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European Social Fund

ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020



Communications Strategy 2014 – 2020



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) is supported under the PEIL 2014-2020

[Version 3. May 2018]

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1 Glossary of Terms

Beneficiary	A public or private body responsible for initiating or both initiating and implementing Operations
CPR	The Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 1303/2013
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
EU	European Union
IB	Intermediate Body
MA	ESF Managing Authority (Department of Education & Skills)
OP	Operational Programme
Operation	A project, contract, action or group of projects that contributes to the objectives of a priority or priorities
PEIL	ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020
PMC	Programme Monitoring Committee
YEI	Youth Employment Initiative

2 Introduction

The ESF Operational Programme, the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 (PEIL) was adopted by the European Commission on 25th February, 2015 and formally launched in April 2015. The programme is strongly focused on helping the unemployed to return to the labour market, with particular attention to youth and long-term unemployed people. Investments are focused on four main areas:

- Access to employment,
- Social inclusion measures,
- Education initiatives, and
- Implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative.

The financial allocation for the programme is €1.157 billion over the period, with €613 million coming from the EU Budget (€545 million from the ESF and €68 million from the EU Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)) and €545 million coming from the Irish Exchequer.

The PEIL forms part of Ireland's Partnership Agreement for the European Structural & Investment Funds.

The primary Information and Communication requirements under the ESIF are set out in **Articles 115-117 and Annex XII** of the CPR, **Articles 3-5 and Annex II** of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 821/2014, **Article 272** of Omnibus Regulation 2018/1046 and in addition, **Article 20** of the ESF Regulation (EU) 1304/2013 for YEI co-funded Operations.

The CPR requires that a Communication Strategy be submitted to the PMC for approval no later than six months after the adoption of the OP. The initial Communications Strategy was approved by the PMC on 20th August, 2015. Version 3 was approved by the PMC on 24th May 2018. Any subsequent amendment to the Communication Strategy must be approved by the PMC.

3 Aims and Objectives of the Strategy

Having regard to the principle of proportionality and the size of the OP, the main aim of this Communication Strategy is to increase public awareness, transparency and visibility of the OP and provide information in relation to ESF funding for the period 2014 to 2020.

The key objectives of the Strategy are to:

- highlight the role and support provided by the ESF (and the YEI where relevant) and the progress achieved under the PEIL, with a view to enhancing the visibility of the Fund,
- promote an understanding of the objectives and achievements of Operations supported by the ESF, including those also supported by the YEI,
- emphasise the joint actions taken by the EU and Ireland and the results accomplished,
- ensure compliance with the ESIF requirements for Information and Communication, and
- ensure that the responsibilities of Beneficiaries, as specified in Article 2.2 of Annex XII of the CPR, are understood and applied.

4 Target Groups

The key target groups for the Communications Strategy include the following:

- IBs, Beneficiaries, Operations and Participants,
- Government Departments and Agencies,
- European Commission, National & European Parliaments,
- International Groups (visiting groups, delegations and other Member State MAs),
- Economic and Social Partners (including those listed in Article 5 of the CPR),
- the General Public, and
- Local, Regional and National opinion formers and influencers including Journalists and the Media, Academics, Researchers and Educators.

5 Roles and Responsibilities

The MA has primary responsibility for ensuring a consistent approach in relation to Information and Communication measures and ensuring compliance with the EU and National requirements.

The key responsibilities of the MA, IBs and Beneficiaries are outlined below, however more detailed advice on roles and responsibilities can be found in the ESF's Information and Communication Guidelines:

- the Information and Communication actions will be proportionate to the level of funding available,
- the MA has a primary role in enhancing the visibility of the OP and ESF and will act as a central point for Information and Communication activities across the OP,
- the MA, IB and Beneficiaries will display the European Emblem at their premises,
- the MA will pursue the broadest possible media coverage using all suitable forms and methods of communication. It will inform the media, both nationally and locally, about the assistance part-financed by the EU,
- The MA will endeavour to support ESF related Events, as set out in the ESF Information and Communication Event Policy in Annex 4,
- IBs/Beneficiaries for individual Operations are responsible for carrying out Information and Communication measures, in doing so, Beneficiaries will comply with the Information and Communication Guidelines for the ESF¹ issued by the MA, the regulatory requirements and D/PER's Information and Communication Guidelines for European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020²,
- IBs/Beneficiaries will nominate an Information and Communication officer to liaise with the MA and will promote the individual Priorities/Operations for which they are responsible using the various channels at their disposal, i.e., websites, launches, sectoral publications, business/community groups, advertisements, information leaflets and selected seminars and conferences,
- IBs/Beneficiaries will report to the PMC on planned and completed information actions relating to their Priorities/Operations and the role of the ESF where appropriate,
- the procedures for spot-checking of co-funded Operations by the MA and IBs in accordance with Article 125 (5) of the CPR will include checks on compliance with the Information and Communication regulatory requirements and guidelines, and
- the MA will present an update to the PMC on Information and Communication activities and its ongoing measures to enhance visibility.

¹ <https://www.esf.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Repository/Info-and-Pub/Guidelines/Information-and-Communication-Guidelines-V3.pdf>

² <https://www.esf.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Repository/Info-and-Pub/01a-Information-and-Communication-Guidelines-DPER.pdf>

6 Role of the PMC

The functions of the PMC are set out in Articles 49 and 110 of the CPR.

In relation to Information and Communication the PMC:

- approves the Communication Strategy and any amendment of the Strategy,
- shall examine the implementation of the Communications Strategy, including information and communication measures and measures to enhance the visibility of the ESF,
- shall give an opinion on the activities and measures planned for the following year, including on ways to increase the effectiveness of communication activities aimed at the public .

7 Information and Communication Guidelines

The MA publishes detailed Information and Communication guidelines to assist IBs/Beneficiaries comply with the regulatory requirements and to ensure the widespread, uniform and consistent application of the correct logos, signage etc., in the correct format in all cases.

These guidelines are issued to all IBs/Beneficiaries of ESF co-funded Operations and are available electronically on www.esf.ie. Any amendments to the guidelines will be communicated to the relevant bodies.

8 Promotion of the ESF

The contribution of the ESF will be promoted to participants on ESF co-funded Operations, potential Beneficiaries and existing Beneficiaries and the general public with the aim of highlighting the role of the ESF and increasing visibility of the Fund. In order to increase awareness and understanding, it is important that clear and simple messages be communicated.

8.1 Ireland's ESIF Logo and the EU Emblem

The EU Emblem with reference to the European Union, together with Ireland's ESIF's logo, will be included in all appropriate material relating to Operations which are ESF co-funded. Wherever possible, for instance in press releases, speeches, publications, annual reports, etc., a description of the ESF should be used. It is recommended that the following statement (or an equivalent) be used, namely that ***“the Operation is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020”*** or for YEI Operations, ***“the Operation is co-funded by the Irish Government, the European Social Fund and the Youth Employment Initiative as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020”***

8.2 OP Level

Information, communication and visibility activities will be undertaken by the MA at the level of the OP. The primary role of OP level publicity will be to disseminate as widely as possible, using all appropriate media, the overall objectives and content of the PEIL 2014-2020, to publicise the progress being made in implementing the OP and the achievements of specific Priorities/Operations and also to increase visibility of the ESF. The MA will:

- design promotional activities to their specific audiences using relevant media, as appropriate i.e. press, radio, the internet etc.,
- be responsible for ensuring that the ESF information, communication and visibility requirements are met for the OP. It will publish information regarding these requirements on its website and update it as necessary,
- enter into Administrative Agreements with IBs setting out the respective roles and responsibilities which will include a section relating to compliance with information, communication and visibility requirements,
- organise one major information activity a year with a theme relevant to the achievement of ESF policy objectives,
- set out the actions undertaken throughout the year and the contribution of the ESF in the Annual Implementation Report. The citizen summary report will be made available on the ESF website,
- conduct Information and Communication compliance checks of all relevant Bodies
- provide progress reports to the PMC on the implementation of the Communication Strategy, including information and communication measures and measures to enhance the visibility of the ESF
- invite representatives of the EU Commission to attend major public events, major conferences, launches, openings and announcements,
- participate in any national & EU information networks, and
- maintain a single website providing information on the OP.

8.3 Managing Authority Website

The MA will maintain an up to date and high quality website that will contain the following:

- Programming Documents,
- Implementation Plans,
- Press Releases,
- Details of Major Events (Conferences and Seminars),
- Examples of Operations in at least two commonly spoken European languages (Annex XII, 2.1(2 (e))),
- Presentations used in Guidance Seminars,
- Reports and Publications including Evaluation Reports,
- List of Operations supported in excel format to allow data to be sorted, searched and extracted
- Citizen Summaries of Annual Implementation Reports,
- Links to other OP websites, the national ESIF website and various EU websites,
- Links to various IB websites providing specific information on funding available, application process and eligibility criteria, and
- Other information that may be relevant from time to time.

The website's design follows international guidelines set out by the W3C (the World Wide Web Consortium). The site aims to comply with Level Double-A standard of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0. In addition, a number of Triple-A checkpoints are incorporated to enhance the accessibility of the website. The MA will continue to monitor and improve the accessibility of www.esf.ie in line with developments and changes in accessibility guidelines, technological advances and general website design best practice.

8.4 Communication Measures

There are many measures that can be used for providing information and promoting the role of the ESF which can include:

- Annual Information Events: national conferences, road shows, site open days / onsite talks, exhibitions, seminars, etc.,
- Training and Information Sessions,
- Participation in European Networks (INIO),
- Informative Publications and Promotional Material: Posters, Flyers, leaflets and brochures,
- Websites, and Social Media.

9 Support for Beneficiaries

As stated in Annex XII 4 (c) of the CPR, Beneficiaries will be supported in their communication activities.

The MA will:

- Provide guidance and training on Information and Communication to IBs/Beneficiaries,
- Ensure that IBs/Beneficiaries are kept informed and up to date on any Information and Communication requirements,
- Consider proposals for the use of Technical Assistance for joint Information and Communication activities, and
- Provide posters and publicity materials to IBs, Beneficiaries and Operations.

10 Visibility and Awareness

In accordance with Article 50 of the CPR, the Annual Implementation Reports and the Final Implementation Report will include examples of Information and Communication measures carried out, the arrangements for the publication of the list of Operations and the contents of any amendments to the Communications Strategy.

11 Implementation and Monitoring

The means used for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the Communication Strategy will be proportional to the Information and Communication measures identified in the Strategy and to the overall level of EU funding allocated. Reporting on the progress of the Information and Communication measures and the planned activities to be carried out during the programming period will be through reports provided for the PMC. These reports will be made available on the MA's website. The MA will complete a report (Annex4) following attendance at an ESF related event. The post event reports will provide the basis for the Information and Communications update for the Annual Implementation Report.

11.1 Evaluation

The indicators to be used to monitor and evaluate the Information and Communication measures are set out in **Annex 2** of this document. These indicators have been agreed for monitoring the implementation of the Information and Communication measures by the PMC. They will also be included in the reporting under the Technical Assistance priority of the OP's annual and final reports. These indicators will be used as a benchmark of the effectiveness of the Strategy's implementation and to inform communications interventions over the timeframe of the Strategy.

12 Responsible Persons and Exchange of Experience

Article 117 (3) of the CPR requires that each MA will designate and inform the Commission of the contact person to be responsible for Information and Communication at OP level. Details of this contact person and others at IB/Beneficiary level are set out in **Annex 3** to this document.

In order to ensure a better implementation of the information measures and to allow a better exchange of information between the Member States and the Commission on the Information and Communication strategies and results (as set out in Article 117 (4) of the CPR) the relevant OP Information and Communication Officer will participate in appropriate European Community networks.

13 Budget

The Technical Assistance Priority of the PEIL 2014-2020 provides the main funding for Information and Communication activities for the OP. The indicative budget for the Communication Strategy will be in the region of €2 million (to be reviewed, as required) from the allocation to the Technical Assistance Priority of the OP. The MA will consider proposals for the use of Technical Assistance for joint Information and Communication activities. All potential information channels to promote the OP will be availed of in order to achieve the overall aims of the strategy in a cost-effective manner.

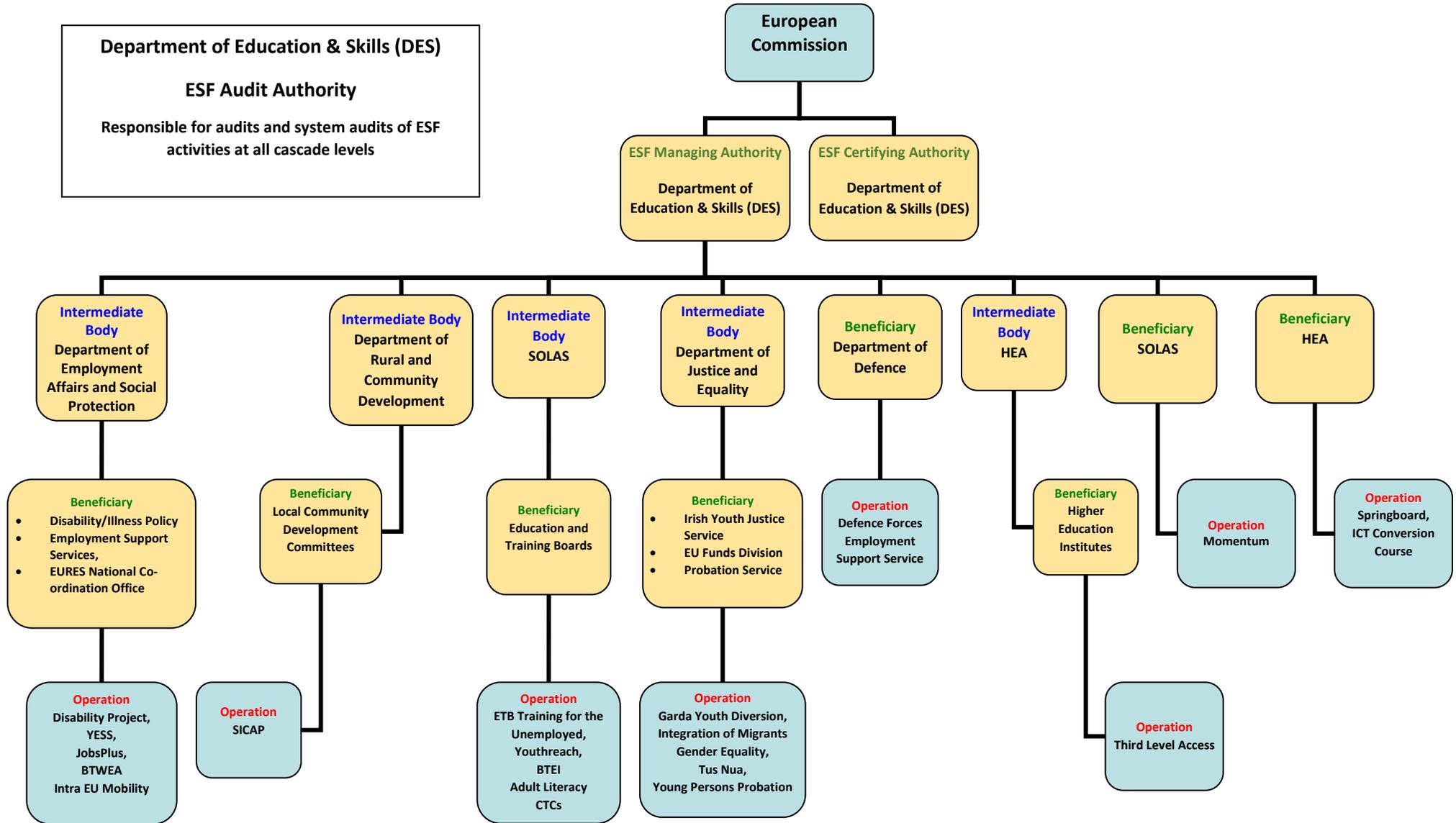
The budget includes items listed below:

- Website development and maintenance,
- Publication of the OP document,
- Annual Report (Citizen Summary) publication,
- Annual Conference costs,
- Publicity at launches,
- Photography,
- Costs associated with publishing advertorials,
- Production of promotional materials (e.g. pens, flags and associated merchandising),
- Attendance at EU events seminars and conferences relating to Communications,
- Hosting of visiting delegations,
- Additional costs that may arise from time to time.

14 Amendments to Communication Strategy

Proposed amendments to the Communication Strategy can be submitted by written procedure to the PMC for decision. Amendments, if approved, will be notified to the European Commission.

ANNEX 1 – ESF Cascade Structure in Ireland



ANNEX 2 – Information and Communication Indicators

Indicator Type	Indicator	Baseline 2014	Mid-term 2017 (per annum)	Final Target 2020 (per annum)
Output (Key management indicator)	Number of People requesting/accessing Information (Website)	10,000hits	11,000 hits	12,000 hits
Output	Number of high profile annual information activities	1 activity	1 activity	1 activity
Output	Number of seminars/presentations	1 activity	2 activities	2 activities
Output	Number of ESF publications produced	1 item	3 items	3 items
Output	Number of articles on ESF	1 item	2 items	2 items
Result	Level of satisfaction with seminars and related documentation	This is a monitoring indicator. Targets have not been set.		
Impact	Level of overall public awareness of the European Structural and Investment Funds*.	53% Prompted 16% Unprompted	55% Prompted 18% Unprompted	58% Prompted 20% Unprompted
Impact	Level of awareness of the ESF*	35% Prompted	37% Prompted	39% Prompted
Impact	Local press coverage of PEIL	This is a monitoring indicator. Targets have not been set.		

***A public awareness survey will provide figures for public awareness**

ANNEX 3 – Contact Information

ESF Managing Authority	
<p>Ms. Nicola Finnegan Information and Communications Officer ESF MA Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough Street Dublin 1 D01 RC96. Tel: + 353 1 889 6701 Nicola_Finnegan@education.gov.ie</p>	
Intermediate Bodies/Beneficiary Contacts	
<p>Clare Droney HQ Financial Management Unit Department of Justice & Equality 51 St. Stephen's Green Dublin 2</p>	<p>David Waters Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection EU Funding Compliance Unit Floor 3 Oisín House 212-213 Pearse Street, Dublin 2.</p>
<p>Donal Bergin Defence Forces Support Services Policy Department of Defence Station Road, Newbridge, Co. Kildare</p>	<p>Rod Tierney SOLAS Block 1, Castleforbes House Castleforbes Road, Dublin 1</p>
<p>Lisa Keaveney Department of Rural and Community Development Govt. Buildings Ballina, Co. Mayo</p> <p>Bernie Furlong Pobal Grants Row Dublin 2</p>	<p>Fergal Noone & Modesta Mawaire Higher Education Authority Brooklawn House, Crampton Avenue, Shelbourne Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.</p>

ANNEX 4 – Information and Communication Event Policy



Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020

Co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union



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Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020

Information and Communication Event Policy



[Version 1 March 2018]

1 Introduction

The primary Information and Communication requirements under the ESIF are set out in Articles 115-117 and Annex XII of the CPR (EU) 1303/2013, Articles 3-5 and Annex II of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 821/2014 and in addition, Article 20 of the ESF Regulation (EU) 1304/2013 for YEI co-funded Operations. The ESF Managing Authority has published a Communications Strategy³ and Information and Communication guidelines⁴ for PEIL 2014-2020.

2 Events

There are many types of events that can be held to provide information on, and promote the role of, the ESF including:

- Annual Information Events
- National conferences
- Road shows
- Activity Site open days/onsite talks
- Exhibitions
- Seminars
- Training and Information Sessions.

In line with the Communications Strategy and the Information and Communication guidelines the IBs and Beneficiaries are requested to liaise with the MA in relation to any Information Events such as launches, conferences, seminars and exhibitions and any other associated publicity events proposed for the co-funded Operations. Each year, the MA requests the IBs/Beneficiaries to advise it of any planned events for co-funded Operations during the year.

Annual Event/Activity

The MA is responsible for organising one major activity a year to promote the support of the ESF. The MA will ensure that the PMC and all IBs/Beneficiaries are informed of the proposed activity.

Event Reporting

The post event reports will provide the basis for the Information and Communications update for the Annual Implementation Report. As part of an Operation's yearly progress report details of events held should be provided in the format requested by the MA. An update on Information and Communication activities, including events, will be presented to the PMC twice a year.

³ <http://www.esf.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Repository/Info-and-Pub/PEIL-Communication-Strategy-V2.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.esf.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Repository/Info-and-Pub/Information-and-Communication-Guidelines-2014-2020-V21.pdf>

3 ESF MA Event Attendance:

First and foremost, attendance by the ESF MA at events is determined by staff availability and is dependent on the current priorities of the ESF & EGF Policy and Operations Unit.

In general the ESF MA will prioritise events that have a national or regional reach but may attend more localised events where appropriate.

All events attended must provide the ESF MA an opportunity to:

- highlight the role and support provided by the ESF and the YEI, where relevant, and the progress achieved under the PEIL,
- promote the opportunities available under the PEIL,
- promote an understanding of the objectives and achievements of Operations supported by the ESF and the YEI.

Events should also provide an opportunity to build relationships with important stakeholders.

4 Procedures:

- On receipt of an invitation, it should be acknowledged and saved in to the relevant folder in M:\2. Administration\02. ESF\1. MA\Operational Programmes\01. PEIL 2014-2020\Info and Communication\04. Publicity Events\Events.
- All invitations should be brought to the attention of the Information and Communication Officer.
- The event should be logged in the calendar of events and also recorded on the Unit calendar, noting the proposed attendee, if any.
- Where the ESF MA is unable to attend or its attendance cannot be justified, the ESF MA will liaise with the relevant IB/Beneficiary to seek to ensure appropriate support for the project/event concerned and request that the ESF is sufficiently publicised. ESF merchandising can be provided for ESF related events.
- If the Information and Communication Officer considers that an event should be attended by a member of the ESF MA, a proposal (Annex I), comprising all relevant information should be submitted to the Principal Officer.
- When attending events, officers should bring the relevant Programme backdrops and relevant posters, along with the associated merchandising.
- Where merchandising is provided, a record must be kept.

- Where possible, the officer should take photographs at the event. It is important to liaise with the Event Planner regarding their policy for the use of photographs that include event attendees to ensure that the relevant authorisations are in place.
- Each event, regardless of ESF MA attendance, should be communicated on the ESF's dedicated Twitter account and published on the ESF's dedicated website.
- Within one week of attendance at an event, the Post Event Report form (Annex II) should be completed, saved in the appropriate folder and sent to the AP and PO.
- All correspondence and information relating to events should be saved in M:\2. Administration\02. ESF\1. MA\Operational Programmes\01. PEIL 2014-2020\Info and Communication\04. Publicity Events\Events and the appropriate paper file.

5 Expenditure

Expenditure for events held by the ESF MA should be approved in advance by the Principal Officer. The MA will maintain accurate and up to date records of Technical Assistance expenditure under the PEIL.

As set out in the ESF Communications Strategy and the Information and Communication Guidelines, the MA will consider proposals for the use of Technical Assistance for events. The potential for the sharing of costs or the co-hosting of events, with other interested parties or bodies, should also be considered, where it is appropriate.

6 Travel

If attendance at an event involves domestic travel, approval must be sought by the Principal Officer. If attendance involves foreign travel, the officer must complete and submit a Foreign Travel Request form⁵. Where travel is involved, officers are required to make themselves aware of the relevant circulars⁶ relating to Travel & Subsistence and Foreign Travel. Any Travel and Subsistence claim should be inputted and submitted on the PSSC system no later than one month from the date of travel.

⁵

http://intranet/Info/Foreign_TandS/Pages/default.aspx?RootFolder=%2FInfo%2FForeign%5FTandS%2FDocument%20Library%2FForeign%20Travel%20Information&FolderCTID=0x012000DA8BB5FED3E2204FACF5ADA9059E00D5&View=%7B58F090DD%2D57CB%2D47DA%2D86BF%2DCE9160FD7E04%7D

⁶ <http://pssc.gov.ie/expenses-guide/>



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Information and Communications Event Attendance Proposal



Ireland's European Structural and
Investment Funds Programmes
2014-2020
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Event Details	
Event Title:	Event Location:
Event Date and Time:	
Event Organiser:	
Purpose of Event:	
Estimated No. of Attendees:	
Proposed ESF Attendees:	

Event Costs	
Merchandise to be provided:	
Estimated Cost of Merchandise:	Estimated Cost of Attendance (T&S):
Other Relevant Costs:	
Estimated Total Costs:	

Rationale for Attendance

Prepared by:	Date:
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Information and Communication Post Event Report



Ireland's European Structural and
Investment Funds Programmes
2014-2020
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and the European Union

Event Details	
Event Title:	Event Location:
Event Date and Time:	
Event Organiser:	
Purpose of Event:	
Estimated No. of Attendees:	
ESF Attendees:	

Event Costs	
Merchandise Provided:	
Cost of Merchandise:	Cost of Attendance (T&S):
Other Relevant Costs:	
Total Costs:	

Media Coverage

ESF Social Media Statistics			
Month		Followers	
Tweets		Mentions	
Impressions		Profile Visits	

Notes

Lessons Learned

Prepared by:	Date:
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