

Update on development of 2007-13 ERDF Competitiveness Programme

As regional stakeholders will be aware, the focus of activity over recent months has been on finalising the content of the region's Operational Programme for the 2007-13 ERDF Competitiveness Programme. Now that the OP has been submitted to the Commission, it seems timely to provide an update on recent progress and outline next steps over the coming months regarding preparations for the new ERDF programme.

This work is taking place against the backdrop of a new, and substantially different, operational context for the 2007-13 ERDF programmes:

- Programmes must be set within the framework of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and deliver the objectives of the renewed Lisbon strategy of stronger growth and more and better jobs;
- Central Government is keen to ensure that ERDF programmes are clearly aligned to domestic and regional policies and funding streams;
- It is expected that this approach will lead to the programmes making fewer, more strategic investments; and
- It is the Government's intention that the management and delivery responsibility for the new East Midlands ERDF programme will transfer from GOEM to *emda*.

GOEM and *emda* will continue to work in close collaboration over the coming months to ensure a smooth transition and to establish the appropriate mechanisms and processes to deliver a streamlined and strategic approach to programme management. This statement has therefore been jointly compiled and issued by *emda* and GOEM in order to update regional stakeholders on progress to date and next steps.

East Midlands 2007-13 ERDF Competitiveness Operational Programme

The draft East Midlands Operational Programme (EMOP) was published for a formal twelve-week consultation period on 18 December 2006. A regional consultation event was held on 19 January 2007, to provide stakeholders with a detailed overview of the draft EMOP and its process for development, and to allow in depth workshop discussions to consider the questions put forward in the consultation document. The views expressed by stakeholders were summarised and made available on the GOEM website shortly after the event. A number of sub-regional consultation events were also organised by local and sub-regional partnerships to ensure local level practitioner engagement in the process.

In addition to the main regional consultation event, two stakeholder workshops were held in February 2007 to discuss the proposed approach to spatial targeting. Again, the main conclusions from the discussion were summarised and made available on the GOEM website shortly after the events.

The twelve-week stakeholder consultation process closed on 12 March 2007 and a total of 50 written responses were received. Representatives from GOEM and *emda* reviewed the submissions and summarised the key points into a paper which was considered by the EMOP Drafting Group on 27 March 2007 and which formed the basis of recommendations for amendments to the EMOP. GOEM will publish a formal response to the consultation on 8 June 2007 and this will be available via the GOEM website.

At a meeting on 10 May 2007, the Regional Strategic Partnership (RESPE) fully endorsed these recommendations and approved the EMOP for submission to the European Commission for formal approval. The EMOP will be checked by Commission officials for admissibility and then once they have accepted it, a formal negotiation process between the region and the Commission will begin. It is anticipated that *emda* and GOEM will lead the negotiations and will be supported by members of RESPE as appropriate. The RESPE-approved negotiation draft of the EMOP is available to download on the GOEM website – please note that it remains subject to Commission approval and may, therefore, need to undergo significant redrafting.

It is hoped that Commission approval will be forthcoming by December at the very latest; however, every effort will be taken to expedite the approval process and secure an earlier decision. In the meantime, work needs to get underway in the region to prepare for the start of the programme. *emda* and GOEM will be jointly taking forward this work over the coming months until responsibility for the management and delivery of the 2007-2013 East Midlands ERDF Programme is formally transferred from GOEM to *emda* later this year (working deadline October 2007).

Programme Management and Implementation

Shadow PMC

Prior to the approval of the EMOP, issues related to programme implementation, delivery and management will need to be developed and considered through a Shadow Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC). The recommendations put forward by the Shadow PMC will then be ratified at the earliest opportunity by the full PMC, which will be convened as soon as the Commission approves the EMOP and which will be chaired by the GOEM Regional Director.

Detailed guidance from DCLG on the composition and process for convening a Shadow PMC is awaited. GOEM and *emda* will be working closely to make proposals on the recommended membership for a Shadow PMC and will seek to convene an inaugural meeting at the earliest opportunity.

ERDF Investment Framework

A key focus in terms of programme preparation will be the development of an Investment Framework (IF) which will sit below the OP and provide further detail on proposed programme activities, timescales and delivery mechanisms.

The use of an ERDF Investment Framework will deliver a more strategic approach to commissioning for the 2007-2013 ERDF Programme and will ensure that the programme invests in fewer, larger and more strategic projects in order to deliver maximum impact. This approach will aim to tackle issues upfront that have historically caused delays and concerns during the 2000-2006 ERDF programme – for example, issues around ERDF eligibility, state aid compliance, strategic fit, match funding requirements / timescales and proliferation of business support.

The development of the IF will be overseen by the Shadow PMC and will require input from regional stakeholders (before ultimately being approved by the full PMC). *emda* will be leading the development of the IF and will be engaging with regional stakeholders (via the Shadow PMC structure) for their input over the summer.

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