

## **Equality of Opportunity – supporting guidance for applicants and projects**

This guidance aims to assist groups applying for funding and delivering projects financed by EU Structural Funds Programmes in meeting their obligations to address equality. These obligations come from two main sources:

Firstly, it is the law. In Northern Ireland, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires a public authority in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need **to promote equality of opportunity between:-**

- (a) persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- (b) between men and women generally;
- (c) between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- (d) between persons with dependants and persons without.

A public authority is also required, in carrying out its functions, to have regard to the desirability of **promoting good relations** between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Secondly, equality of opportunity is one of the cross-cutting themes which guide the delivery of the 2007-2013 EU Structural Fund Programmes. Equality of opportunity must be considered in relation to all the Section 75 Groups listed above at all stages of the Programmes supported under the EU Structural Funds. The Funds themselves are an equality measure; they represent the EU's response to inequalities between regions across Europe.

## Guidance for Applicants

Before addressing how to make equality work in your project or programme, it is important to state that addressing equality issues is not designed to be another hurdle that your organisation needs to clear in order to access funding. There are specific benefits to building equality measures into your plan and these include:

- The outcomes you deliver are likely to be of greater benefit to the wider population;
- It will speed up the selection process;
- There are points available within application scoring systems for addressing equality issues;
- It will enhance your project if it is fully addressing the equality needs of your community or your sector;
- You can become an example of good practice; and
- The skills you develop for the European Programmes will help you in other applications.

Clearly there are many routes to ensuring that your project or programme addresses the equality agenda. A logical way to take forward equality mainstreaming is through the following four steps.

**Firstly, you need to analyse the problem in order to fully expose what is involved. This might include:**

- Breaking down statistics for the project or programme beneficiaries to ensure that you can see to what extent Section 75 categories have been affected (for example, issues that might be raised for the participation of men and women);
- Undertaking surveys and forecasts (for example, surveying members of the minority ethnic population regarding cultural issues involved);
- Doing research either through previously published work or by undertaking or commissioning further new work;

- Following guidelines and advice available from Programme Managing Authorities;
- Undertaking your assessment of how an issue impacts on equality issues and setting up performance indicators, targets and other monitoring tools in order to ensure that the right sort of information will be captured.

In all cases, you should be mindful that the level of analysis needs to be proportionate to the scale of the project undertaken.

**Secondly, you need to consult in a meaningful way, and at an appropriate level, those people who are set to benefit from our programmes and projects. This will improve the quality of policy-making and deepen democracy.**

This might include

- Setting up working or steering groups;
- Ensuring the participation of Section 75 category representatives in decision-making;
- Holding conferences and seminars in order to harness a broader range of knowledge and experience into the design of the project or programme plan; and
- Establishing consultative forums which will make sure that the contribution of target groups is continuous throughout the life of the project or programme.

**Thirdly, you need to educate all the parties involved to raise awareness, to transfer knowledge and to support training.**

This might include:

- Commissioning or running awareness-raising and training courses;
- Follow-up actions to ensure that the message stays constant right the way through the programme;

- Ensuring that in cases where goods and services are being procured from outside the project itself, the contractors are aware of, and fully adhere to, the principles of equality of opportunity in Public Sector procurement<sup>1</sup> and
- Distributing booklets and leaflets such as this Guide or other available material. Good resources are widely available.

**Fourthly, you need to implement those measures identified through research, consultation/participation and education as being the most appropriate to redress inequalities.**

Clearly conducting the research, taking the time to ensure that stakeholders are aware of the issue and consulting with beneficiaries are not in themselves going to produce results. For this to work, the findings from these steps are built into the project at the outset and then implemented in a consistent way throughout the life of the project or programme. For many organisations, access to information is not the real problem – it is a question of applying that learning on the ground.

### **How do you address equality in your application form?**

The reality is that demand for EU Structural Funds is far greater than the money available. Most programmes are heavily over-subscribed. The selection system has been designed to take account of this and so the process of applying for funding is a competitive one and unfortunately not all applications which address the criteria will receive funding. The system has been designed to make sure the best projects are chosen which meet the needs of the region within the available budget.

To address the equality perspective when you are designing your project and drafting your application, you might find it useful to consider the following:

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<sup>1</sup> [Equality of Opportunity and Sustainable Development in Public Sector Procurement](#)

**1. Explain the purpose of the project and what it is going to do, setting out how the project will contribute to equality of opportunity.**

**2. Explain why the project is needed.**

- Detailed local evidence and if appropriate, evidence from a particular sector should be given in support of the application. This could include labour market evidence, local surveys and evidence from consultations. The equality implications should be drawn out, including how Section 75 categories are particularly affected.
- Describe the barriers faced by the target group(s) and how the proposed project will help to overcome them.
- Describe if appropriate, how the project links with or complements government strategies or initiatives concerning equality of opportunity.

**3. Explain who the project is for.**

- Identify the target group or groups the project aims to help, whether this is a group within a specific area or people on a wider scale.
- Describe the number of people the project will aim to help and show that this is achievable. Show the anticipated or proposed break-down of target beneficiaries by Section 75 category.
- If the project aims to target people for development, identify how they will be recruited and show that the process to be used is appropriate according to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland Code of Practice.<sup>2</sup>
- Show how this process satisfies equality of opportunity for Section 75 categories.

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<sup>2</sup> There are three NI Codes of Practice dealing with recruitment and all are available from the Equality Commission. These are:

i) [Removing Sex Bias from Recruitment and Selection](#)  
ii) [Fair Employment in NI, Chapter 5 Excerpts on the Role of Employers](#)  
iii) [A Guide to complying with the law in Recruitment and Selection under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.](#)

**4. Describe how the project will be designed, carried out and managed to meet the needs of the target group.**

- Describe the main processes and stages in carrying out the project.
- Describe how equality of opportunity considerations have been incorporated into all stages in the design and development of the project.
- Describe how the needs of the target group(s) will be monitored.
- Describe any relevant experience your organisation has had in running previous projects.
- Describe any research undertaken and its findings.
- Describe how the project will be advertised and how it will be maintained after EU funding ceases.

**5. Identify the anticipated outcomes and results of the project.**

- Outcomes: what will be the long term effect of the project on the people of Northern Ireland?
- Will there be an increased up-take of employment by, for example women or men in a field where either group is currently under-represented?
- Will the project lead to achievement of qualifications, including NVQ?
- What measures will be taken to ensure that these results are achieved?
- Does the project bring benefits to the balance of working and family life? If so, how is this measured?

For applicants to the PEACE III Programme, there are specific criteria which applicants must meet which have a bearing on equality. In order to assess whether projects are meeting the two key objectives of the programme ('reconciling communities' and 'contributing to a shared society') projects must indicate how they target areas and groups which have been affected by the conflict, and as such experience particular problems of segregation,

marginalisation and isolation. This targeted approach aims to ensure that reconciliation is embedded in the programme.

## **Case Studies**

You might find it useful to consider the equality implications for these examples of projects before you start on your own. Think about the barriers facing the potential beneficiaries of the project and the factors that the applicants need to consider. Our examples are:

### **Case Study 1 - Cross Community Working**

An application has been received for a new community centre to replace an old run-down centre beside an urban interface area. There is an imbalance in representation of the catholic/protestant communities in this area. However, there is also a sizeable travelling community which could also get value from use of the facilities.

The applicant is a Government department who will receive the grant and manage the construction. However, the proposed long term management of the project post-construction will be by the local community group which mainly represents the majority community.

The main issue to consider here is inclusion and how to encourage participation from all communities:

- Representation on the management committee of all communities in the area the community centre is serving
- Accessible advertising – provision of different formats e.g. Braille, different languages, large print
- Physical accessibility of the building to older people/people with a disability
- Monitoring and encouraging usage where necessary, particularly in terms of the various communities

## **Case Study 2 - Rural Women's Groups**

A women's training organisation has been successful in applying for a grant for a major peace and reconciliation training programme for women. The project's constituent groups are from throughout Northern Ireland and the border region of Ireland. This project involves a wide range of women's organisations including rural women's groups, church based women's groups, women's education and development groups, women's groups in urban interface areas and women's empowerment groups.

Good practice Equality issues to note / consider:

- Encouraging participation of both rural and urban based groups
- Extending the geographical remit encourages participation from both communities
- Including different women's groups encourages the promotion of opportunities to women from different backgrounds and with different experiences, including race and age
- Accessibility of services is improved by using locally based community venues
- Timing of training to accommodate the different needs of women who are working and/or have caring responsibilities
- Provision of childcare

## **Case Study 3 – Cross Community Youth Activity Centre**

A local authority is taking the lead in a project to build a youth activity centre in its area that is accessible to youth in the north and south of Ireland. One of the partners in this project is a youth body whose membership is mainly from one community and is part of an international umbrella organisation. In Northern Ireland there is a separate body affiliated to the same international youth organisation that represents the other community. However, this body is not represented on the partnership which has submitted the application.

Equality Issues to consider:

- Include representation from both communities on project team to ensure all views are taken on board from the application stage.
- Advertising and promotion – will this be provided in different languages and formats?
- Will the staff working in the Youth Centre be representative of the surrounding communities and trained in Section 75?
- Physical accessibility of the youth centre and availability of large print signs and hearing loops.
- Accessibility in terms of transport to the centre.

#### **Case Study 4 - Consultation on Leisure Facilities**

A Local Council would like to consult in relation to leisure facilities in the area and have decided to arrange some open forums.

A number of issues need to be considered in relation to accessibility of these forums and advertising to all Section 75 groups:

- How and where to advertise including advising in different languages – i.e. local papers, local groups notice boards, libraries, GP surgeries;
- To advertise well in advance to give plenty of notice;
- Forum would need to be open to all under Section 75;
- Need to consider venue – would need to be accessible to all including any with disabilities including parking;
- Timing – to cover both day and evening to accommodate all especially those with caring responsibilities;
- Crèche facilities if needed; and
- Employing an interpreter.

## **Case Study 5 - Helping Women in Employment**

A local community group are trying to help women without Essential Skills qualifications return to employment.

- + Are woman being targeted because they are under represented in the working population?
- + Provision of crèche facilities if the course cannot run at a time when crèche facilities are not needed – evening, weekend?
- + Accessibility of facilities to people with disabilities – not just car parking and wheelchair access but large print signs, Braille directions, loop system for hearing aids?
- + Advertisement of the programme that does not disadvantage women with reading difficulties
- + Availability of advertising in different languages
- + Use of a signer for deaf/partially hearing on the course
- + Interpreters for those who have difficulty understanding English?
- + Are older women being targeted as well as younger women?

## **Case Study 6 - Environmental Skills for All**

An environmental group is hoping to set up a programme to provide skills to the employed in the areas of horticulture and environmental conservation. These skills would include activities such as tree planting, creation of ponds and chain saw training.

For this project equality issues should be considered in relation to accessibility of the training, such as: -

- Possible gender bias in manual/outdoor work, Are women being encouraged to participate?

- Will there be anything to encourage older participants as the programme may be suited more to younger age groups due to the physical activities involved?
- Those with a physical disability will be disadvantaged due to where the training is taking place – fields, meadows, ponds and also heavy lifting element – trees, gravel, stones.
- Transportation - is the minibus which is provided wheelchair friendly?
- Possible issues with childminding due to the long hours spent travelling to and from areas the times at which the activities will take place.
- Are verbal instructions given in other languages, including sign language?