

# Working Towards the Convergence Programmes

## Newsletter 8: 15<sup>th</sup> December 2006

This is part of a fortnightly series of newsletters that will help explain the process and progression towards the Convergence programmes for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The newsletters will contain the most up to date information about Convergence as it evolves over the coming months. Updated information will appear in blue. The next newsletter will be 5 January 2007.

### Introduction

Dear Colleague

*ESF investment in up-skilling will help raise productivity and improve employment prospects.*

The European Social Fund (ESF) in England will be delivered through a national Operational Programme during the next programme period. The ESF Programme will complement a wider national strategy of making sustainable improvements in the UK's economic performance by raising the skills levels of young people and adults and increasing employment rates in disadvantaged groups.

*Until 22 January 2007 people can help shape the ESF Programme by contributing to the consultation.*

The national ESF Programme is currently the subject of a formal consultation which is due to be finalised on 22 January 2007. Further details can be found on the Department for Work and Pensions website at: [www.esf.gov.uk](http://www.esf.gov.uk). Overall the ESF Programme for England is worth some €3 billion over the next seven years. ESF will comprise around 30% of the total value of the Convergence Programme.

*In Cornwall ESF investment will focus on raising skills across the spectrum to boost innovation and grow the knowledge-based economy.*

In the Convergence Programme for Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly, ESF will seek particularly to improve the skills of the local workforce to enable it to contribute more effectively to the development of the innovation- and knowledge-driven economy. More work remains to be done on the precise actions which might be supported under the Convergence Programme, notably how to develop and retain higher level skills in Cornwall, through the development, with partners, of an ESF Convergence Strategy.

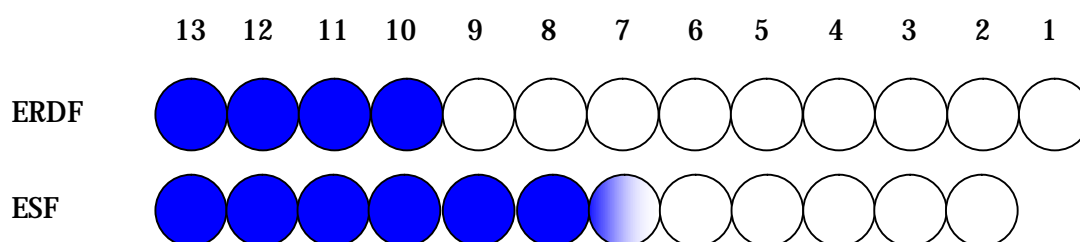
*Getting policies and strategies working together will increase the effectiveness of ESF skills investment, improving opportunities and boosting economic growth.*

The Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) – comprising Learning & Skills Councils, JobcentrePlus, the South West Regional Development Agency, Government Office for the South West and others – will ensure that local and regional skills strategies are properly aligned with national policy objectives. The RSP is co-ordinating the Region's response to the ESF consultation exercise on behalf of the South West Cohesion Group – although, of course, organisations and individuals can submit their own comments directly should they wish to do so. Comments for inclusion in the RSP's wider regional response can be e-mailed to: [gareth.grimshaw@gosw.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:gareth.grimshaw@gosw.gsi.gov.uk).

Richard Bayly  
Director  
Government Office for the South West

15 December 2006

## Consultation Countdown: weeks remaining



ERDF consultation ends 16 February 2007

ESF consultation ends 22 January 2007

## What we know about Convergence

- ERDF Convergence consultation* The consultation on the draft European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Convergence Operational Programme for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly was launched on 20 November 2006. Responses to the consultation should be made to the South West Regional Development Agency by 16 February 2007 using the feedback form. Further information can be found at [www.southwestrda.org.uk](http://www.southwestrda.org.uk).
- ESF consultation* On 30 October 2006 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) launched the consultation for the England ESF Programme 2007-13. The deadline for responses is 22 January 2007. Further information about the ESF consultation can be found at [www.esf.gov.uk](http://www.esf.gov.uk) under the heading 'Future'.
- Convergence timetable* A timetable for the Convergence Programmes and Strategy and Action can be viewed in the Towards Convergence section of the Objective One website, [www.objectiveone.com](http://www.objectiveone.com).
- NSRF published* On 23 October the Government published its response to the consultation on the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), outlining broad priorities, management arrangements and funding allocations for ERDF and ESF programmes 2007-2013.
- What is the budget for Convergence?* The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Convergence Programme will receive €579m (approx. £389m) and the Government proposes a 70:30 split between ERDF and ESF funding. However, the details of the ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes will determine the final splits.
- Management arrangements for Convergence ERDF* The South West RDA will take the lead in the management of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly's ERDF Convergence Programme. However, the details of the management and delivery arrangements have yet to be clarified and further information will be contained within the ERDF Operational Programme.
- Management arrangements for Convergence ESF* The draft ESF Operating Programme, which is currently out for consultation, proposes that the Managing Authority for the ESF Programme in England 2007-13 will be the European Social Fund Division (ESFD) of the Department for Work and Pensions, overseen at a national level by a Programme Monitoring Committee. Most of the delivery of the programme will take place at regional level. The Regional Skills Partnerships will have a leading role in the development of regional ESF strategies and may be assisted by regional ESF committees. The Convergence area of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly will have its own strategy and committee.

<i>More information</i>	<p>More information about the NSRF and the Government's response to the consultation, can be found at:  <a href="http://www.dti.gov.uk/consultations/page28796.html">http://www.dti.gov.uk/consultations/page28796.html</a></p>
<i>The current Objective One Programme</i>	<p>The investment cycle of the Objective One Programme runs until 31 December 2006. This will be followed by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF) Convergence programmes for the period 2007-2013. The purpose of the Convergence programmes will be to speed up the economic development of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.</p>
<i>The role of Strategy and Action</i>	<p>Strategy and Action – the overarching economic regeneration strategy for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly - will inform the ERDF and ESF Convergence programmes. The Convergence programmes will not be able to do everything that is included in Strategy and Action. They will be able to invest in some of it.</p> <p>There will be a number of differences between the Objective One Programme and the Convergence programmes.</p>
<i>Convergence only ERDF and ESF</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convergence will consist only of ERDF and the ESF.</li> <li>• In the NSRF the Government proposes to allocate 70% of Convergence to ERDF and 30% to ESF. However, the details of the ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes will determine the final splits. In Objective One 75% was allocated to ERDF and 25% to ESF.</li> </ul>
<i>Rural and fish part of mainstream programmes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The rural and fisheries funds will become part of mainstream UK programmes.</li> </ul>
<i>More information about the fisheries and rural programmes</i>	<p>Further information about the fisheries programme can be found in the South West Regional Development Agency's Cohesion Newsletter at:  <a href="http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/european-funding-pos.shtm">http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/european-funding-pos.shtm</a></p> <p>And more information about the rural programme, including the latest draft of the Regional Implementation Plan, is available at:  <a href="http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/european-agricultura.shtm">www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/european-agricultura.shtm</a></p> <p>The Objective One website <a href="http://www.objectiveone.com">www.objectiveone.com</a> contains more information in the 'Towards Convergence' section.</p>
<i>The Lisbon Agenda</i>	<p>European and UK economic regeneration policy is increasingly being driven by the Lisbon Agenda where the EU set itself the goal of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world. It has been written by the EU and Member States in response to intensified competition from around the world.</p>
<i>Lisbon targets</i>	<p>The Convergence programmes will need to clearly show how they are contributing to the Lisbon Agenda – this will mean a significant increase in emphasis on business competitiveness and productivity, innovation and a more knowledge based economy.</p> <p>There will be a target of at least 60% of the Convergence programmes to meet the objectives of the Lisbon Agenda.</p>

## What we don't know about Convergence

*What will commissioning look like in the Convergence Programme?* The Convergence Programme aims to make a smaller number of more strategic investments than the Objective One Programme. To achieve this some investments will be commissioned. What these investments will be, how much they will cost and the details of the commissioning process are currently under discussion.

*Details of the Convergence Programmes.* Although we know that there will be ERDF and ESF Convergence programmes for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly – the decision was made when the European Union's Member States agreed the EU budget in December 2005 – we still do not know the exact details of the programmes.

The recently published NSRF indicates that the South West RDA will have an important role in managing the ERDF Programme; more details are expected to be included in the ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes.

For Objective One, the role of Managing Authority for ERDF, ESF and EAGGF has been Government Office for the South West and the Marine Fisheries Agency for FIFG.

*What activities will be eligible for funding?* The NSRF outlines broad priorities for ERDF and ESF in the UK, but the detailed priorities for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly's will be contained in the ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes which are currently being developed and will be consulted on over the coming months.

More detailed information about Convergence, links to key organisations and websites can be found in the 'Towards Convergence' section of the Objective One website [www.objectiveone.com](http://www.objectiveone.com)