

Shared Prosperity, Shared Rights: replacing EU funding for equality and human rights after Brexit

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Executive Summary

We all want to live in a fair and decent society. As we move towards leaving the EU, it is essential that we make the most of every opportunity to strengthen the UK's ability to deliver equality, human rights and prosperity for all. A key part of this is maintaining the investment currently provided by the EU.

The Equality and Diversity Forum (EDF) welcomes the Prime Minister's commitment to tackling the burning injustices that cause discrimination, disadvantage and abuse for many people and groups in the UK. Such injustices prevent people from fulfilling their potential. They cause unnecessary downstream costs to health and other public services, and limit productivity and growth.

This is particularly the case in relation to women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people, disabled people, and people of all backgrounds in working class communities, especially where these characteristics intersect.

The combined allocation for 2014-2020 for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) in the UK is almost €11 billion (£9.13 billion). The spend on the three ESF objectives which have the most focus on equality issues is some €5 billion (£4.15 billion) in England alone, with a further £1.4 billion in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Other significant programmes, such as the Rights Equality and Citizenship fund and the PEACE fund in Northern Ireland, directly support projects focusing on human rights, violence against women, hate crime and discrimination.

This summary and the accompanying recommendations set out how the Government can replace EU funding in ways that will support its commitments to reducing inequality and injustice. They are drawn from research conducted for EDF that mapped and learned from the successes and challenges of current EU funding programmes across the UK. The full research report is available at www.edf.org.uk.

Building on what works for people and communities

Levels and focus of funding

The research has made clear that EU funding programmes have provided, and are providing, significant investment aimed at addressing the inequality,

discrimination, and injustices that harm people's life chances, our communities and the economy.

This level of investment needs to be maintained after we leave the EU.

The outline below summarises, programme by programme, the extent to which EU funding has supported people dealing with abuse and those in marginalised and alienated communities. More details of the funds and their impact are given in the full report.

- The Rights Equality and Citizenship (REC) programme 2014-20 has a budget of £343 million for the whole of the EU. It supports progress on equality and human rights through both strategic initiatives and frontline services that help people experiencing domestic violence, hate crime, discrimination, and labour exploitation. Over a third of REC-funded projects directly support people in the UK.
- From 1997-2013, the Daphne Programme was one of the predecessor funds to REC. It aimed specifically to prevent violence against women and children. Its final 2007-2013 phase had an average annual budget of £14 million. Ninety-nine of the 660 projects (15%) funded in that phase supported women and children at risk in the UK.
- In England, the ESF and ERDF have been brought together into a single EU Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme (ESIF), worth £500 million a year. Objectives 8, 9 and 10 of the programme relate directly to equality and human rights and are worth £4.15 billion between 2014-20. The target groups for these three objectives are young people not in education employment or training (NEETs), older people aged 50 or over, women, disabled and minority ethnic people, people with multiple complex barriers, offenders and ex-offenders.
- ESIF distribution is so fragmented and complex in England that we could not map all of the work it has so far supported. However, the research identified that the ESIF is currently supporting many local initiatives across a wide range of equality and human rights-related issues. This includes the Building Better Opportunities fund run by the Big Lottery Fund (BLF). ESIF investment is developing the employability of NEETs, disabled people, marginalised Black Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) people, ex-offenders and single parents. It also funds projects supporting women exploited in the sex industry, and others that improve the social inclusion of older people.

- In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the ESF budget amounts to £1.4 billion. Some 60% of ESF-funded projects identifiably target people with one or more protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, other disadvantages, such as homelessness, and complex needs including addictions. For example, Agile Nation is a project run by the charity Chwarae Teg. It has been awarded £6.3 million to promote gender equality and career advancement, and to contribute to the reduction of the gender pay gap. It is helping improve the position of women in the workforce in the construction and other priority sectors, and so far has trained 2,921 women, 349 of whom subsequently progressed to more senior roles. It has supported 504 businesses to improve their diversity and modern working practices.
- The INTERREG fund 2014-20 is part of the ERDF and operates in each of the four UK administrations and in the Republic of Ireland. Its purpose is to address problems that relate to the existence of borders, and promote economic, social and territorial cohesion. It is worth £234.8 million in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. One investment is aimed at supporting 4,000 socially isolated disabled people, 8,000 people recovering from mental illness, and services for older people.
- The PEACE fund in Northern Ireland, also part of the ERDF, is currently £224.1 million. It supports the ongoing peace process – and therefore people’s human right to live free from violence. Recently, the British government noted that PEACE funding ‘has played a significant role in advancing cohesion between communities and promoting economic and social stability’. It committed itself as part of the Brexit negotiations to seek to continue the current PEACE IV programme as well as consider how PEACE funding might be secured post-Brexit.¹

The Government has said it will honour ESF and ERDF commitments for projects agreed to 2020, as long as they demonstrate value for money and align with ‘domestic priorities’. However, these domestic priorities have yet to be determined and, as yet, there are no guarantees that they will continue to include equality and human rights.

¹ HM Government (August 2017), *Northern Ireland and Ireland – position paper*, p.6 available here:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/638135/6.370_3_DEXEU_Northern_Ireland_and_Ireland_INTERACTIVE.pdf

The Government is considering plans for replacements of some funds, such as the ESF being replaced by a Shared Prosperity Fund, but they have yet to consult on and determine the scope and focus of that Fund. And they have, to date, made no announcements on replacements for the Rights Equality and Citizenship programme.

Ministers should work closely with the voluntary and community sector and other partners to develop plans to replace these funding programmes.

Equality drivers

EU funding programmes include a number of criteria, conditions and levers that ensure the monies address the inequality and disadvantage faced by so many people in the UK. These drivers create an essential framework that enables innovation, best practice and accountability. The Government should carry them forward and improve upon them in successor funds.

For example, regulations state that all the projects funded under these programmes must incorporate the following cross-cutting themes (CCTs):

- Equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming
- Tackling poverty and social exclusion
- Sustainable development.

The UK Government adopted a set of principles to meet the requirements of the CCTs. These are supported by the EU requirement to address the needs of those at most risk of discrimination; and by additional principles specific to the four administrations. See Section 5.2 for details.

The Government also sets out expectations for how the bodies responsible for distribution and management of the funds, known as Managing Authorities, will embed the principles.

There are fund-specific thematic priorities: for example, one of the ESF's four thematic priorities is 'to promote social inclusion, and combat poverty and any discrimination'.

There are also fund-specific participation targets. For 2007-2013 in England, the top-level ESF equality targets set were 51% women, and 19% each for BAME, disabled people, and people over the age of 50. Monitoring by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) identified where targets were met and where there were shortfalls, demonstrating where real changes had been made and where additional effort was needed.

The research identified two further examples of good practice measures that helped ensure higher levels of participation by people from disadvantaged groups:

- An evaluation of the development and delivery of CCTs for the 2007-2013 Structural Funds in Wales found that having a dedicated CCT team to provide guidance and support enabled the effective use of CCTs, making Wales a leader in the EU in the field.
- The Employment and Skills Funding Agency used its procurement and contract management arrangements to ensure gender mainstreaming and equality of opportunity were integrated into services provided through its three ESF programmes 2012-15 (Skills Support for the Unemployed and Apprenticeship Grant for Employers; Skills Support for Redundancy; and Workplace Learning).

Building these levers into successor programmes will help the Government to deliver on their equality priorities and their duties under the Equality Act 2010, create more inclusive growth and communities, and make a real difference in people's lives.

Improving value for money, performance and delivery

The CCTs, equality principles, and use of fund-specific priorities and targets that relate to equality and human rights, provide a sound framework for designing initiatives that benefit people facing abuse, disadvantage, discrimination and barriers in the labour market.

However, the research identified that the framework could be better used to target resources, monitor actual performance and drive up delivery on outcomes. In particular, it showed that much of the data on the use of funds is complex, unhelpful and lacks transparency.

It is particularly difficult to determine the extent to which equality and human rights commitments are being delivered. Effective collection and use of equality data would improve targeting and ultimately delivery and value for money.

In addition, all stakeholders identified the overly bureaucratic processes involved in EU funding. These create barriers for both cost-effective delivery and the accessibility of funding for voluntary and community organisations who have the necessary reach into disadvantaged target communities. Stakeholders

also identified the need for longer term funding options, and an enabling infrastructure to support local and grassroots work. Both are essential to effective interventions and change on the ground.

Future funding should therefore take the opportunity to remedy these shortcomings, and improve targeting, outcomes and value for money.

Avoiding missed opportunities

The Government's proposed Shared Prosperity Fund to replace the ESIF gives the UK a fantastic opportunity to invest in a comprehensive programme to tackle the injustices and discrimination that hold people back and hinder inclusive growth and productivity. However, there is a risk this opportunity will be missed.

If, for example, the Shared Prosperity Fund focuses on economic inequalities based on geography alone, or on business development alone, many of the people and communities who are currently targeted by EU programmes (and many of whom face multiple or complex barriers including discrimination) would be likely to lose out.

Similarly, if it does not set high level equality priorities and support delivery of those priorities through the kinds of key equality drivers currently used in EU programmes (described above) there is a significant risk that if any progress is achieved, it will be patchy and unsustainable.

The people section of the Government's Industrial Strategy,² published in November 2017, makes a strong case for an inclusive workforce that is good for people, business and productivity. It references several initiatives already underway. These include targets for BAME and disabled apprentices, the introduction of gender pay gap reporting, the Race Disparity Audit, promoting flexible working, and their strategy for moving one million disabled people into work in ten years.

But, the funding commitments required to deliver any significant change in these areas are largely missing from the Industrial Strategy. The only investments specified are £5 million for the return to work programme, and the £60 million apprenticeship programme, only part of which is relevant in this context to the extent that it will increase apprenticeships for BAME and disabled

²https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664563/industrial-strategy-white-paper-web-ready-version.pdf

people. Yet the Industrial Strategy commits over £54 billion of investment in other areas.

Likewise, the subsequently published disability strategy, 'Improving Lives: the Future of Work, Health and Disability'³ (also published in November 2017), seems to contain no significant investment plans to achieve the goal of getting one million disabled people into work.

Finally, the 2016 National Infrastructure Delivery Plan for 2016-21, which has over 600 projects totalling some £483 billion of investment of public funding⁴, is silent on equality.

There is a risk that the Shared Prosperity Fund will follow a similar pattern. Instead, the Shared Prosperity Fund should seize the opportunity to invest in a comprehensive programme to tackle injustice and inequality. It should set bold equality priorities, and apply the equality framework of CCTs and principles used by the Government in ESIF funding.

The Government should ensure that the DWP and civil society organisations (especially those able to share learning on gender and equality mainstreaming) are fully engaged in developing the Shared Prosperity Fund. This will help the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Ministry for Communities, Housing and Local Government, who are currently leading on it, to make it fit for purpose.

Additionally, applying the equality framework of CCTs and principles across delivery of all Industrial Strategy initiatives (and any outstanding or future National Infrastructure Delivery Plan projects) would drive more consistent and coherent progress. That would be strengthened if backed up by practical support for, and improved monitoring of, implementation, along with equality and human rights procurement requirements.

Devolution

It will be important that the setting of national priorities (which will be used to determine both whether both funding for projects agreed to 2020 and future funding arrangements are honoured) does not undermine the devolution agreements in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

³https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/663399/improving-lives-the-future-of-work-health-and-disability.PDF

⁴ Disability Rights UK briefing to EDF, 2017

The research identified key questions that the Government needs to address around the purpose and status of the proposed Shared Prosperity Fund in particular and how this, and whatever domestic priorities are identified, align to the priorities and expectations of the three devolved nations and the English regions.

Such questions include: What will the position be if there is no such alignment? How might this impact on the devolution agreements? What will be the mechanics of funding transfers for monies held in a national fund for projects that under the ESF programme were paid to and managed by the devolved nations?

Impact on the voluntary and community sector

There is significant concern across the voluntary and community sector (VCS) about the potential loss of the structural funds and other funds, such as the REC Programme.

This is partly about the loss of EU funding to VCS organisations and the resulting loss of capacity to provide much-needed services, which would threaten the sustainability of some organisations involved.

NCVO has calculated that VCS organisations in the UK receive a minimum of £300 million⁵ from the EU. (This is a minimum figure because it does not include all funds, match-funding or subcontracting arrangements.)

While this is a relatively small proportion of VCS funding overall, it is nonetheless significant to the organisations that rely on it to provide vital services, for example:

- The Agile Nation project in Wales run by the charity Chwarae Teg, described above, has a budget of £6.3 million.
- A recent Fawcett Society briefing⁶ highlighted the example of two women's organisations providing health and social care and domestic

⁵ David Kane (December 2016) *What do we know about charities and the European Union?* <https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2016/12/16/what-do-we-know-about-charities-and-the-european-union/>

⁶ <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/european-withdrawal-bill-committee-stage-briefing>

violence services that are set to lose 14% and 40% of their funding respectively.

- The Law Centres Network has relied on EU funding to enable Law Centres to use their expertise to tackle systemic problems in local communities. The EU awarded them £367,000 in last three years, including a two-year project to enable the successful inclusion and participation of EU citizens living in the UK, and tackle labour market exploitation of vulnerable migrant workers.
- A project run by Age UK Walsall, awarded £221,876, is offering support to older people over 50 to build confidence, increase social inclusion, develop transferable skills, address health issues and encourage volunteering.

And the situation is all the more acute because, as VCS organisations told us, EU funds often enable work on difficult issues and with groups for which there are insufficient alternative sources of funding. This includes hate crime, discrimination, workers at risk of exploitation, and women with complex needs including addiction, homelessness, contact with the criminal justice system, and mental ill health. For example, Summit House Support was awarded £239,038 to provide support to extremely marginalised individuals, including those living with HIV and LGBTQI people, to improve their health, wellbeing and social skills, and to develop their employability skills.

There are even greater concerns in the sector about the impact of funding losses on the people and communities that face disadvantage, abuse, and discrimination. Unless money from the EU to tackle these issues is replaced, the situation for these people is likely to worsen.

This in turn will increase the pressure on the VCS, and without replacement resources, the sector will be unable to play its part.

Finally, it is not at all clear where replacement funding could come from if not from Government. Government funding is already the second largest source of income to charities (32%) after individual donations (45%)⁷. Trusts and foundations' grant-making provides only part of the remaining 21%, along with the private sector and investments. The Association of Charitable Foundations (ACF) estimate that, at £6.5 billion, foundation grant-making is equal to less

⁷ NCVO's Civil Society Almanac 2017 <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/a/almanac17/income-sources-2/>

than half (43%) of the £15 billion total government spending in the voluntary sector ⁸ . As ACF note, 'Despite [foundations'] enormous contribution, foundation spending is a drop in the ocean when compared to total government spending of £762 billion.'⁹

This means foundations will be highly unlikely to be able to increase their grant-making to cover the loss of the billions of pounds of EU funds currently going to help disadvantaged communities, nor the hundreds of millions going to the VCS to provide essential support to those communities.

⁸ ACF Foundation Giving Trends 2017
http://www.acf.org.uk/downloads/publications/ACF135_Foundation_Giving_Trends_2017_SP_FINAL.pdf

⁹ ACF, *ibid*

Recommendations to the UK Government:

Provide successor funding

The Shared Prosperity Fund

1. We welcome the proposal to replace the European Social Fund. The proposed Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) must have a people and equality focus to make sure it reaches those experiencing discrimination and disadvantage, and helps drive prosperity for all.
2. The framework of equality drivers built into the design and delivery of EU funding programmes should be applied to the SPF. In particular, if the SPF is to be grounded in the Government's Industrial Strategy, this Strategy must be strengthened so that it is consistently underpinned by the principles of equality, human rights, and gender mainstreaming. It must include support for monitoring effectiveness and measuring impact.
3. The EDF supports the overarching design principles put forward by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations//Employment Related Services Association (ERSA) Working Group on a successor programme to the European Social Fund (to which we contributed) ¹⁰. We call on the Government to continue active and positive engagement with this group and its recommendations.

Other funds critical for equality and human rights (e.g. The Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme, PEACE programme)

4. The Government should commit to replacing the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) and INTERREG programmes that support the delivery of domestic equality and human rights work at both national and local levels. Proposals should be developed and consulted on, including consideration of appropriate distributors, such as the Big Lottery Fund or other suitable body.

¹⁰ <http://ersa.org.uk/media/news/increase-uk-productivity-and-reduce-inequalities-post-brex-it-world-leading-initiative>

5. The Government should consider using some of the Unclaimed Assets Fund to replace programmes such as REC which (rightly) do not fall within the scope of the SPF.
6. The Government's commitment to the continuation of the PEACE programme in Northern Ireland is welcome. It should continue to work toward sustaining this programme beyond 2020 in order to support future peace and reconciliation work.
7. To avoid gaps in service provision, the design of new funding arrangements should take account of 2014-20 projects that are currently underway, along with their wind-up dates and the lead-in time organisations will need to apply for future funding.
8. The Government should conduct an analysis of European Regional Development Fund databases and those of other funding programmes, such as INTERREG, to identify projects with a focus on equality and human rights and inform the assessment of need and the design of future funding arrangements.

Key principles

9. A framework of equality drivers, including the cross-cutting themes of equality of opportunity and gender mainstreaming should be carried forward to, and actively supported in, all successor funding arrangements. The Government's set of equality principles should continue to be applied. Equality impact assessments should continue to be carried out.
10. Those responsible for distributing future funding should use their procurement and contracting arrangements to ensure that equality, gender mainstreaming and human rights considerations are integrated into the services provided.
11. The Government must consult fully, and work in partnership with, the equality and human rights sector and broader VCS in the development of future funding mechanisms, including the SPF, and the replacement for the REC.
12. Future funding arrangements must be designed in such a way that application, monitoring and reporting requirements are proportionate to minimise the risk of preventing VCS organisations from applying.

13. The Government must ensure that all future funding arrangements place explicit requirements on, and hold Managing Authorities to account for, collecting and analysing equality data so that the impact of funding programmes on people and communities can be assessed.

Ensure that equality and human rights remain part of domestic priorities in practice

14. UK domestic priorities that shape funding decisions should be underpinned by equality and human rights principles. They should include equality and human rights targets and robust, transparent mechanisms for monitoring effectiveness and measuring impact.
15. The views of the devolved nations and the English regions must be integral to governments' consultation on, and the development of, UK domestic priorities in order that nation-specific and region-specific priorities can be identified and incorporated as appropriate.
16. A comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment should be carried out in parallel with the development of the UK domestic priorities and informed by stakeholder consultation with active involvement of the VCS.

Improve use of equality data

17. In the short term, it would help the Government to have a clear understanding of the reach of current structural funds to inform the design and operation of future funding arrangements and the development of domestic priorities. Managing Authorities should therefore be asked to collect and analyse equality data and monitor programme delivery for the current and any final funding rounds, as it impacts across the protected characteristics, human rights and in relation to other disadvantaged groups.
18. In the longer term, improvements should be made to how equality data is collected and used in all successor funding arrangements. This will improve targeting and value for money. To facilitate this, the VCS should work with the Government and the devolved administrations to agree an approach, and help ensure consistency and robustness of data collection.

Facilitate networks and transnational working

19. The Government should fund a mapping exercise to determine the networks and transnational work that UK organisations are currently engaged in across all equality and human rights issues. Such mapping was outside the scope of this research, but stakeholders frequently raised the importance of these networks and of transnational partnerships.
20. The Government should use the findings from this exercise to inform its negotiations with the EU around options and opportunities for UK organisations working on equality and human rights issues to continue transnational working and participation in networks, and ring-fence the necessary funding to enable this to happen.

1. Introduction and background

Over the years, European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and other funding programmes have targeted billions of pounds of funding at disadvantaged people and communities, thereby contributing to advancing equality and human rights. This has in part been driven by the EU's requirements on equality, including the cross-cutting themes, and their effective implementation on the ground.

While the loss of these funds is a major cause for concern, it is hoped that the Government will put in place alternative funding programmes, underpinned by equality, human rights and mainstreaming principles, so that this important work is sustained. There are lessons to be learned and examples of good practice that can improve and inform the United Kingdom's (UK) approach post-Brexit so that future funding is targeted at and clearly benefits those who continue to suffer discrimination, abuse, disadvantage, poverty and social exclusion.

For example, 60% of the European Social Fund (ESF) projects mapped in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales sought to improve the lives of people with one or more protected characteristic covered by the Equality Act (2010).

The objective of this research was to explore the impacts of Brexit on equality and human rights-related funding and programming under the European Structural Funds for disadvantaged people and communities in the UK and the Rights Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme. It also sought to consider how the Equality and Diversity Forum (EDF) and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) more broadly could inform its own thinking and influence the negotiations on Brexit and the final outcomes in relation to replacement funding and programmes post Britain's exit from the European Union (EU).

Finally, it looks to build a case for non-regression in relation to equality-specific work and equality mainstreaming in government initiatives to tackle discrimination, poverty and exclusion at a local level.

1.1. Structure of this report

This report sets out the methodology adopted, the current political and funding context across the UK, and a discussion of the findings of a mapping of funding across the four nations, with a focus on the current 2014-2020

funding round. It also includes an overview of the impact of the 2007-2013 funding round, mainly through case studies which seek to show how UK/EU funding programmes have had an effect on people and communities on the ground, and how gender and equality mainstreaming has been considered.

Contributions from key stakeholders, including a roundtable in July 2017 organised by EDF, and interviews with two Managing Authorities, umbrella VCS organisations in the devolved administrations, and one Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), informed this research. The report concludes with a discussion of the issues emerging out of the research, which require attention in the short, medium and longer term to ensure the orderly distribution and spend of approved funds, as well as recommendations on the way forward.

1.2. Methodology

The researchers developed a methodological framework, setting out how the work would progress and meet the research objectives within the agreed timescale. This included desk research, interviews, consultation and an interrogation of the data sets for each of the funds in each of the four nations for the 2014-2020 round, which were mapped against an agreed set of issues and the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 and other characteristics, for example, ex-offenders.

The research identified human rights-specific work through examining the data sets for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, although this was slightly hindered by the lack of detail in the way the data was presented (see Section 3.6).

Completing a similar exercise for England proved problematic mainly because of the volume of data involved and the difficulty in accessing information specifically related to equality and human rights. As a result, it was agreed that, for England, an alternative approach would be taken – namely, an overview of three of the main distributors of ESIF funding, and an analysis of one specific area, the Black Country, as a list of all ESF projects in that area was made available.

The research also wanted to try to identify what impact access to ESIF funds had in enabling projects to deliver outcomes for individuals, groups or communities with a focus on equality and human rights. Given that the current round of funding is still underway, the emphasis was on projects that

ran during the 2007-2013 round of funding. While there are a large number of evaluation reports at the level of ESIF programming, the level of detail included within those is patchy, particularly around actual outcomes achieved for people and the extent to which projects had delivered the EU's cross-cutting theme on equality of opportunity. It was therefore agreed to use case studies, primarily identified through desk research, to highlight the types of projects carried out in the four nations and showcase the nature of work at a local and regional level, who the beneficiaries were and the outputs and outcomes achieved.

The researchers conducted interviews with third sector umbrella organisations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; the original plan to also conduct interviews with government officials was changed due to the June 2017 general election being called and the period of purdah that followed.

The July roundtable, attended by representatives from VCS organisations and infrastructure bodies, the Big Lottery Fund (BLF), the Employment Related Services Association (ERSA), the Association of Charitable Foundations (ACF), and officials from the Government Equalities Office (GEO) and the Department for Exiting the European Union (DExEU), informed the research and discussed a number of key issues that the work had highlighted to date. These included the proposed Shared Prosperity Fund, the implications of new funding arrangements for the devolved administrations, and the lack of accessible data across the Structural Funds. A note of this discussion is available on request.

Finally, there was a review of relevant policy and position papers. See Appendix A for a list of resources consulted.

2. Context for the research

Apart from the priorities set out by the Prime Minister in her Lancaster House speech in January 2017 and the February 2017 White Paper on the UK's exit from and new partnership with the EU¹¹, there is little to assist in understanding what the likely impact will be on the VCS of the potential loss of the significant funding it receives from the EU for policy and projects to advance equality and protect human rights. This is part of the reason why EDF has commissioned this research.

¹¹ HM Government (February 2017) *The United Kingdom's exit from and the new partnership with the European Union*. London: Crown Copyright

This research started in May 2017, during a period of considerable uncertainty following the Government triggering Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty. The general election, preceding period of purdah, and the results - which led to a minority Conservative Government - have made the level of uncertainty even more acute.

The Government's White Paper indicated that any ESIF agreements in place at the time of the 2016 Autumn Statement would remain fully funded. There is, however, a qualified commitment for projects signed after the Autumn Statement, which will continue after Brexit, to demonstrate 'strong value for money and [be] in line with the UK's domestic strategic priorities.'¹²

The White Paper also stated that bids made directly to the European Commission by UK organisations would be underwritten beyond Brexit. This would cover initiatives such as Horizon 2020, the EU's research and innovation programme, and health and education programmes.¹³ Some of these could have equality and/or human rights implications; however, these are beyond the scope of this report.

The devolved governments have also been promised 'the same level of reassurance' in relation to their funding but there is, as yet, no clarity about what this means in practice. The government has said it will consult stakeholders to 'ensure any ongoing funding commitments best serve the UK's national interests'.¹⁴

The 8 June election result, the existence of a minority Conservative Government, the ongoing Brexit negotiations, and the positioning of various players in relation to the type of Brexit secured mean that the situation is likely to shift frequently over the next two years. Clearly, this has implications for the work of those seeking to inform and influence funding for EU projects up to 2020 and replacement funding beyond this at national, regional and local levels.

¹² *ibid*, p.12

¹³ *ibid*, p12

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.12

Questions arise around the purpose and status of the proposed Shared Prosperity Fund¹⁵ and how this, and the domestic priorities identified, align to the priorities and expectations of the three devolved nations and the English regions. What will the position be if there is no such alignment? How might this impact on the devolution agreements? What will be the mechanics of funding transfers for monies held in a national fund for projects that under the ESF programme were paid to and managed by the devolved nations? These and other issues are set out in Section 6 (The way forward – Brexit and beyond).

Overall, going forward, the VCS will be operating in a volatile and changing environment while having to continue to address the increasing pressure of growing demands for services in the face of diminishing resources. In addition, while charitable foundations provide valuable funding to civil society, they do not have access to additional funds and will not be able to increase their grant-making to compensate for the loss of EU funds.

3. Overview of 2014-20 funding programmes

This section focuses on the 2014-2020 funding round and summarises the distribution and priorities of the ESF, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), including PEACE and INTERREG, and the separate Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) programme across the UK.

The European Structural and Investment Fund programmes (ESF and ERDF) aim 'to create more and better jobs and a socially inclusive society'; goals which are at the core of the Europe 2020 strategy for generating smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The beneficiaries are to include 'disadvantaged people, such as the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, migrants, ethnic minorities, marginalised communities and people of all ages facing poverty and social exclusion. [The fund can also support] workers, enterprises, including actors in the social economy, and entrepreneurs... [toward]...reducing skill mismatches and promoting good governance, social progress and the implementation of reforms, in particular in the fields of employment, education, training and social policies.'¹⁶

¹⁵ The Shared Prosperity Fund is discussed in detail in Section 6.3 of this report

¹⁶ European Commission (November 2015), *European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020: official texts and commentaries*. Luxembourg: European Commission
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/guides/blue_book/blueguide_en.pdf

Member states in receipt of ESIF funds are allowed to identify and address their own specific challenges as their way of achieving the overall Europe 2020 strategy objectives.

Regulations that govern ERDF and ESF funds state that all the projects funded under these programmes must incorporate the following cross-cutting themes (CCTs):

- Equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming
- Tackling poverty and social exclusion
- Sustainable development

The combined allocation for 2014-20 for ERDF and ESF in the UK is almost €11 billion (£9.13 billion)¹⁷. The likely spend on the three ESF objectives which have the most focus on equality issues is €5 billion (£4.15 billion).¹⁸

In addition, PEACE funding in Northern Ireland will be around €270 million (£224.1 million)¹⁹. Both PEACE and the INTERREG programme are funded through the ERDF.

Table 1 gives an indication of the proposed ESIF spend for the four nations²⁰

Table 1: 2014-2020 ESF and ERDF proposed funding allocations

Nation	ERDF		ESF	
	EUR €	GBP £	EUR €	GBP £
<i>England (and Gibraltar)</i>	3.6 billion	3 billion	3.3 billion	2.7 billion
<i>Wales</i>	1.4 billion	1.1 billion	1 billion	830 million
<i>Scotland</i>	476 million	395 million	417 million	436 million

¹⁷ Throughout this report, we have used the following conversion rate 1 GBP= 1.2 EUR, which represents the average exchange rate for the last 10 years.

¹⁸ HM Government (13 October 2014) *United Kingdom Partnership Agreement – Equalities Impact Assessment (updated)*. London: Crown Copyright
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/368810/bis-14-1181-equality-impact-assessment-UK-partnership-agreement.pdf

¹⁹ www.seupb.eu/piv-overview

²⁰ HM Government (13 October 2014) op.cit. page 11

<i>Northern Ireland</i>	308 million	256 million	205 million	170 million

The separate REC programme has a budget of €439 million (£364.3 million) for the whole of the EU.²¹

3.1. The European Social Fund

There are four thematic priorities set by the EU:

- Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility;
- Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination;
- Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning;
- Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration.²²

The UK Government Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on the Partnership Agreement for the use of the 2014-2020 ESIF, published in October 2014, concluded that, through an increase in support for interventions, this strategy will contribute to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality, and fostering good relations between people who share the protected characteristics and those who do not. The EIA led to changes in monitoring and evaluation processes with projects now required to monitor the equalities impact of the programmes and underpinning projects.²³

The ERSA notes that the ESF offers 'crucial investment in education, training and employment [...] targeting some of the most vulnerable groups.'²⁴ Examples of projects in these areas can be found in Section 4.2.

3.1.1 England

In England, the ERDF and ESF were brought together into a single EU Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme, managed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The top priorities for 2014-2020

²¹ The figure for REC funding to the UK specifically is not available.

²² http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/priorities

²³ HM Government (13 October 2014), op. cit. p. 38-39

²⁴ Employment Related Services Association (no date) *European Social Fund (ESF) Investment in the UK*,

included skills and employment, and social inclusion. The Fund is worth £500 million per year delivered through a number of co-financing organisations such as the BBLF, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA – Formerly the Skills Funding Agency), the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and the DWP itself.

The Fund's Inclusive Labour Markets priority axis focuses on access to work and support for those not in education or training (NEETs), the long-term unemployed, those with multiple complex barriers, prisoners, prison leavers and ex-offenders. The Skills for Growth priority focuses on building skills capacity among the workforce with key areas including: access to lifelong learning; relevant qualifications and training; increasing the number of high-skilled apprenticeships; in-work progression; the gender pay gap; and skills support for those in Small and Medium Size Enterprise (SMEs).²⁵

Big Lottery Fund (BLF) – Building Better Opportunities fund

Through its Building Better Opportunities fund, the BLF is matching funds from the European Social Fund (ESF) 2014-2020. The total BBO fund is £330 million. The amount received by local projects ranges from £330,000 to £10.6 million and the allocation per project is roughly on a 50/50 split (BLF and ESF).

As at September 2017, the Managing Authority (DWP) had committed approximately half of all ESF funds, with the majority committed to co-financing organisations such as the BLF. Further funding may be agreed with the BLF in due course.

There are currently 133 BBO projects across England, co-designed with 38 LEPs who decide on the funding priorities and groups they wish to target, determined largely by each LEP's economic strategy, which means that there will be regional differences.

The LEPs are responsible for building their evidence base, which may or may not have any equality components, although they are bound by the ESF requirements on equality mainstreaming. This is discussed in more detail in Section 7.²⁶

²⁵Ibid

²⁶ Big Lottery Fund presentation at the EDF Roundtable, July 2017 and interview

The South East LEP (SELEP) provides an illustration of how the LEPs are using ESF match funding. SELEP was allocated approximately £70 million for 2014-2020, £50 million of which has been contracted so far for 11 projects across the LEP area. The cohort of people targeted by these projects includes single parents, disabled people and people living in rural areas. One example is a project run by the Papworth Trust in Essex, which supports disabled people and people with long-term health conditions towards employment.

The following case study highlights the difference funding is making to disadvantaged Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women in London, and Section 3.6 contains an analysis of how the funds are being used to advance equality in the West Midlands.

Support for long-term unemployed and economically inactive BAME women to improve skills, confidence and employability:
Create your Future – the Links Partnership

Issue: Employability and skills	Fund: ESF	Co-financing organisation: Big Lottery Fund	Location: London
Project objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BAME women will increase their own confidence, knowledge and networks, enabling them to engage with other services and professionals, take advantage of wider opportunities, and improve their personal circumstances. • Organisations will have improved skills, capability and evidence-based models to meet local needs for the future, resulting in improved support for BAME women. • Employers will have improved understanding of the barriers for BAME women, enabling them to offer improved pathways to employment. • Policy-makers and commissioners will have the knowledge and evidence to design more effective employability programmes for BAME women in the future. 		
Project description	This project provides support for long-term unemployed and economically inactive BAME women to improve skills, confidence and employability.		
Impact and sustainability	People from BAME communities face barriers and perform less well in the labour market than white people. The Mayor's Annual		

Equality Report noted that the gap in employment rates between those from BAME communities was 14.7 per cent, and that the gap in median pay between BAME and white groups was 18.4 per cent. The Europe 2020 goal is to raise the employment rate of women and men aged 20-64 to 75 per cent. The increase in employment in this disadvantaged group will improve the health of the local economy, increasing resource in the area and improving economic sustainability.

The Links Partnership started activity in January 2017. It is on track to reach its target of BAME women accessing the service so far. This is a hard-to-reach group with significant barriers to employment and, accordingly, the typical provision is a ten-week programme with intensive support for each individual, tailored according to their individual needs, with further provision as appropriate.

The Links Partnership will engage 1,300 BAME women in a flexible programme called Create Your Future. As a result of their engagement, the aim is to achieve:

- 454 into employment (including self-employment), of which 299 will sustain employment after six months
- 286 into further education or training
- 416 employment ready and receiving further job search support.

Employment and Skills Funding Agency

The EIA carried out by the ESFA for ESF specifications for 2012-2015 reviews the evidence in support of the targets set for its three programmes of work – Skills Support for the Unemployed and Apprenticeship Grant for Employers; Skills Support for Redundancy; and Work Placed Learning. It identifies positive impact for age, disability, race and sex and neutral impact for the remaining protected characteristics. The evidence for the positive impact is the priority given to each of these groups in the funds. The Agency used its procurement and contract management arrangements as a means of ensuring that gender mainstreaming and equality of opportunity was integrated into services.²⁷

²⁷Skills Funding Agency (November 2012) *Equality Impact Assessment For European Social Fund (ESF) Specifications 2012-2015*. Available here:

The Employment Related Services Association (ERSA) estimates that the ESFA has previously awarded 6.4% of ESF to the charitable sector, which equates to circa £32 million in the current funding period. Around £72 million of Big Lottery funding goes to the sector ERSA, but an exact figure cannot be determined from the information available. However, with cross-departmental working such an analysis is thought to be 'absolutely feasible'.²⁸

National Offender Management Service (NOMS)

The NOMS is a third major co-financing organisation receiving over £31 million for 2014-2020 to help disengaged and socially excluded individuals with a history of offending to enter mainstream services or employment in London and the East of England. In London, beneficiaries include women exploited in the sex industry, non-English speakers from the EU, young people involved in gangs and those with mental health issues. In the East of England, there is a focus on those serving life sentences, those who have personality disorders, women and ex-armed forces personnel. Interventions include employment support, work experience and placements, short courses, and training and support for individuals with complex needs.²⁹

3.1.2 Northern Ireland

The Department for Employment and Learning reports that the ESF programme will be delivered through the implementation of the three thematic objectives of sustainable and quality employment; social inclusion and combatting poverty and discrimination; and investing in education, training and vocational training. €146.3 million (£122 million) of the ESF fund has been allocated to the first objective, €154 million (£128.3 million) to the second objective and €205 million (£170.8 million) to the third. The EU contribution makes up 40%.

In relation to sustainable and quality employment, the largest groups of beneficiaries are those who are outside the labour market and require support, and young people. Four projects focus on women and one on ex-offenders. The list of beneficiaries is diverse, and includes the Prince's Trust, Derry Youth and Community Workshop, Enterprise Northern Ireland, Disability Action, Extern Northern Ireland and the Shankill Women's Centre.

http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/18382/1/Equality_Impact_Assessment_for_European_Social_Fund_%28ESF%29_Specifications_2012-2015.pdf

²⁸ www.ersa.org.uk op. cit.

²⁹ <https://www.changegrowlive.org/what-we-do/our-services/criminal-justice/noms-cfo3-new-employment-programme-hard-reach-groups>

In relation to social inclusion, poverty and discrimination, the beneficiaries are just as diverse and include major disability and mental health charities, a local community development organisation, social enterprises and trusts, and a housing association. Ten of the funded projects focus on people with a learning disability and another ten cover a range of different impairments including visual and hearing impairments. Five projects aim to support families with a high level of need to develop capacity and potential.

The Department for the Economy commenced the second call for bids during 2017 with a view to having projects approved for April 2018 and then to run until March 2022.³⁰

3.1.3 Scotland

In Scotland, ESF for the 2014-2020 funding period will be 465 million Euros (£387.5 million) and a number of the Strategic Interventions will have a focus on equality and human rights issues.³¹

One priority is aiming to tackle inequalities and support community bodies through a Challenge Fund, managed by the Scottish Government, for projects run by the community and voluntary sector, and working through local partnerships to deliver 'community-led solutions that tackle inequalities and improve outcomes'. The Youth Employment Initiative is supporting young unemployed people aged 16–29 into education, training and employment through the Scottish Funding Council and eleven local authorities.

Under this priority, Developing Scotland's Workforce, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council will roll out new work-based learning opportunities for young people, modern apprenticeships, vocational skills and additional activities to address regional skills gaps and shortages.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) will work with local authorities on the employability priority to support unemployed people, including those with a disability, ex-offenders and those isolated due to geography or poor educational attainment. Local authority plans mainly focus on those who are facing multiple barriers to employability with a number focusing on younger people and other target groups, including young parents, disabled people,

³⁰ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/ni-european-social-fund-programme-2014-2020.pdf>

³¹ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/ni-european-social-fund-programme-2014-2020.pdf>

under-employed migrants, older people over 50 years of age, and carers. A range of interventions are on offer such as debt and money advice, health rehabilitation, training, mentoring, work placements and key worker support.

Under social inclusion and poverty reduction, local authorities will distribute priority funds across the country. A number of projects seek to improve financial capacity, with others addressing employability and skills, energy, fuel poverty and childcare. Some projects focus on particular groups such as people with a learning disability, lone parents, younger people, homeless people and vulnerable families. Examples include the BLF, which is supporting services to increase financial capacity and address social exclusion, and the Scottish Government's Social Economy Development Programme, which is using part of the fund contribution to 'support growth and increase the capacity and sustainability of social economy organisations to deliver support programmes to disadvantaged areas and groups.'³²

3.1.4 Wales³³

The Managing Authority in Wales is the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO), which has set out a range of specific priorities for its ESF funds. Under employability, there is a focus on those most at risk of poverty, the long-term unemployed aged over 25 facing complex barriers, and people who have work-limiting health conditions or other barriers to sustainable engagement with the labour market.

The four objectives under Skills for Growth include those with no or low skills, increasing the number of people with technical and job-specific skills and graduates working in research and innovation. There is also a focus on improving the position of women at work. In the area of youth employment, projects will target NEETs and those at risk of becoming NEET, an increase in attainment levels in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects for 11-19 year olds, and increasing the skills of the Early Years and Childcare workforce.

Thus far, a total of £594.6 million has been allocated to 42 projects, with providers representing a mix of local and national government, the further education sector and the third sector. For example, Agile Nation 2, a project run by Chwarae Teg, has been awarded £6.3 million to promote gender equality

³² <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Business-Industry/support/17404/EuropeanStructuralFunds>

³³ http://www.wcva.org.uk/media/4587289/01_overview_of_esi_funds_2014-2020_e.pdf

and career advancement, and contribute to the reduction of the gender pay gap.³⁴ Another project run by the Welsh Government was awarded £24.5 million to tackle poverty by offering tailored mentoring and employment support to 'hard-to-reach' groups. This included economically inactive over-25 year olds with low or no skills, people over 54 years old, people with work-limiting health conditions or disabilities (including substance or alcohol abuse), those with care or childcare responsibilities, people from jobless households, and people from BAME backgrounds. Other projects cover the range of employability activities, such as work experience programmes and industry-specific training and development.

3.2. The European Regional Development Fund

The ERDF aims to contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth through its Investment Priorities that, within EU Member States, allow for flexibility at the level of operational programmes and between different categories of regions.³⁵ The aim is to support and reinforce economic, social and territorial cohesion by redressing regional imbalances.

Depending on which category of regions the ERDF support, funding concentrates on research and innovation, information and communication technologies (ICT), SMEs, and promoting a low-carbon economy. One of the fund's priorities is to promote social inclusion, combat poverty and any discrimination, particularly in marginalised communities, the definition of which varies according to geography. However, as pointed out by one interviewee, it is difficult to assess the impact of ERDF on equality because the outputs and outcomes focus on business outcomes.

The research identified some ERDF projects that have a specific focus on equality characteristics. For example, Enterprise in the City, based in London and run under the auspices of the Prince's Trust, which is working with 800 young entrepreneurs;³⁶ and a project on 'servitization' for SMEs in Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP area which is taking into account the promotion

³⁴ More information about this project is available here: <https://www.agilenation2.org.uk/>

³⁵ Official Journal of the European Union 2013 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32013R1301>

³⁶ See ERDF project list: www.london.gov.uk

of equality and the protected characteristics in adapting business models to offer customer services.³⁷

However, an in-depth search of available databases across the UK would need to be undertaken to determine the extent to which projects have a specific focus on the equality characteristics or human rights.

ERDF funding is also delivered through the PEACE programme in Northern Ireland and INTERREG in Northern Ireland and Scotland, both of which are discussed in sections 3.4 and 3.5 below.

3.3. The Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme

The European Commission-funded REC Programme is separate and additional to ESIF funds. REC's overall objective is to contribute to the further development of an area where equality and the rights of people are promoted, protected and effectively implemented.³⁸ Its total budget for 2014-2020 is 439 million Euros (£364.3 million). Its specific objectives are:

- To promote the effective implementation of the principle of non-discrimination on grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation and respect the principle of non-discrimination as per Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedom;
- To prevent and combat racism, xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of intolerance;
- To promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities;
- To promote equality between women and men and advance gender mainstreaming;
- To prevent and combat all forms of violence against children, young people and women as well as violence against other groups at risk, in particular groups at risk of violence in close relationships and to protect victims of such violence;
- To promote and protect the rights of the child;

³⁷ Minutes of the Growth Programme Board equality sub-committee, November 2016
<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/growth-programme-board#past-meeting-documents>

³⁸ http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&t=PDF&gc=true&sc=false&f=PE%2089%202013%20INIT&r=http%3A%2F%2Fregister.consilium.europa.eu%2Fpd%2Fen%2F13%2Fpe00%2Fpe000089.en13.pdf&_cldee=cGxhdGZvcmlAc29jaWFscGxhdGZvcml0ub3Jn

- To contribute to ensuring the highest level of protection of privacy and personal data;
- To promote and enhance the exercise of rights deriving from citizenship of the European Union;
- To enable individuals in their capacity as consumers or entrepreneurs in the internal market to enforce their right deriving from European Union law.

Funding goes to non-governmental organisations, public authorities, academics and other organisations that carry out activities that further REC aims. The main types of activities funded include training, mutual learning, such as sharing good practice, and research. All activities must provide added value at EU level, so the results must benefit more than one EU Member State. REC projects therefore tend to consist of partnerships between organisations from different EU countries. The European Commission manages the programme directly.

A mapping of Rights, Equality and Citizenship projects funded in the EU since 2014 shows that out of 140 projects 42, or just over one third, had a UK lead or partner.

It is too early to assess impact of the projects currently underway. An overview of a sample of these projects as follows gives an idea of the types of funded projects with a clear focus on equality and human rights issues.

Hate crime

Facing all the facts - building capacity to monitor hate crime and hate speech through online hate speech.³⁹

The UK partners are the National Police Chief's Council for England and the Community Security Trust (CST). The project outcomes include: improved knowledge of the gaps and opportunities in relation to cooperation on hate crime and hate speech recording; greater clarity on the needs of specific victim communities; better understanding of the impact of hate crime and the barriers affecting different victim groups; and an improved ability to build robust evidence to legally prove hate motivation and understand how to keep vulnerable victims engaged in the criminal justice process.

Violence against women

TRAVAW: training of lawyers on the law

³⁹ <http://facingfacts.eu/node/118>

The UK partners are the Bar Council of England and Wales and the Bar Council of Northern Ireland. The objective is to train lawyers in seven Member States, including the UK, in support for women who suffer gender violence and also in relation to gender-specific issues, as well as to share good practice and develop transferable working practices. Outputs will include training material and national seminars to ensure participants have a learning experience and improve their knowledge of relevant national and EU law.

Learning disability and exploitation

HOPE: helping ourselves prevent exploitation⁴⁰

This project is led by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities. The objectives include a reduction in the vulnerability of women and children with intellectual disabilities to sexual exploitation and an increase in knowledge and confidence to recognise, resist and report it. The intention is also to provide learning for professionals and improve multi-disciplinary responses and cooperation. It is expected that the resources developed will enable replication and roll-out locally and regionally both in the UK and across Europe.

Homophobia and transphobia

DIVERCITY: preventing and combating homophobia and transphobia in small and medium cities across Europe

Led by the University of Barcelona, the UK partner is Nottingham city. The project will facilitate an exchange of experiences and good practice, and propose and promote organisational, legal and social measures to combat homophobia and transphobia. A database will become a main instrument for the registration and analysis of cyber hate and the complaints app will be the method of choice for users to report to trusted partners.

Participation, inclusion and rights

The Living Rights Project

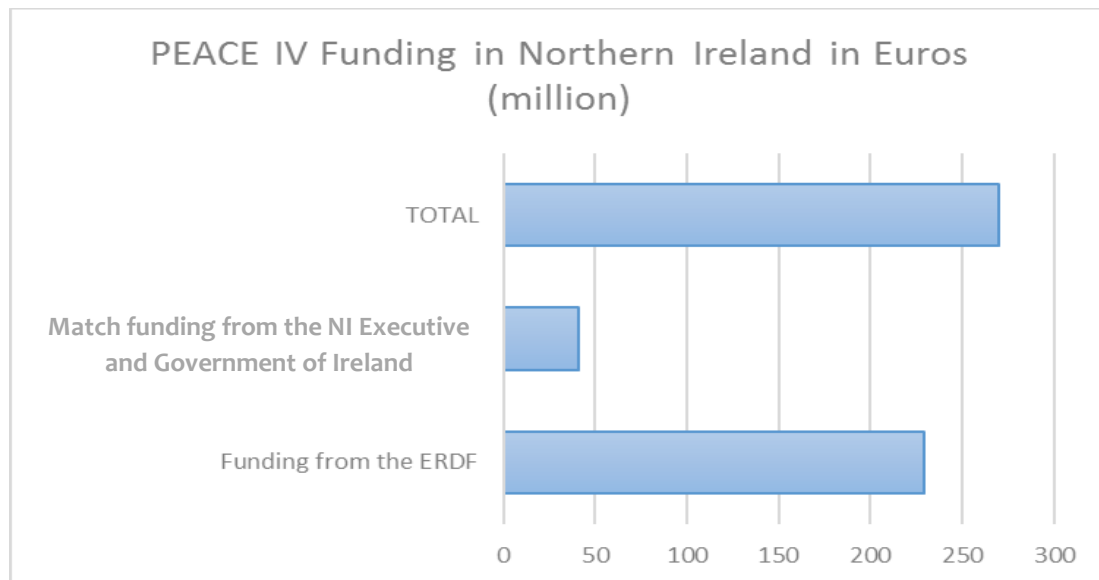
The project is led by Law Centres Network UK working with a range of partners in the UK, including law centres in Avon and Bristol, Newcastle, the London Borough of Lambeth, and Derbyshire. The objective is to promote participation and inclusion of newly arrived EU citizens by raising their awareness of the rights they hold, and the awareness of public service providers to improve their procedures. The project delivers awareness raising

⁴⁰ <http://www.bild.org.uk/resources/cse-and-ld/hope/>

and outreach information sessions at local level, workshops for public officials, and town hall meetings to encourage civic participation in the voting process.

3.4. PEACE IV

PEACE IV has a €270 million (£224.1 million) budget of which 85% (€229 million/£190 million) is provided through the ERDF. The remainder is match-funded by the Government of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Executive.⁴¹



Operating since 1995 and unique to Northern Ireland, the European Union established the fund to:

‘make a positive response to the opportunities presented by developments in the Northern Ireland peace process...especially the announcements of cessation of violence by the main republican and loyalist paramilitary organisations.’⁴²

Thus, it represents the EU’s commitment to supporting the peace process and reinforcing progress toward a peaceful and stable society in Northern Ireland and the border region of Ireland. The VitalLinks Project review of PEACE III identified some of the successes of this programme as tackling sectarianism and racism, developing useful models of peace building and conflict transformation, and improving the VCS governance structures. It demonstrated how certain areas, small groups and individuals have dramatically benefitted.⁴³

Recently, the British government noted that PEACE funding, ‘has played a significant role in advancing cohesion between communities and promoting economic and social stability’ and committed itself, as part of the Brexit

⁴¹ www.sepub.eu

⁴² The VitalLinks project. A review of PEACE III and considerations for PEACE IV www.nicva.org

⁴³ Ibid

negotiations, to seek to continue the current PEACE IV programme as well as consider how PEACE funding might be secured post-Brexit.⁴⁴

The Objectives of Peace IV are Shared Education, Children and Young People, Shared Spaces and Services and Building Positive Relationships.

As of July 2017,⁴⁵ 31 awards had been made. One is a £11,366,640 contribution to the Victims and Survivors Service to support victims and survivors of the conflict in Northern Ireland and their families, to be delivered in conjunction with the VCS. The programme will deliver advocacy support to 6,300 people with 11,350 receiving casework or resilience support.

The remaining 30 awards are to 10 local authorities who will develop Local Action Plans. Each will be funding projects under the three priorities of Children and Young People, Shared Spaces and Services and Building Positive Relationships.

In relation to children and young people, the aim is to build relationships 'with others of a different background and make a positive contribution to building a cohesive society'. Over the funding period the target is to help over 7,400 14-24 year olds from marginalised communities develop their 'soft skills and a respect for diversity'. A second initiative will target 36,000 young people in terms of their 'distance travelled' around good relations, personal development and citizenship. Examples of initiatives include cross-community sports engagement; early intervention with intercultural awareness sessions; a personal development, health and community engagement initiative targeting 11-18 year olds; and a capacity building and youth leadership development programme for 12-24 year olds.

37 Shared Spaces and Services projects will support local initiatives that facilitate the sustained usage, on a shared basis, of public areas or buildings making them more inclusive, and addressing issues such as flags, emblems and graffiti based on religion or race. There will be capital projects to tackle residential segregation that increases social division and tension.

The Building Positive Relations priority will fund projects designed to create meaningful, purposeful and sustained contact between people from different

⁴⁴ HM Government (August 2017), *Northern Ireland and Ireland – position paper*, p.6 available here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/638135/6.3_703_DEXEU_Northern_Ireland_and_Ireland_INTERACTIVE.pdf

⁴⁵ <https://www.seupb.eu/piv-overview>

communities. Projects include: a cross-border literary trail; a programme to create local history and culture trails and activity hubs; and a cross-community training programme to de-stigmatise mental health issues for young men and women from 'hard-to-reach' communities.

The Shared Education priority will focus on 'direct, sustained, curriculum-based contact between pupils and teachers [...] to promote good relations and enhance skills and attitudes to contribute to a cohesive society'. The outputs include the involvement of 350 schools and 144,000 participants.

3.5. INTERREG

This programme, also known as European Territorial Cooperation, operates in each of the four nations. Northern Ireland and the West of Scotland, in particular, appear to have projects that have a focus on individuals and communities from an equality perspective. The purpose of the INTERREG programme is to address problems that arise from the existence of borders.⁴⁶ The aim is to promote greater levels of economic, social and territorial cohesion, and initiatives must involve at least two Member States. The programme is worth €283 million (£234.8 million) for work in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, of which 85% comes from the ERDF, with the remainder match-funded by the Northern Ireland Executive and the Government of Ireland.⁴⁷

One of the four priority axes is Health and Social Care, which clearly has equality and human rights implications. For example, the contribution of €53 million (£44 million) is seeking the following outputs:

- community support services for 4,000 socially isolated disabled people
- supporting 8,000 people recovering from mental illness
- interventions to benefit 5,000 vulnerable families and;
- supporting services for older people.⁴⁸

It also appears that the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) Scotland has received funding this round. An example of INTERREG legacy is the Sensory

⁴⁶ See SEUPB http://www.seupb.eu/2014-2020Programmes/INTERREGV_Programme/INTERREGV_Overview.aspx

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ This includes funding going to initiatives in the border region of the Republic of Ireland

Engagement Programme online resource for service providers launched in 2014 by RNIB Northern Ireland.⁴⁹

The Ireland-Wales programme supports work to address social challenges on the south-east coast of Ireland and in west Wales.⁵⁰

3.6. Equality and Human Rights ESF projects

Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

The research reviewed ESF projects for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and identified 211⁵¹. The mapping looked at the types of issues that were being addressed as well as the characteristics of beneficiaries. Some projects cover multiple issues and are therefore counted in the tables more than once.

Table 2 shows that over one half of the projects focused on skills and experience, following the ESF programme priority of 'Skills for Growth'. It further shows that over half of the projects mapped focus on people with specific equality characteristics.

Table 2: Issues addressed by ESF funding in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (211 projects in total)

Issues	Projects	%
Fuel poverty	3	1%
Other	3	1%
Community engagement and support	4	2%
Substance abuse	6	3%
Health & well-being	11	5%
Childcare	15	7%
Financial capacity	15	7%
Multiple (focus on more than three issues)	25	12%
Employability – NEETS	53	25%
Employability – skills and experience	119	57%

⁴⁹ <http://www.rnib.org.uk/sensory-engagement-programme-launches-online-toolkit-service-providers>

⁵⁰ <http://gov.wales/funding/eu-funds/european-cooperation/?lang=en>

⁵¹ The projects described here reflect the focus of the beneficiaries to whom the funds were awarded. Beneficiaries may have used the funds to support a number of individual projects so the total number of projects may be higher.

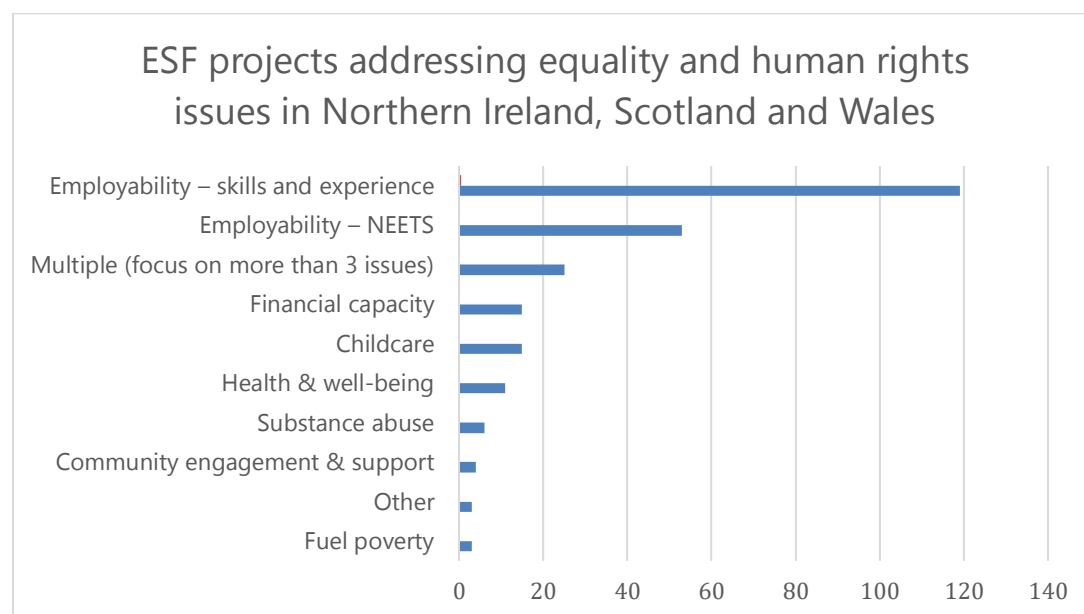


Table 3 shows that 60% of the 211 projects mapped focused on one or more protected characteristics. Once again, some projects cover multiple issues and are therefore counted in the tables more than once.

Table 3 – Characteristics addressed by ESF funding in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (211 projects in total)

Protected Characteristics / 'Disadvantaged' group	Projects	%
Homeless people	1	0%
Carers	2	1%
Gender – men	4	2%
Disability - mental health	5	2%
Ex-offenders	5	2%
Lone parents	6	3%
Gender – women	8	4%
Age – older	9	4%
Black, Asian and minority ethnic	9	4%
Multiple (focus on more than three protected characteristics)	10	5%
Learning disabilities	13	6%
Disability – general	21	10%
Age – younger	65	31%
Total	125	59.2%

In terms of the protected characteristics, the largest focus (31%) was on young

people, followed by disability (18%). In addition, 5% of mapped projects focus on more than three protected characteristics.

This finding demonstrates the significant focus of ESF funding on equality and human rights work and highlights the effectiveness of the equality cross-cutting theme (CCT).

England

As highlighted earlier in this report, it was not possible to identify all the data needed to conduct a similar mapping exercise for England. However, the research looked at one particular area – the Black Country in the West Midlands – in more detail, as a list of all ESF projects funded by the Building Better Opportunities fund in that area was made available.

As shown in tables 4 and 5 below, a mapping of all ESF-awarded projects in the Black Country to date uncovered that, out of 127 projects, 50 (39.3%) have a focus on at least one protected characteristic, with the largest focus being on young people (17 projects), followed closely by BAME groups (14 projects).

One example includes a project run by Age UK Walsall, awarded £221,876 to offer support to over 50s to build confidence, increase social inclusion, develop transferable skills, address health issues and get involved in volunteering.

Another example is Summit House Support, awarded £239,038 to provide support to extremely marginalised individuals, including those living with HIV, and LGBTQI people, to improve their health, wellbeing and social skills, and to develop their employability skills.

Some projects cover multiple issues and are therefore counted in the tables more than once.

Table 4 – Issues addressed by ESF projects in the Black Country LEP area (127 projects)

Issues	Projects	%
Domestic violence	1	0.8%
Social inclusion/exclusion	1	0.8%
Childcare	1	0.8%
Entrepreneurship and self-entrepreneurship	2	1.5%
Substance abuse	2	1.5%

Health and well-being	6	4.7%
Employability – NEETS	15	11.8%
Employability – skills and experience	29	22.8%

Table 5 – Characteristics addressed by ESF projects funded in Black Country LEP area (127 projects)

Protected Characteristics / 'Disadvantaged' group	Projects	%
Homeless people	1	1.8%
Carers	1	1.8%
Gender – men	1	1.8%
Sexual Orientation	1	1.8%
Ex-offenders	1	1.8%
Transgender	1	1.8%
Multiple (focus on more than three protected characteristics)	1	1.8%
Learning disabilities	2	3.7%
Disability - mental health	3	5.5%
Lone parents	3	5.5%
Age – older	3	5.5%
Gender – women	6	11%
Disability – general	8	15%
Black, Asian and minority ethnic	14	26%
Age – younger	17	31%
Total projects focusing on at least one protected characteristic	50	39.3%
No specific protected characteristics identified	77	60.7%

4. Assessing Impact 2007-2013

This section looks mainly at the 2007-2013 ESF funding round and aims to identify how projects impacted on people and communities across the UK. The objective was to build a picture of the way in which these programmes have contributed to tackling inequality in line with their stated objectives.

Once again, the challenges with accessing data and the timeframe for this research limited the ability to fully meet this objective. This is an area where we would recommend the UK government commits resources, to inform its approach to embedding equality and human rights principles in any successor programmes.

The following sections form an impact overview. The first summarises the evaluated impact of the Daphne Programme, which focused on violence against women and children. This is followed by summaries of evaluation mechanisms and the overall impact of other programmes by the four UK administrations and by the EU. It concludes with a selection of ESF case studies that relate to advancing people's equality and human rights.

4.1. Impact overview

The Daphne Programme

The Daphne Programme ran from 1997–2013, after which it was merged with other funds into the REC fund 2014-20. Daphne's objectives were:

- to help protect children, young people and women against all forms of violence and to help them attain a high level of health protection, wellbeing and social cohesion;
- to help develop community policies (in public health, human rights and gender equality) and action to protect children's rights and combat trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation.

The final Daphne III programme (2007-2013) had an average annual budget of €16.7 million.

The evaluation of the Daphne III programme⁵² showed that all funded projects were designed either to prevent violence against women, children and young people or to protect victims and people at risk. It found that most measures

⁵² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0055>

taken helped improve protection for victims of violence or groups at risk, and a significant number contributed to policymaking and lawmaking at EU or national level. It concluded that, 'It was Daphne III's support to EU networks, research and innovation and direct support to victims and at-risk groups that did most to improve protection against violence'.

99 of the 660 projects funded through Daphne III were in the UK, led by local authorities, universities and voluntary and community sector organisations. Three examples are given below.

COMBAT- Combining Against Trafficking

COMBAT raised awareness of trafficking through the training of targeted front-line professionals and stakeholders in civil society, thus contributing to the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable and at-risk children and young women across Bulgaria, Lithuania and the UK.

It trained around 2,000 professionals across three EU Member states to recognise trafficking and protect those vulnerable. Training programmes targeted not only child protection workers but also non-specialists.

Among the training programmes, a training package, 'Say Something if you See Something' was dedicated to the staff in the hotel sector, and developed with Coventry City Council Community Safety Team, West Midlands Police and third sector agencies in Coventry. Five training sessions were delivered to targeted hotel staff across the city. This work developed as a direct result of young people disclosing sexual exploitation happening at hotels in the city.

Prevention of interpersonal violence in a domestic context

Led by Agenda Scotland, the project's purpose was to focus on male violent behaviour towards an intimate partner through analysis, development and training in treatment programmes for violent men, and counselling and support of women and child victims.

There were four project partners: two NGOs and two regional authorities. Activities included model development, analysis and implementation of perpetrator treatment programmes, support and treatment programmes for women and children, and education and training of staff.

Involved by Right: ensuring children's active participation in the child protection system

The lead agency was the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The aim of the project was to ensure the effective participation of children in decision-making processes in child protection systems across Europe to realise the aspirations of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12.

Growth Programme Board

The Growth Programme Board is responsible for meeting the monitoring and evaluation requirements of the EU in England. It comprises a number of partners: the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG); DWP; the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA); local government and LEPs; the private and voluntary and community sectors; further and higher education; and rural, environmental and equalities interests.⁵³

It has a national-level sub-committee on equal opportunities whose responsibility it is to monitor the application and implementation of equalities principles and advise the Programme Board on any risks or opportunities that are identified. It also provides advice on equality within EU programmes and undertakes analysis into thematic or policy issues. A second sub-committee provides advice and analysis in relation to employment, skills and social inclusion.⁵⁴

Two reports by the sub-committee on equal opportunities were reviewed but did not disclose any high-level equality data by protected characteristics or human rights issues.

The membership was updated on the amount of 2014-2020 funds committed (55% by 2017) followed by updates on some project work. The March 2017 report provided an overview of Managing Authority and Intermediate Body staff equality training but no detail on the extent of delivery to date, and an overview of the ESF Equality Leaders Awards and its 2016 winner on gender, Opportunity Hackney.

European Commission

In its paper, European Social Fund (2007-2013) support Gender Equality,⁵⁵ the European Commission sets out the case for equality between women and men as a fundamental requirement to achieve 'growth, prosperity and solidarity in

⁵³ For further information see here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/growth-programme-board>

⁵⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/494675/ESF-F-GN-2-011_GPB_National_Sub_Committees_Terms_of_Reference_v1.pdf

⁵⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/docs/genderequality_en.pdf

an equal and democratic society', and this is a 'horizontal' priority for actions taken by all of the Structural Funds. In practice, this means that all programmes have to include indicators and selection criteria to ensure they are equally open to men and women.

The EU position is that integrating gender and equality mainstreaming into the ESIF programmes can contribute to equality in a number of ways. For women, these include improved access to and participation in the labour market; improved equality in education and training; improved participation of women in enterprise, creation and growth; the reconciliation of work and family life; and improved participation of women in decision-making.

Mainstreaming equality and gender

Mainstreaming is discussed in more detail in Section 5, however, for 2007-2013 in England, the top-level equality targets set were 51% female participation levels and 19% each for BAME people, those with a disability and those over the age of 50.

In July 2016, the DWP published its report on progress made toward achieving equality targets⁵⁶ covering participation levels and employment and skills indicators in England. This and 'Improving People's Lives'⁵⁷ sought to demonstrate how the ESF made real changes, in particular in tackling poverty and promoting social justice. It shows that female participation reached 36%, although progress was more pronounced during the second half of the funding round possibly due to the addition of 'families with multiple problems' who, according to the report are 'female dominated'. The BAME participation target of 19% was met; there was a 2% shortfall in the target of 19% for those with disabilities and a 3% shortfall against the 19% target for those over 50 years of age.

⁵⁶ England and Gibraltar ESF convergence, competitiveness and employment programme for 2007-2013 *Final ESF Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Mainstreaming Progress Report*, July 2016

⁵⁷ DWP (2014) *European Social Fund in England, Improving People's Lives 2013-2014*. Crown Copyright
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/369964/esf-in-england-improving-peoples-live.pdf

In Northern Ireland, the mid-term evaluation of ESF⁵⁸ demonstrated that the overall programme target of 45% female participation was being achieved or exceeded, leading to a suggestion that new targets for male participation needed to be considered. Female targets were also met in relation to the attainment of skills levels although training suppliers were reporting difficulty in recruiting part-time workers, women and those with a disability or health conditions. This was attributed to the unappealing nature of work on offer.

The Scottish Participants Survey⁵⁹ for the whole of the 2007-13 cycle reports that the gender percentage split of 59%/41% male/female closely aligns with the gender split within the unemployment population. One quarter had children living in their household and 12% were lone parents. One in five (21%) said they had a disability or health condition that limited their day-to-day activities, which broadly mirrors those with a disability in the Scottish labour market. 9% of participants were BAME, three times more than in the wider population. The survey notes that the programme 'has particularly succeeded in recruiting a higher proportion of participants from Pakistani and African ethnic backgrounds'.

In Wales, The Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) published an evaluation on how the CCTs of Equal Opportunities and Environmental Sustainability were developed and delivered for the 2007-2013 Structural Funds in Wales, in particular through the work of a dedicated CCT Team within WEFO. The evaluation found that Wales was a leader in the implementation of CCTs within the EU, particularly thanks to the guidance and support offered by the CCT team, and it provides case study examples of projects funded by ESF that have incorporated the CCTs in their work.⁶⁰

This data indicates that using cross-cutting themes and gender and equality mainstreaming has had a significant impact on ensuring higher levels of participation by disadvantaged groups.

⁵⁸ Department for Employment and Learning (May 2012) *Mid-term Evaluation of the Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme, 2007-2013. Main report.* <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/del/esf-mid-term-evaluation.pdf>

⁵⁹ Hall Aitken (February 2012) *European Social Fund Participants Survey Report* <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0040/00400347.pdf>

⁶⁰ Welsh European Funding Office (March 2015) *WEFO Cross-cutting Themes Evaluation – Equality and Sustainability – Research Report.* Welsh Government. <http://gov.wales/docs/wefo/publications/151222-cross-cutting-evaluation.pdf>

4.2. Case studies

In order to highlight the impact that ESF funded-projects have had on equality, human rights and people from disadvantaged groups, the 12 case studies that follow, provide examples of projects that target the different protected characteristics. Some of these case studies indicate the impact that ESF- and REC-funded projects had on the lives of disadvantaged groups across the four nations between 2007 and 2013. In some cases, impact data was not available, however, in their absence these case studies illustrate the type of work funded by EU ESF and REC programmes.

Offenders and ex-offenders

Bad Boys Bakery

Issue: Employability and skills	Fund: ESF	Co-financing organisation: NOMS	Location: London
Project objectives	To offer training and qualifications in baking to help prisoners find sustainable work when they leave prison.		
Project description	<p>The project offers a 12-week course that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides on-the-job training to industry standards, including food preparation, baking, stock and time management, as well as knowledge of health and safety systems; • helps prisoners to gain a relevant qualification; • prepares prisoners for work by helping with CVs, applications and letter writing; • helps those who are eligible for temporary release, by arranging opportunities that include helping with deliveries outside the prison and taking on administration roles within the bakery. 		
Impact and sustainability	<p>As of 2014, more than 60 people had benefitted from the training. Figures made available in 2014 show that, out of those who have taken part in the programme and are out of prison, 33% are now in work or training and only 3% have gone on to reoffend within a year of being released (compared to a national average of 47%). The programme is still running, despite ESF funding having ceased in 2014. Following the success of the</p>		

programme, a social enterprise was set up to keep the business going.

Young people not in training, education or employment (NEETs)

Whatever it Takes Project⁶¹

Issue: Employability and skills	Fund: ESF	Co-financing organisation: Skills Funding Agency	Location: Northumberland North East England
Project objectives	To increase the skills and qualification levels of young people and support their transition to a sustainable progression in learning or employment.		
Project description	The project was managed by igen Ltd, and delivered by Northumberland County Council, Skills4U North East Ltd, Buzz Learning Ltd, Learning Choices, Barnardos, and the Northern Learning Trust. It supported young people aged 14-19 in Northumberland who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET by providing them with training and one-on-one support with the help of tutors.		
Impact and sustainability	<p>The project has provided training to 580 young people over three years. Eighty three percent of the young people who have received training through the project have successfully progressed to other learning opportunities or employment.</p> <p>There is no indication that the project was sustained beyond the funding provided by ESF between 2007 and 2013.</p>		

⁶¹ http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/WAMDocuments/B957C6DD-8334-41DA-8A42-C911CF9923B7_1_0.pdf?nccredirect=1

Disability and older people

Theatre of Opportunity - Cascade Theatre⁶²

Issue: Employability and skills	Fund: ESF	Co-financing organisation: Skills Funding Agency	Location: Cornwall
Project description	Theatre of Opportunity offered the chance to learn self-awareness and self-management through drama workshops and psychological techniques. The skills learned could then be transferred to the workplace. The activities were tailored to each participant. Four six-week courses were held in Liskeard, Camborne, Newquay and St Ives.		
Impact and sustainability	37 people were supported through the workshops. Cascade Theatre continues to receive ESF funding, which they use to run workshops and provide support to different target groups (such as older people, carers, etc.).		

Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women

Quest for Integration – QED⁶³

Issue: Integration	Fund: European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals	Co-financing organisation: Not applicable	Location: Yorkshire and London
Project objectives	The project aimed to assist in the integration of third country nationals who are legally in the UK with a potential route to settlement. It did this by supporting eligible migrants to become integrated and active members of UK society through providing English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), pre-employment advice, generic employability skills and signposting to vocational		

⁶² <http://www.cornwalldevelopmentcompany.co.uk/assets/file/November%2012%20Press%20Releases/07.11.12%20Theatre%20of%20Opportunity%20for%20Jobs%20Issued%20by%20ESF%20Convergence.pdf>

⁶³ <https://qed-uk.org/what-we-do/projects-archive/>

	training, voluntary and community activities and mentoring opportunities.
Project description	The project provided English language and integration training to eligible third-country women to aid their integration into mainstream economic and social activity in Britain by June 2015. This comprised a ten-week programme of accredited English language training and confidence building; communication skills; support with personal finance, banks, bills, credit and insurance; support with shopping, cultural and leisure facilities; access to health, housing and education services; and integrated information and guidance. In addition, there were award ceremonies, case studies, heritage visits, and Employer/World-of-Work visits to employers.
Impact and sustainability	<p>In relation to outputs, 150 women attended the programme in London and 263 attended the Yorkshire programme. In both locations, almost two thirds of beneficiaries felt that their English had improved a lot as a result of the programme. Following the programme, around a third of women undertook further education (college or ESOL) or looked for a job.</p> <p>The evaluation found that attending the programme provided a major step towards integration and overcoming barriers they had previously faced. This project did not continue after EU funding ceased.</p>

Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities

End Racism This Generation Campaign – Runnymede Trust

Issue: Discrimination	Fund: European Commission Anti-Discrimination Progress Action Grant (PROGRESS)	Co-financing organisation: N/A	Location: UK- wide
Project objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To raise awareness that racism and race inequality are still problems in the UK. 		

- To encourage people to make changes to their behaviour, at an individual, organisational or institutional level to further race equality.
- To publicly share the pledges for action so that they hold the pledger to account, and to spread practical ideas about how to tackle racism.

Project description

The project was a pledge-based campaign, which included a number of activities spread over one year. As well as a general public audience, the campaign targeted specific groups and sectors to encourage practical action to tackle race inequality. These were young people, teachers and youth workers, non-governmental organisations, small and medium businesses, local government officials and health professionals.

Campaign activities included:

- A campaign website to capture pledges for action: www.end-racism.org
- Online and offline events – some targeting specific sectors
- Films exploring the intersectionality between different types of discrimination such as race and gender, race and age, race and sexuality, race and religion and race and disability
- Advisory groups
- Surveys of attitudes to race issues across different ethnic groups
- Case studies showing how action to tackle racism can have practical impacts
- A race blog site called Race Card: www.racecard.org.uk
- Dissemination of campaign messages through social media and structured email communications to supporters.

Impact and sustainability

An external evaluation of the project demonstrated that the campaign:

- achieved impressive reach – with people seeing campaign messaging over six million times and a

supporter base of nearly 2,000 people and nearly 500 organisations;

- created spaces for discussion of racism and increasing people's understanding of the complexity of racial discrimination;
- successfully connected different race equality actors and provided opportunities for sharing and learning. For example, 60% of participants of the youth events reported having made connections useful for their subsequent work on anti-racism;
- and started a conversation on the intersectional dimension of discrimination, connecting various race equality actors with organisations working on other grounds of discrimination.

The project was initially envisaged as a three-year programme. However, it was unsuccessful in securing funding for the three years and, as a result, could not sustain beyond the first year.

Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) young people

The Gypsy Traveller Learning and Future Employment Project⁶⁴

Issue: Employability and skills	Fund: ESF	Co-financing organisation: Not known	Location: West Wales and the Valleys
Project objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the participation rates in education and employment of young people in the Gypsy Traveller population. • To enhance positive outcomes for Gypsy Traveller young people (that is, entry into employment and further education). • To reduce discrimination against the Gypsy Traveller population. 		
Project description	The project was delivered by seven different local authorities: Pembrokeshire County Council (lead) Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Carmarthenshire County Council, Merthyr Tydfil		

⁶⁴ Bowen R. (September 2012) *Final Report; External Evaluation of the Gypsy Traveller Learning and Future Employment Project*. People and Work Unit.

County Borough Council, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, City and Council of Swansea, and Torfaen County Borough Council.

The project ran from September 2009 to September 2012. Interventions varied depending on the local authority but included one-to-one support with Gypsy Traveller pupils, the use of discrete units for Gypsy Traveller young people, basic skills tutoring, social and emotional support, and developing links with colleges and employers.

Impact and sustainability

From a total of 317 participants; 91 gained qualifications; 37 entered full learning; 37 entered employment; and 83 gained other positive outcomes. An evaluation found that the project:

- increased participation of Gypsy Traveller young people in education;
- improved levels of educational attainment among Gypsy Traveller young people (though not to the target set by the project);
- successfully supported Gypsy Traveller young people into employment, in particular through shifting employers' attitudes towards Gypsy Traveller young people;
- improved a range of Gypsy Traveller young people's skills, which could help them access education, employment or training;
- and helped reduce discrimination towards Gypsy Traveller young people, through positive interaction.

The project ended when the ESF funding ceased.

Women

Agile Nation Project – Chwarae Teg⁶⁵

Issue: Employability and skills	Fund: ESF	Co-financing organisation: Welsh Government	Location: Wales
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⁶⁵ <https://www.cteg.org.uk/projects/agile-nation-project/>

Project objectives	<p>To help improve the position of women in the workforce across nine priority sectors in Wales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced materials and manufacturing • Construction • Creative industries • Energy and environment • Financial and professional Services • Food and farming • Information and communications technology • Life science • Tourism
Project description	<p>The project provides a career development programme for women to improve their position in the workforce, and a business programme to help businesses attract, retain and develop talent and inspire an inclusive staff culture to improve diversity.</p>
Impact and sustainability	<p>The project had the following outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,921 women trained, all gaining a recognised Institute of Leadership and Management qualification • 349 women progressed to more senior roles following the training • 504 businesses were supported to improve their diversity and modern working practices (over half of which were from the private sector). <p>The ESF and the Welsh Government have provided funding from the 2014-2020 programme to continue the project over the next few years.</p>

Young people

Youth Employment Scotland Fund⁶⁶

Issue: Employability and skills	Fund: ESF	Co-financing organisation: N/A	Location: Scotland; 32 Local authority areas
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⁶⁶ <http://www.employabilityinscotland.com/policy-and-partnership/youth-employment/youth-employment-scotland-fund/>

Project objectives	To support unemployed young people through education and training, and address high levels of youth unemployment resulting, in part, from the reluctance of employers to employ young people.
Project description	<p>Employer Recruitment Incentives (ERI) were provided to employers in the private and social enterprise sectors to take on young people by the Fund covering half of their salary costs for a minimum of 26 weeks in jobs that were additional and permanent. A flexible part-time option and paid work experience at local authority level were added to address the needs of vulnerable young people.</p> <p>Young people were recruited in a range of ways, including social media campaigns and digital marketing, working with schools and through pre-existing employability programmes.</p> <p>The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations worked with third sector organisations that were engaging with young people through the Community Jobs Scotland, enabling them to move easily into the Fund. This progression was described as 'a key part of the employability pipeline, targeting young people who are furthest from the labour market'.</p>
Impact and sustainability	<p>At the time the programme was evaluated, 9,396 young people had started in a job. The non-completion rate was 14%.</p> <p>All the participants were given permanent contracts, and the evaluation notes that, without the Fund, 69% of employers would not have provided the jobs.</p> <p>The evaluation concludes that young people benefited in a number of ways: they developed hard skills related to the job; gained qualifications; gained soft skills, such as time-keeping, team-working and motivation; improved their employment prospects and future career progression; and demonstrated confidence and aspirations for the future.</p> <p>Sixty-four percent of those who started a job were still in employment at the end of the period during which the employer incentives were provided.</p>

Employers were able to bring in 'new, fresh ideas and attitudes' and increase business capacity at a lower cost. The Fund also encouraged employers to provide opportunities by agreeing to employ young people. The Fund helped local authorities to meet targets to address youth unemployment and enhanced their engagement with employers.

Within local authority areas that provided full monitoring data, 69% of participants 'sustained their positive destination at the end of the ERI', the majority staying on with the original employer.

Disability

PROGRESS FIFE⁶⁷

Issue: Employability and skills	Fund: ESF	Co-financing organisation: N/A	Location: Fife, Scotland
Project objectives	To enable disabled people to realise their full potential through accredited training, further education and sustainable paid employment		
Project description	Disabled people are supported to find and stay in work through training and practical support; placements; job application skills; and managing health conditions or disabilities in the workplace based on individual needs. Vocational training, further education or short courses that can help with confidence and communication skills may be on offer. For those who are already in work, the project can help with ongoing training or other support.		
Impact and sustainability	A recent (2016) Capability Scotland report indicates that 58% of participants showed an improvement in their confidence to perform well. Other areas showing improvement included:		

⁶⁷ http://www.capability-scotland.org.uk/media/435866/progresss_fife_leaflet2.pdf

- a willingness to take responsibility to create one's own success, particularly for 30-45 year olds
- the ability to work well with others
- the development of social support networks, particularly for male clients
- upgraded skills and/or education to match the current opportunities.

Improvements in clients exceeded the average improvement across Fife in terms of readiness for employment.

Capability Scotland advises that should EU funding cease with no domestic replacement the project would have to close.

Religion and belief, and race

Football for All⁶⁸

Issue: Social cohesion	Fund: PEACE III	Co-financing organisation: N/A	Location: Northern Ireland
Project objectives	This project was funded under the Acknowledging and Dealing with the Past priority of the PEACE III fund. Its aim was to promote peace and reconciliation and reduce sectarianism and racism.		
Project description	<p>Under the auspices of the Irish Football Association, the project sought to build the capacity of football clubs, fans and communities to address sectarianism and racism head on. This was done by investing in education and social development to create advocates for positive change within local communities and peer groups.</p> <p>The tools used included seminars, inter-generational story-telling and a youth forum giving young people a voice on community relations issues. This was underpinned by the support and work done within the domestic football league and international supporters' groups.</p> <p>Project outputs included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the recruitment of a full-time Football for All Project co-ordinator – the creation of a Football for All Youth Forum – developing working links with the Ardoyne Interface programme; Limestone United; the Women's World United Intercultural Football Programme and the Belfast Street League (players include homeless people, ex-offenders, drug- and alcohol-dependent individuals, long-term unemployed, refugees, asylum seekers and other disadvantaged groups). 		
Impact and sustainability	The Irish Football Association's five-year plan to 2022 - Promoting, developing and fostering football for all – includes as core values an acknowledgement that everyone loves the game regardless of gender, religion, politics, race or sexual orientation, and that individuals and groups should feel comfortable and welcome. It is establishing a Foundation to deliver positive change in Northern Ireland, advance education and provide funds in areas of economic need.		

⁶⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2013/01/project-of-the-week-football-as-a-hook-to-promote-peace-and-reconciliation-in-northern-ireland

Young people and women

Small Wonders⁶⁹

Issue: Good relations, employability and skills, childcare	Fund: PEACE III	Co-financing organisation: N/A	Location: North Belfast, Northern Ireland
Project objectives	The Creating Shared Public Spaces PEACE priority aimed to regenerate areas that appear derelict, segregated, underused, threatening or unwelcoming, and transform them into shared areas. This project sought to create a cross-community childcare facility in an interface area where segregated nationalist and unionist areas meet.		
Project description	<p>The area is a deprived ward with high levels of unemployment and high numbers of incidents of sectarian-based conflict between the Protestant and Catholic communities.</p> <p>Small Wonders II was developed by the Shankill Women's Centre and has transformed a derelict church into a modern cross-community childcare facility accommodating up to 31 day-time and 32 after-school places. Its outdoor play space is built around the theme of peace.</p> <p>Additional key outputs were the recruitment of 12 childcare workers and 60 people taking part in Peace and Reconciliation Programmes in year one.</p>		
Impact and sustainability	Alongside the childcare facility in the Shankill Women's Centre, there is a fully equipped IT suite for use by local women to enhance their computer skills and employment prospects. There is a full-time outreach worker to promote greater levels of cross-community contact through the shared use of the new facility. Other funders now include Lloyds TSB, Belfast Local Strategic Partnership, the Arts Council, Invest Northern Ireland and the Police Service for Northern Ireland. Small Wonders is now a Social Economy Childcare Business owned by the Shankill Women's Centre. Its mission is to support the rights of children and provide a child-safe environment where children are valued in every respect.		

5. Gender and Equality mainstreaming 2014-2020

This section considers how equality of opportunity and gender mainstreaming have been built into the 2014-20 ESIF programmes in the UK. It draws mainly on the EIA prepared by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) on the Partnership Agreement October 2014, which is the high-level UK strategy, including priorities and arrangements for the funds.⁷⁰ Partnership Agreements (PA) are developed in line with the EU's Common Provisions Regulation.⁷¹ The assessment outlines in some detail how the UK Government will deliver gender and equality mainstreaming.

5.1. Priorities and spend

The EIA indicates that, although activities in other funds, such as the ERDF, may also have a positive impact on equality issues, these are not as explicitly stated as they are in the ESF. In particular, Objective 8 on sustainable and quality employment; Objective 9 on promoting social inclusion, combatting poverty and any discrimination; and Objective 10 on education, training and vocational training. For these objectives, the programme target groups are NEETS, those aged 50 or over, women, those with disabilities and BAME people. The UK Government states in its EIA that a focus on these objectives and target groups will help to advance equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination.

It estimates that the UK total spend on these three objectives will be approximately €5 billion (£4.15 billion), as follows:

Table 6: ESF and ERDF spend on Objectives 8, 9 and 10⁷²

Objective	ESF	ERDF	Total EUR (millions)	Total GBP (millions)
<i>Objective 8: Sustainable and quality employment</i>	1,839	167	2,006	1,665
<i>Objective 9: Social inclusion, poverty and discrimination</i>	1,094	75	1,169	9,70

⁷⁰ HM Government (13 October 2014) op.cit

⁷¹ ibid

⁷² Ibid, p.13

<i>Objective 10: Education, training and vocational training</i>	2,051	0	2,051	1,702
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This is an increase over the 2007-13 spend, which was around €4.5 million (£3.73 million), and the increase, according to the Government, 'signals a potential positive impact' in relation to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 public sector equality duty.⁷³

5.2. UK Gender and mainstreaming principles

Article 7 of the Common Provision Regulation of the EU, which lays our common standards and principles for the implement of the ESIF, states that:

'The Member States and the Commission shall ensure that equality between men and women and the integration of gender perspective are taken into account and promoted throughout the preparation and implementation of programmes, including in relation to monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

The Member States and the Commission shall take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation and implementation of programmes. In particular, accessibility for persons with disabilities shall be taken into account throughout the preparation and implementation of programmes.'⁷⁴

To meet these requirements, the UK Government adopted a set of principles which are set out in full below. These principles may be helpful to the VCS in discussions with Government around domestic priorities post-Brexit. (See Section 6.2.)

- No beneficiaries are excluded from participating in the programmes on the grounds of their protected characteristics.

⁷³ The duty is to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the (Equality) Act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it

⁷⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1303&from=EN>

- The needs of all potential beneficiaries are considered at project design stage in order that the service is appropriately delivered.
- All physical regeneration, that is construction of new buildings and upgrading of existing premises, meets minimum accessibility requirements (in line with the Equality Act, Part M of the Building Regulations and recommended British Standards for Accessibility).
- Services are responsive to the needs of all communities and under-represented groups.
- Support is targeted towards under-represented communities where relevant.
- Responsiveness to, and inclusiveness of, under-represented groups in delivery and management.

The Government outlines how it expects Managing Authorities to ensure these principles are embedded, including having representatives from bodies responsible for promoting equality on monitoring committees; ensuring information is gathered to help monitor the extent to which men, women, disabled people and relevant disadvantaged groups participate; and embedding equalities impact into evaluation strategies.

The EIA sets out additional principles for the devolved nations, each of which have produced their own EIAs.⁷⁵ For example, the Scottish Government has noted, as one of the key lessons learned from the earlier round, 'how important, and sometimes difficult, it is to retain a focus on [the equality requirements]'⁷⁶ and, for 2014-2020, has adopted a dual approach to promoting and mainstreaming equality by requiring evidence that project activity is addressing equality, non-discrimination and accessibility, and that there is scope for positive action to be taken. These must also be integral to programme planning, preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

⁷⁵ Scotland Equality Impact Assessment of European Structural Funds Programmes 2014-2020.
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0044/00448106.pdf>

Welsh European Structural Funds Impact Assessments
<http://gov.wales/funding/eu-funds/2014-2020/programme-evaluations/equality-impact-assessments/?lang=en>

Northern Ireland Department for Employment and Learning Section 75 Equality of Opportunity Screening Template of European Social Fund Programme 2014-2020
<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/european-social-fund-programme-2014-2020-screening.pdf>

⁷⁶ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2013/12/8707/7>

Further considerations in the EIA for England include improving equality policies, providing training for staff who advise providers, and offering funding mechanisms to enable niche projects and bottom-up interventions to be supported. The ERDF and Rural Development Programmes in the four nations⁷⁷ are also seen as having a mainstreaming role, such as considering equality in relation to access to the countryside, and engaging women, under-represented and excluded groups in enterprise and business finance and young people and communities in the enterprise culture.

Wales also talks about staff training, regular progress monitoring and updates for stakeholders, as well as providing guidance and case studies for beneficiaries. It sees a benefit in encouraging gender mainstreaming, equal opportunities and social inclusion organisations to be involved and create a network of support, and seeks to offer specialist advice on mainstreaming at an early stage to maximise the take up of opportunities to pursue mainstreaming and equality.

The Ireland/Wales Territorial Cooperation Programme EIA indicates expected positive equality outcomes for younger and older people, BAMR people and women and girls.⁷⁸ The ERDF EIA appears to focus mainly on impact in relation to the Welsh Language.⁷⁹

Finally, the PA EIA reflects the equality protections in Northern Ireland, some of which are more extensive than in other European countries, including the positive promotion of equality under the Fair Employment and Treatment Order and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, the Northern Ireland version of the public sector equality duty. It talks about the role of the Equality Commission and how the ESF programme aligns with a range of other strategies, such as those on disability and equality between men and women, and measures to tackle social exclusion. In its impact assessment, the Department for Education and Learning notes that 'the programme is designed to assist individuals who

⁷⁷ Funded under the EU Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-funding_en

⁷⁸ Welsh European Funding Office (July 2014) *Ireland/Wales Territorial Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 Equality Impact Assessment Report*

<http://gov.wales/docs/wefo/publications/150128iwequalityimpactassessment.pdf>

⁷⁹ Welsh European Funding Office (July 2014) *2014-2020 European Regional Development Fund Programmes for Wales - Equality Impact Assessment Report*

<http://gov.wales/docs/wefo/publications/150128erdfequalityimpactassessment.pdf>

face barriers or disadvantage...and will promote greater equality of opportunity for individuals across all of the Section 75 categories.’⁸⁰

At the EDF Roundtable in July 2017, participants noted that delivery of the cross-cutting theme of gender and equality mainstreaming was not consistently measured or evaluated, making it unclear how this has been addressed and what outcomes have been achieved. It is therefore important that, across the four nations, all work on gender mainstreaming is properly monitored.

5.3. Partnerships

The Common Provisions Regulation also requires governments to develop partnerships with bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination, and the EIA describes how this is being done in the four nations. In England, it appears that the LEPs, to whom most ESI funds go, have been advised that they must have regard to the public sector equality duty in developing their strategies, which should also include evidence of equality issues in their areas and how those working on equality and inclusion have helped in preparing them. All nations have established consultative partnership groups.

5.4. Addressing the needs of those at most risk

Finally, the EIA describes how the UK will meet the requirement of the Common Provisions Regulation to address the specific needs of target groups at highest risk of discrimination or social exclusion. Examples include community-centred approaches, understanding the need to address individuals’ requirements appropriately, and addressing issues such as caring responsibilities, debt and access to transport.

The UK Government has concluded that the policy decisions that have been taken have no adverse impact in relation to the Equality Act and that the increase in funds targeted to the ESF priorities set out above are likely to have a positive impact. It considers that ‘comprehensive measures to promote

⁸⁰ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/european-social-fund-programme-2014-2020-screening.pdf> Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act is the public sector equality duty for Northern Ireland covering the characteristics of age, disability, gender, religious belief, political opinion, sexual orientation, marital status, racial group and dependents

equality between women and men and non-discrimination across the nations' are in place.

The principles and actions set out in the EIA and those prepared by the devolved administrations provide a useful framework that should be carried forward and further refined in any future arrangements.

They also provide a framework for the sector in determining the extent to which the fund and those managing it have delivered on the commitments made. The equality sub-committee (see Section 4.1), and its equivalent in the other nations, may prove to be a valuable resource as well.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Way Forward: Brexit and Beyond

As pointed out in Section 2.0, the UK is currently in a period of transition with some uncertainty, which impacts on the VCS. This section considers how this can be addressed, looking at the issues that need to be tackled between now and the UK's exit from the EU and beyond. It is possible that there may be transitional arrangements that will 'extend' the exit date; however, for the purposes of this report, the assumption is that the UK's departure from the EU will be in March 2019.

6.1. Consultation and sector views on potential loss of funding for the VCS

There is significant concern across the VCS about the loss of the Structural Funds and other funds such as the REC Programme. This anxiety is not only related to the direct loss of EU funding but also because of the more widespread impact this will have on disadvantaged and discriminated against communities. With less money coming from the EU to tackle disadvantage and discrimination, the situation is likely to worsen and the pressure on the VCS will be sharper, but, with little resources, the sector will be unable to help.

It is also unclear at this stage to what extent the UK Government will make up the shortfall resulting from the loss of EU funding. For the current funding period to 2020, the UK Government has given assurances that approved funding programmes will be honoured. However, there is concern in the four nations about how these assurances will be delivered, not least the qualified nature of the assurance, which is discussed in Section 6.2.

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland considers that the Government should 'address the potential impact of the loss of EU funding on programmes aimed at supporting peace and reconciliation, equality and good relations and social inclusion, including the impact on the voluntary and community sector.'⁸¹ The Equality and Human Rights Commission recently urged the Government, in

⁸¹ <http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/EU-Exit-EqualitySummary.pdf>

creating a fairer Britain, to ensure that equality organisations that rely on EU funding can keep operating.⁸²

The sector is already having to cope with cuts in funding as a result of domestic policies that have led to a reduction in the money available from, for example, local authorities. As one organisation noted in its submission to the Women and Equalities Committee, 'The impact of...cuts on charities and NGOs...has been significant and seriously affects participation in public life. That will adversely affect the development of law and policy.'⁸³

In Scotland, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisation's (SCVO) State of the Sector survey found that 81% of respondents felt that leaving the EU would negatively impact on poverty and social inclusion, while 80% believed it would negatively impact on human rights and equality.⁸⁴

Against this background, the sector is seeking assurances from the Government that replacement funding, equal to that of the Structural Funds will be made available. The SCVO has written that 'the European Union has broadly been good for ...Scotland's third sector and [we] support measures to ensure that many of the protections we currently enjoy are not jeopardised.' The Council goes on to suggest that, should there be a 'hard' Brexit, it would support 'a differentiated deal for Scotland within Europe'.⁸⁵

In Wales, voluntary organisations are seeking assurances about replacement funds, as without this they cannot make plans. 'Community and voluntary organisations are in a kind of hiatus....not knowing what to do next'.⁸⁶ The Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) notes that the Communities First programme in Wales, which some groups have been using as match funding for EU funds, is being phased out. Smaller organisations worry about their day-

⁸² <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/news/brexit-plans-lack-ambition-equality-and-human-rights>

⁸³ Discrimination Law Association submission to the Women and Equalities Committee Inquiry on Ensuring strong equalities legislation after the EU exit:
<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/women-and-equalities-committee/ensuring-strong-equalities-legislation-after-the-eu-exit/written/42926.pdf>

⁸⁴ <http://www.scvo.org.uk/long-form-posts/scotlands-place-in-europe-third-sector-concerns/>

⁸⁵ <http://www.scvo.org.uk/long-form-posts/brexit-and-scottish-independence-a-third-sector-perspective/>

⁸⁶ <http://www.acf.org.uk/news/foundations-and-brexit-a-view-from-wales>

to-day survival and are increasingly concerned about cuts in local authority spending and the increasing demand on pots of money that they traditionally bid for.⁸⁷ So, even with a Treasury assurance, it is not clear if VCS organisations in Wales can deliver the programmes, as they will still need to find the match funding required.

The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland notes that the nation has benefitted massively from the EU, gaining hundreds of millions to support the peace process. However, there are community and voluntary groups who are delivering EU programmes who do not know what is going to happen next and what funding the UK government will guarantee.⁸⁸

In a letter to the Women and Equality Committee of the House of Commons, the then Minister for Women and Equalities, Justine Greening, in relation to the REC programme, said that the Government Equalities Office would be working closely with Departments to understand the activities supported by the programme and the impact of changes following Brexit.⁸⁹ She went on to say that the Government Equalities Office (GEO) 'sought to engage stakeholders on the issue of EU exit'. The Committee welcomed this commitment by the Government to consult, and urged that this consultation with equality stakeholders should begin immediately.⁹⁰

EDF welcomes the engagement we have had with the GEO, DExEU and Treasury during the course of this research, through meetings and our roundtable in July 2017. However, a more formal consultation process in relation to replacing EU funding on equality and human rights and the impact on civil society needs to be carried out. It is to be hoped that all Departments with responsibility for the Structural Funds and REC programme, as well as the DExEU, will ensure that formal consultation is undertaken without delay.

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ <http://www.acf.org.uk/news/foundations-and-brexite-a-view-from-northern-ireland>

⁸⁹ Letter dated 23 February 2017

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/799/79907.htm#_idTextAnchor035

⁹⁰ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/women-and-equalities-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/ensuring-strong-equalities-legislation-after-eu-exit-16-17/publications/>

6.2. UK domestic priorities and equality and human rights

The Government has said that funding for projects agreed to 2020 will be honoured as long as they represent value for money and align with 'domestic priorities'. These priorities are of fundamental importance and have yet to be determined. Should they not reflect fully a commitment to equality and human rights principles as well as inclusion then planned work at local, regional or national level and/or projects already underway could be put at risk. As the Wales Funders Forum puts it, 'the money that the UK Government contributed to the EU has not disappeared. How it is spent is a matter of political priorities. A starting point for negotiations on behalf of the sector must surely be that promises will be kept and the third sector [...] will continue to be funded only with decisions made here, close to home.'⁹¹

As Section 5.2 has set out, the UK Government has committed itself to a set of equality principles for the current funding round and, through active participation in the ESF programmes, has adopted the EU's commitment to ensuring equality, tackling disadvantage and creating a socially inclusive society.

The setting of national priorities must not undermine the devolution agreements with Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Within each of the four nations there may also be regional differences, for example in relation to the peace and reconciliation process in Northern Ireland, the needs of remote or rural regions in Scotland and Wales, or deprived regions of England. Finally, the nations may have developed their own strategies on equality and human rights⁹². It is not clear what the position will be should one or more of the devolved nations have priorities that do not appear in the national list of priorities.

The minutes of the Growth Programme Board meeting of 13 December 2016 refer to the domestic priorities, noting that 'LEP Area ESI Funds sub-committees will be asked to put emphasis on the Chancellor's domestic priority and value for money conditions'.⁹³ This reinforces the importance of the point made at

⁹¹ <http://www.acf.org.uk/news/wales-and-the-eu-a-view-from-the-wales-funders-foum>

⁹² Examples of such strategies include, the Race Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2025; the individual nation roadmaps on Roma Integration, part of the UK's response to the EU requirements on Roma; the Scottish Race Equality Framework 2016-2030 and the Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives 2016-2020.

⁹³ Growth Programme Board Ibid

the EDF Roundtable in July 2017 that the sector must be alert to how these are being developed and maintain pressure on Government to ensure that equality, human rights and inclusion are underpinning themes, and that the views of the devolved nations are fully taken into account. The principles adopted and articulated by the UK Government and devolved administrations in the Partnership Agreement EIA (see Section 5) may provide a useful framework within which discussions can take place.

6.3. The proposed Shared Prosperity Fund and equality and human rights

In its 2017 election manifesto, the Conservative Party proposed it would establish a Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). The Manifesto stated:

‘Current EU-wide structural funding was designed to tackle disparities but it is expensive to administer and poorly targeted [...] we must look at how we can better reduce and eliminate these inequalities [...]. We will use the Structural Funds money [...] to create a UK Shared Prosperity Fund, specifically designed to reduce inequalities between communities across our four nations. The money [...] will help deliver sustainable, inclusive growth based on our modern Industrial Strategy.’⁹⁴

For its part, the Labour Party committed to ensuring the protection of funding for the current round and that ‘no region or nation [would be] affected by the withdrawal of EU funding for the remainder of this Parliament’, with specific mention made of PEACE in Northern Ireland.⁹⁵

The reference to the SPF being grounded in the Industrial Strategy is interesting but creates some insecurity around the status of equality and human rights.

⁹⁴ *Forward Together Our Plan for a Stronger Britain and a Prosperous Future. The Conservative and Unionist Party Manifesto 2017.* <https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/manifesto2017/Manifesto2017.pdf>

⁹⁵ *The Labour Party Manifesto 2017: A Manifesto for a better fairer Britain.* <http://www.labour.org.uk/index.php/manifesto2017>

The consultation on the Green Paper, 'Building our industrial strategy' closed in April 2017.¹ It had ten pillars around which the strategy would be delivered, none of which made any mention of equality, inclusion or fairness, with only one reference to people – to ensure that they have the skills employers need. The final strategy, published in November 2017, sets out a clear case for how an inclusive labour market can improve skills, growth and productivity, but fails to commit the necessary investment to make an inclusive labour market a reality, despite committing some £54 billion to other areas.

At time of writing, the DCLG and the BIS are leading on the SPF fund, regarding what it will include, and what it will look like. It is not clear the extent to which the DWP is joined up with these discussions, though of course there is a clear need.

As mentioned by a LEP representative:

'DWP is the organisation that currently acts as the managing authority for projects activity that have greatest impact on equality, as they are the Managing Authority for the Building Better Opportunities activities through the Big Lottery, and the Educations and Skills Funding Agency. These activities aim to reach those furthest from the labour market. So there is a concern that the equality aspect of the programme might be lost in future because DCLG and BIS tend to be more business focused. They tend to look at capacity for economic development but there does not appear to be anyone with a brief for equality or regeneration.'⁹⁶

In relation to devolution, the Institute for Government commented, 'In a move that the devolved administrations are likely to regard with deep suspicion, former EU structural fund spending will go not to the devolved governments but to a UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Labour's manifesto established a 'presumption of devolution' of EU powers relating to devolved functions, something the devolved administrations would say should happen automatically.'⁹⁷

This has the potential to raise constitutional issues around how money can be ring-fenced to the devolved nations without undermining the devolution agreements.

⁹⁶ Interview with LEP representative

⁹⁷ <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/brexit>

It will be crucial that the VCS has a clear view on how it believes any such fund will be shaped and how it will operate, taking full account of devolution considerations. It will also be important to confirm how the domestic priorities for funding the VCS and the pillars of the Industrial Strategy align, if at all.

6.4. Networks and transnational working

Networks and transnational working were not a focus of the research; however, their value and impact was highlighted by a number of organisations and, therefore, some of their thoughts are included here. Transnationality was a cross-cutting theme for the 2007-13 round of funding and was a key element of the past and current REC programme. The INTERREG fund is transnational in nature and, of course, there is the cross-border work undertaken under the auspices of the four PEACE Programmes in Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Republic of Ireland.

Not all networks or opportunities for partnership working are dependent on EU membership. For example, Norway, as a member of the European Economic Area, participates in Equinet⁹⁸, currently chaired by the Northern Ireland Equality Commission, and Macedonia is a member of the European Anti-poverty Network. There are also research and academic networks that focus on equality issues where membership is not dependent on being a Member State of the EU.

Ali Harris, Chief Executive of EDF, highlighted the importance of networks in her November 2016 evidence to the Women and Equalities Committee Inquiry into 'Ensuring strong equalities legislation after the EU exit'. She said 'there is a significant amount of engagement between the UK voluntary sector and the EU networks' citing LGBT issues, tackling race hate and older people's concerns [...] there is a real will within the race equality and gender networks for the UK to still engage because there is so much to be gained.'⁹⁹

⁹⁸ EQUINET is an EU funded network of Equality Bodies across Europe.

⁹⁹ House of Commons (22 February 2017) *Ensuring strong equalities legislation after the EU exit* – Seventh Report of Session 2016-17

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/women-and-equalities-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/ensuring-strong-equalities-legislation-after-eu-exit-16-17/publications/>

An example of such network is the European Gender Budgeting Network. This view was reinforced by Professor Anna Lawson from the University of Leeds:

‘One of the great benefits of EU structures has been networks of experts, networks of Government, networks of civil society and networks of equality bodies that bring together people from different countries with different types of expertise and different ideas about implementation of these agreed standards. There is a massive amount to be gained from sharing ideas [and] we have been influential [...]. Staying part of those processes is really important.’¹⁰⁰

Organisations across the UK have, for years, successfully been part of transnational projects – EQUAL and DAPHNE being two examples – and there is concern that the value of partnerships and networks will be diminished or lost as a result of Brexit. There is some evidence that it is already having an impact with Scottish organisations beginning to experience an unwillingness to engage with UK-based partners in case this puts bids at risk.¹⁰¹ From the research point of view, Professor Sylvia Walby, Lancaster University, UNESCO Chair in gender research and Director of the Violence and Society UNESCO Centre, told the Women and Equalities Committee ‘[...] it is not clear that the equalities strand has been as engaged in the details of the negotiation of Brexit as it might be. [...] I have been watching the formation of a research programme between researchers and civil servants, and it has not named the equalities strands.’¹⁰²

The VCS is anxious to maintain its transnational links and will be looking for ways to make this happen; the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action, for instance, believes there will still be such opportunities, possibly funded by international donors.¹⁰³ However, there is a need to map what networks are in existence and the extent to which they are tapped into across the UK. In its Inquiry report, the Women and Equalities Committee recommended that: ‘The Government should seek to set aside funding for ensuring that UK research and civil society organisations can maintain international links that are vital for ensuring strong equality protection.’¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰¹ <http://www.scvo.org.uk/long-form-posts/brexit-and-scottish-independence-a-third-sector-perspective/>

¹⁰² Women and Equalities Committee Inquiry *ibid*

¹⁰³ Association of Charitable Foundations *A view from Wales* *Ibid*

¹⁰⁴ House of Commons (22 February 2017) *op.cit.*

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/799/79902.htm>

6.5. Equality data

This research and the testimony of stakeholders, including at the EDF roundtable, have confirmed that data on the use to which the Structural Funds are being put is complex, unhelpful and lacks transparency, particularly in trying to determine the extent to which equality and human rights issues are integrated or delivered. Addressing this shortfall in relation to equality data would greatly help increase accountability in relation to the way the Structural Funds are used.

In addition, despite the fact that the Funds themselves require projects to address equality of opportunity as a cross-cutting theme, it can be difficult to assess the extent to which this is being done. One Managing Authority said that, as part of the application process, it ensured that all criteria, including equality, were robustly addressed. However, there was little done on project wind-ups to assess the extent to which equality had, in fact, been delivered. It was also suggested by others that many LEPs who distribute large amounts of the ESIF funds in England, focused on enterprise, jobs and growth with less interest in equality issues.¹⁰⁵ This, despite the requirements of the UK Partnership Agreement.

It would be of benefit to the Government to ensure there is a clear understanding of the reach of the Structural Funds across the UK's nations, regions and communities so this can inform and feed into the design and operation of new funding arrangements and the development of domestic priorities.

If Managing Authorities across the UK were to ensure that, as far as possible, disaggregated data and information for the final funding round are made available, so that equality and human rights-related issues and characteristics can be identified more readily, this would assist the VCS in constructing coherent arguments and strategies in relation to ongoing and replacement funding.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Managing Authority Representative

6.6. Technical issues

A number of technical issues identified during the research are listed below. Each will require attention and discussion across departments and with DExEU. One person interviewed for this research emphasised the importance of the VCS engaging with such issues in order fully to understand the implications they may have for the operation and winding down of existing and future projects, and so that they can work with and influence Government as solutions are sought and policies developed.

- The need to ensure that funding is provided for multi-year projects, not subject to annual spending limits.
- Arrangements should be in place between the UK and the EU so that projects that are currently funded beyond 2019 will receive the funding allocated on the basis upon which the award was made, whether as the result of ongoing draw down from the EU or provided directly by the UK Government.
- Clarity is needed on the audit arrangements for UK projects beyond 2019. One issue to consider is the extent to which the European Court of Audit will still have jurisdiction.
- There is concern about the amount of funding still to be drawn down by the UK Government and when this will be done. As at July 2017, a large amount of funds have yet to be allocated. One consultee urged that draw down takes place now so that projects are not at risk of losing out on funds that may rightfully have been theirs had Brexit not taken place.
- It was suggested that a watching brief should be maintained on draw down to ensure that approved Structural Funds are not 'bargained away' or used for other purposes by the UK Government.
- The agreement between the EU and the UK allows for up to three years beyond the funding period to spend the money awarded and wind up projects. There is anxiety that those who are only now applying for the second round of 2014-20 funds might be forced to wind up early and not complete their work. This situation needs to be clarified as soon as possible.
- Any transitional arrangements that may be negotiated beyond 2019 should take account of the potential impact there may be for projects funded under the Structural Funds.

6.7. Future funding

Here we outline some of the suggestions that have been made for a future funding programme. All those consulted were keen to stress that the sector is at the very early stages of this conversation – the process is just beginning. However, people are anxious that there are no delays and that the work needed to put a new funding regime in place progresses quickly and is given the priority it needs if the UK is properly to address the continuing need to tackle poverty and disadvantage and promote equality and human rights for all. As the Learning and Work Campaign puts it:

‘Brexit Britain must not lose 2.4 billion pounds investment in people [...] we call for successor programmes to ESF of at least the same value. This is a time for bold and creative thinking on how to create the jobs of the future, ensure everyone has a fair chance in life, and develop the skills we need for future prosperity.’¹⁰⁶

A key theme among stakeholders is the need to reduce bureaucracy and simplify processes. It is common knowledge that EU bidding, monitoring and reporting mechanisms are complex, time consuming and sometimes inaccessible. This is particularly problematic for smaller projects and, as one interviewee expressed, prevents some groups from accessing funding. Furthermore, others drop out as they do not have the resources to cope with the paperwork. For example, the requirement to demonstrate that every participant in a project has the right to live and work in the UK may result in delay while the evidence is being sourced but, if a provider works with an individual in the meantime, they cannot claim back any costs associated with this if it turns out that the individual is not eligible. Also, the ESF requires a number of different levels of auditing, the preparation for which is time-consuming.¹⁰⁷

Some would like to see smaller or niche projects, which would help ensure that local and grassroots work is supported. This local dimension is seen as crucial, not just in the development of project ideas but also in their design, operation, monitoring and evaluation. Local communities know what the focus and

¹⁰⁶ www.learningandwork.org.uk supporters include the Employment Related Services Association, Barnardos, St Mungos, Business in the Community, Disability Rights UK, Centrepont, Gingerbread and TAEN

¹⁰⁷ Big Lottery interview

priorities should be, including on intersectional issues. This bottom-up approach is the one adopted by the Big Lottery Fund: by the community, for the community.

To ensure this happens at local and grassroots level, organisations must have the necessary capacity and skills, so it is important that time is taken to build an enabling infrastructure. This is particularly crucial if the concept of match funding is retained, as sourcing this can be difficult and complex for community organisations.

There should continue to be a significant focus on social inclusion encompassing equality and human rights. This would help to ensure an appropriate balance in funding so that poverty reduction and tackling disadvantage can be addressed appropriately. Concern was expressed that equality might be lost, particularly if funds are managed by government departments of Managing Authorities that have mainly a business and enterprise focus.

The October 2014 EIA noted that LEPs in England had been told to include a commitment to promoting equality and combating discrimination in their strategies, and provide proportionate evidence on equalities issues and how investment decisions would impact on these and ensure that those with equality expertise had been involved in preparing the strategy. It went on to describe how the UK-wide equality principles that had been developed would be embedded by Managing Authorities, including equality training, equality guidance, embedding equality impact into evaluation, etc.¹⁰⁸ It is not apparent that these expectations were delivered on nor that the Government took steps to hold Managing Authorities to account.

This highlights the need for the UK Government's proposals in relation to domestic priorities, the SPF, and future funding arrangements to be equality and human rights-proofed from the outset and monitored effectively in their implementation.

¹⁰⁸ UK Partnership Agreement Equality Impact Assessment op. cit: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/368810/bis-14-1181-equality-impact-assessment-UK-partnership-agreement.pdf pages 15, 23

In its July 2017 Discussion Paper, 'Beyond Brexit: future of funding currently sourced from the EU'¹⁰⁹, the Local Government Association (LGA) sets out three options for the design and delivery of successor arrangements. It outlines eight principles, many of which will resonate with the VCS. For example, stable periods of funding, accountable to people and place, and funding that is easier to access and manage, and based on local determination and local delivery. It goes on to examine the three successor options of 'no change', 'innovative' and 'fully integrated'. The discussion paper notes that its analysis is intended to kick-start this conversation, which is timely and offers an opportunity for the VCS to join in this debate. It would be welcome, however, to see a focus on equality and human rights as underpinning principles included.

At its July 2017 IntoWork Convention,¹¹⁰ ERSA, NCVO and the Learning and Work Institute set out their key messages and design principles for future funding and the Shared Prosperity Fund.¹¹¹ Its key messages are that:

- leaving the EU is an opportunity to improve on the ESF to reduce bureaucracy and duplication, while pushing more funding to the frontline;
- the successor fund should invest to tackle skills gaps and low productivity as part of the government's Industrial Strategy;
- the new fund should be led by partnerships developing community-driven solutions for greater social cohesion;
- re-shaping investment today to deliver savings in the long-term.

Future funding design principles need to:

- reflect the link between health, wellbeing and employment services;
- ensure ease of access;
- deliver through multi-agency and multi-sectoral community partnerships;
- incorporate the principles of additionality and complementarity;
- foster innovation;
- include a mix of long-term funding and short-term trials;

¹⁰⁹ Local Government Association *Beyond Brexit: future of funding currently sources from the EU*, July 2017

¹¹⁰ http://stats.learningandwork.org.uk/events_presentations/IntoWork2017/presentations/32Future.pdf

¹¹¹ <https://www2.learningandwork.org.uk/intowork2016>

- involve a quicker process to identify need and allocate funds.

The earlier discussion on developing UK domestic priorities and the operation of the SPF with its link to an Industrial Strategy stressed the need for these to be underpinned by equality and human rights principles, and for them to advance equality and human rights goals. As noted above in relation to the LGA position, it is important that these principles continue to be reflected in the VCS campaign.

At the EDF Roundtable in July 2017, it was recommended that the sector should investigate alternative financing options. Some bodies responsible for distributing funding have begun conversations with delivery partners about the need for diversification, helping community organisations and social enterprises to identify their funding shortfalls and gaps with a view to filling them. The Welsh Funding Foundation says, 'The unspoken question here, however, is with what? The size of these funding pots hasn't increased simply because the UK is exiting the EU.'¹¹²

According to the NCVO's Civil Society Almanac 2017,¹¹³ charities receive £15.3 billion from Government, the EU and international government. The EU monies make up a minimum of £300 million. Government is the second largest source of income for charities, whilst charities and grant-making foundations provide £4 billion. These figures, together with evidence provided by the Association of Charitable Foundations and various grant-making foundations, highlight that the VCS will not be able to fill the gap left following the loss of EU funds.

The Government should therefore commit to replacing the range of EU funds at minimum in line with the current levels.

In addition, the sector as part of its work on replacement funding options should include an assessment of opportunities further afield, for example the European Social Investment Bank, the World Bank or other international donors.

Finally, the recent UK Government commitment to the continuation of the current PEACE IV programme was noted above, along with its willingness to consider how such funding might be possible post-Brexit. It is important that

¹¹² Wales Funding Foundation

¹¹³ (NCVO) UK Civil Society Almanac 2017 – Income Sources. Available at: <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/a/almanac17/income-sources-2/>

PEACE funds retain the status they currently have as a unique Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland programme. They should not become part of an overall replacement fund 'pot' of money where they might be at risk due to other demands for funding. Nor should the needs of other organisations across the four nations be placed in competition with PEACE initiatives.

Appendix A

List of acronyms

BBO	Building Better Opportunities fund
BEIS	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (subsequently BEIS)
BLF	Big Lottery Fund
BAME	Black, Asian and minority ethnic
CCT	Cross cutting themes
CST	Community Security Trust
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DExEU	Department for Exiting the European Union
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EDF	Equality and Diversity Forum
EIA	Equality Impact Assessment
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ERI	Employment Recruitment Incentives
ERSA	Employment Related Services Association
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESRA	Education and Skills Funding Agency
EU	European Union
GEO	Government Equalities Office
ICT	Information and communication technologies
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
MCHLG (formerly	Ministry for Communities, Housing and Local Government DCLG)
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NOMS	National Offenders Management Service
PA	Partnership Agreements
PROGRESS	European Commission Anti-Discrimination Progress Action Grant
REC	Rights Equality and Citizenship Programme
RNIB	Royal National Institute for the Blind
SCVO	Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SME	Small and Medium Sized Enterprise
SPF	Shared Prosperity Fund
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector

WCVA Wales Council for Voluntary Associations
WEFO Welsh European Funding Office

Appendix B

List of resources

- Department for Employment and Learning (May 2012) Mid-term Evaluation of the Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme, 2007-2013. Main report
- DWP (2014) European Social Fund in England, Improving People's Lives 2013-2014. Crown Copyright
- Employment Related Services Association (no date) European Social Fund (ESF) Investment in the UK,
- England and Gibraltar ESF convergence, competitiveness and employment programme for 2007-2013 Final ESF Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Mainstreaming Progress Report, July 2016
- European Commission (2006) European Social Fund (2007-2013) support Gender Equality.
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- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland Protecting and advancing Equality and Good Relations as the UK exits from the European Union.
<http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/EU-Exit-EqualitySummary.pdf>
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<http://www.gov.scot/resource/0040/00400347.pdf>
- HM Government (February 2017) The United Kingdom's exit from and the new partnership with the European Union. London: Crown Copyright

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- HM Government (August 2017), Northern Ireland and Ireland – position paper
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<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/799/799.pdf>
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- (NCVO) UK Civil Society Almanach 2017 – Income Sources. Available at:
<https://data.ncvo.org.uk/a/almanac17/income-sources-2/>
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- Scotland Equality Impact Assessment of European Structural Funds Programmes 2014-2020. <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0044/00448106.pdf>
- Skills Funding Agency (November 2012) Equality Impact Assessment for European Social Fund (ESF) Specifications 2012-2015.
<http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/24937/1/ESF%20Report%20%28web%29.pdf>
- Welsh European Funding Office (March 2015) WEFO Cross-cutting Themes Evaluation – Equality and Sustainability – Research Report.
- Welsh European Structural Funds Impact Assessments
<http://gov.wales/funding/eu-funds/2014-2020/programme-evaluations/equality-impact-assessments/?lang=en>
- Welsh European Funding Office (July 2014) Ireland/Wales Territorial Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 Equality Impact Assessment Report
<http://gov.wales/docs/wefo/publications/150128iwequalityimpactassessment>

[pdf](#)

- Welsh European Funding Office (July 2014) 2014-2020 European Regional Development Fund Programmes for Wales - Equality Impact Assessment Report
<http://gov.wales/docs/wefo/publications/150128erdfequalityimpactassessment.pdf>

