoring Committee on an annual basis</p> <p>Evaluation of the OP impact in relation to sustainable development was undertaken as an element of the mid term evaluation of the OP</p>

6. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:													
Annual Indicators													
OUTPUT													
	Region	Baseline (2006)			Mid Term Target 2010			Target 2013			Cumulative Target 2013		
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1. The number of students supported by the Student Assistance Fund	BMW	1127	1270	2397	1168	1318	2486	660	990	1650	5,517	9,554	15,071
	SAE	3380	3810	7190	3281	4176	7457	2399	3451	5850	18,041	27,755	45,796
	NAT	4507	5080	9587	4449	5494	9943	3059	4441	7500	23,558	37,309	60,867
2. The number of students supported by the Fund for Students with Disabilities	BMW	254	287	541	415	468	883	1234	1391	2625			
	SAE	715	909	1624	1166	1483	2649	3465	4410	7875			
	NAT	969	1196	2165	1581	1951	3532	4699	5801	10500	21,477	23,083	44,560
RESULT													
	Region	Baseline (2006)			Mid Term Target 2010			Target 2013			Cumulative Target 2013		
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1. The number of students supported by the SAF successfully completing the academic year	BMW	516	581	1097	697	785	1482	581	656	1237	4,354	7,254	11,608
	SAE	1448	1843	3291	1956	2490	4446	1634	2079	3713	14,256	21,857	36,113
	NAT	1964	2424	4388	2653	3275	5928	2215	2735	4950	18,610	29,111	47,721
2. The number of students supported by the FSD successfully completing the academic year	BMW	141	160	301	260	293	553	610	915	1525			
	SAE	398	506	904	730	929	1659	2216	3189	5405			
	NAT	539	666	1205	990	1222	2212	2826	4104	6930	18,204	20,235	38,439
IMPACT													
	Region	Baseline (2006)			Mid Term Target 2010			Target 2013			Cumulative Target 2013		
		T			T			T			T		
1. Rate of completion of higher education <u>qualification</u> among SAF beneficiaries	BMW	Discussion needed on appropriate Impact indicators with I/B. Indicators listed across suggested by IB – however Commission indicated other indicators desirable: SAF – can I/B break down new 3 rd level entrants by Socio Economic groups FSD – Can progression to FE/Employment be measured											
	SAE												
	NAT												
2. Rate of completion of higher education <u>qualification</u> among FSD beneficiaries	BMW												
	SAE												
	NAT												

See end of document for ANNEX XX111 from Implementing Regulation 1828 of 2006

7. FINANCIAL INPUT			
Budget (€/m.)	SAE €8.571m.	BMW €11.800m.	NAT €20.371m.
EU Intervention Field Code	73		
ESF Contribution €m	€10.185m.		
Treatment of ESF	Treated as appropriations-in-aid by DES		
National Co-Financing Basis (Net/Gross)	Gross- i.e. the ESF contribution and matching Exchequer provision are provided for in the Vote and the ESF receipts are paid to the Department as appropriations-in-aid.		
Max. ESF Co-Financing %	50%		
Max. Total Public Support %	100%		
Exch. Vote& S/Head	Vote 26 E15		
Description of Financial Flows	Payment to D/ES from D/Finance in respect of Exchequer and from D/ES in respect of ESF Payment from the Department of Education and Skills to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ the Higher Education Authority (National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education) and then subsequent payments from the Higher Education Authority to individual universities, Institutes of Technology, Colleges, and other publicly funded third level institutions; ADM/Area Partnerships, and Education and Training Boards (ETBs)# ♦ Education and Training Boards ♦ Local Authorities 		
Agreed flat rate for indirect costs*	none		

* Agreed by Managing Authority subject to Commission approval

Note: Education and Training Boards assumed the role and responsibilities previously held by Vocational Education Committees with effect from 1st July, 2013.

8. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	
Certifying Authority	ESF Certifying Authority
Managing Authority	HCI-OP Managing Authority
Intermediate Body	Department of Education and Skills
Beneficiaries	National Access Office
Nature of Support	Grant
Operation of Scheme	Multi-annual
Implementation Arrangements (Sub-Contracting?)	Implemented by the Department of Education and Skills in conjunction with the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education (HEA) in respect of third level institutions, authorities of non-ETB schools, ADM/Area Partnerships, and Education and Training Boards. • Education and Training Boards • Local Authorities

9. PAYMENT ROLES				
Ex-Ante Expenditure Verification checks (Art.13) ¹ by:	Certified Claims Submitted by:	Submitted To:	Ex-Post Audit of Operations ² by:	System Audits ³ By:
National Access Office, HEA	National Access Office, HEA	NDP/SFU DES	ESF Financial Control Unit, DES	ETB Audit Function
NDP/SFU DES	NDP/SFU DES	Managing Authority DES	ESF Financial Control Unit, DES	Internal Audit Unit DES
EO/HEO Managing Authority DES	HEO/AP Managing Authority DES	Certifying Authority DES	ESF Financial Control Unit, DES	Internal Audit Unit DES
EO/HEO Certifying Authority DES	Head of Certifying Authority DES	European Commission	ESF Financial Control Unit, DES	Internal Audit Unit DES

¹ Article 13, Reg. 1828/2006

² Art. 62 (1)(b) Reg. 1083/2006

³ Art. 62 (1) (a) Reg. 1083/2006

10. PROJECT SELECTION	
Project Selection Process	The National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education (National Access Office) has specific responsibility for the administration of the Fund for Students with Disabilities and the Student Assistance Fund.
Project Selection Criteria	Selection criteria and systems have been developed for the allocation of the funds which have been reviewed for effectiveness and efficiency to ensure that they advance social inclusion and gender equality principles. In conducting its review the National Office was assisted by its Advisory Committee which has representatives of all key stakeholders in the access area.
Composition of Project Selection Committee	These schemes are being implemented in accordance with the agreed and publicly available criteria. An independent expert panel will assist the National Office in its determination of applications for assistance from the Fund for Students with Disabilities.

11. PUBLICITY/INFORMATION PLANS	
Publicity/ Information Plans for the Activity	Applications, brochures, reports and promotional materials will equally publicise the appropriate funding source in line with national requirements and those of Implementing Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 regarding information and publicity measures to be carried out by the Member States concerning assistance from the Structural Funds

12. FINANCIAL PLAN FOR THE ACTIVITY
Financial Tables relating to this area of activity are attached containing all ESF and National/Private funding broken down by each year of the programming period and detailing BMW, SAE and National Profiles.

13. IMPLEMENTATION CONTACT		
Body: Department of Education and Skills	Contact Name:	Paul Daly
Address: NDP/Structural Funds Unit Training College Building Marlborough Street Dublin 1	Phone:	01 889 2393
	Fax:	01 889 2378
	Email:	Dalyp2@education.gov.ie

[Extract from Implementing Regulation 1828 of 2006]

Annex XXIII : Data on participants in ESF operations by priority

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS PER YEAR

(people entering, those leaving, carry-over from one year to the next)

BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER

BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO STATUS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

- employed (total number of employed, including self-employed)
- self-employed
- unemployed (total number of unemployed including long-term unemployed)
- long-term unemployed
- inactive persons (total number of inactive persons, including those in education, training or retirement, those having given up business, the permanently disabled, those fulfilling domestic tasks or other)
- inactive persons in education or training

BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY AGE

- young people (15-24 years)
- older workers (55-64 years)

BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY VULNERABLE GROUPS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH NATIONAL RULES

- minorities
- migrants
- disabled
- other disadvantaged people

BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

- Primary or lower secondary education (ISCED 1 and 2)
- Upper secondary education (ISCED 3)
- Post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4)
- Tertiary education (ISCED 5 and 6)