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Post: Research Team
Equality and Human Rights Commission
Arndale House
The Arndale Centre
Manchester M4 3AQ

Email: research@equalityhumanrights.com

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### Abbreviations and acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIS</td>
<td>Department for Business, Innovation and Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRAE</td>
<td>Children’s Rights Alliance for England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWP</td>
<td>Department for Work and Pensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDF</td>
<td>Equality and Diversity Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF</td>
<td>European Regional Development Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERSA</td>
<td>Employment Related Services Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF</td>
<td>European Social Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESIF</td>
<td>EU Structural and Investment Funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>gross domestic product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT</td>
<td>lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQI</td>
<td>lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEET</td>
<td>not in education, employment or training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REC</td>
<td>Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCVO</td>
<td>Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>Strategic Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPF</td>
<td>Shared Prosperity Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>science, technology, engineering and mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEFO</td>
<td>Welsh European Funding Office</td>
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Executive summary

The UK Government has made a commitment to replace EU structural funds with a UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) when the UK leaves the European Union (EU). This report makes recommendations for how this new fund should operate.

This research report explores how EU funds currently support equality and human rights across Great Britain, and how they operate in practice. We examined information on EU ‘structural’ funds and non-structural funds that promote equality and tackle discrimination. To supplement the literature review, we interviewed 16 funding experts and stakeholders across Britain.

EU ‘structural’ funds, including the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF), support economic development across all EU countries. The ERDF aims to address economic imbalances between regions while the ESF focuses on employment and education. The ESF and ERDF are used to provide funding to some of the most disadvantaged groups in the UK. As such, they have significant implications for people with certain protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, such as women, people from ethnic minorities, disabled people and older and younger people. However, there are procedural challenges with EU structural funds and this can sometimes undermine the effectiveness of this funding.

On average, the UK receives €36 per person per year from EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).¹ This varies by region and country, however: funding corresponds with overall deprivation levels, with less developed areas receiving more funding:

- **England** receives €27 per person, per year on average in ESIF funding – around €4.8 billion in total is related directly to equality and human rights over the period 2014–20. The primary target groups are young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), people aged 50 and over, women,

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¹ ESI funds are: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.
disabled people, those from ethnic minorities, people with multiple and complex barriers to employment, and ex-offenders.

- **Wales** receives €140 per person per year on average – approximately €3.5 billion in total over the period 2014–20, in combination with match funding. EU funding helps people into work and training and supports research and innovation in the business community.

- **Scotland** receives €47 per person per year on average – around €1.1 billion in total over 2014–20. Overall, nearly half the funding will go to employment and youth employment measures.

This funding supports a wide range of projects that have implications for equality, inclusion and human rights in Great Britain. Many of them focus on supporting disabled people, women and those from ethnic minorities to gain the skills and experience they need to succeed in the labour market. Others are intended to alleviate poverty and support those with multiple disadvantages. The EU also funds work in the field of human rights.

In this context, the Government’s commitment to replace EU structural funds is welcome. However, a continuing lack of detail about the proposed amount, scope, focus and operation of the SPF has meant that concerns about the future of funding for equality and human rights persist. Interviewees were concerned that a temporary pause or complete discontinuation of funding after Britain’s exit from the EU (‘Brexit’) would weaken the voluntary sector. There was general agreement that charitable funding bodies such as trusts and foundations would struggle to plug the gap created by the loss of EU funds, in the event that they were not adequately replaced.

**Opportunities and challenges ahead**

The current EU funding regime has many strengths that we would like to see replicated in the SPF. In particular, it is one of the only sources of long-term, multi-annual funding for people working with marginalised groups and for small, grassroots organisations.

However, EU funding processes also present challenges in the form of a lengthy and complex application process, onerous monitoring systems and a lack of flexibility in fund administration. Administration costs eat into project budgets considerably.

In the wake of Brexit, the UK Government should make sure that the SPF builds on the strengths of the EU funding regime, while addressing the difficulties and frustrations it sometimes creates.
While the Government will face many competing demands as we leave the EU, in our view, whenever possible, the protection of equality and human rights should be prioritised in decision-making. Our recommendations are for the Shared Prosperity Fund to:

1) **ensure that the funding that has been in place up until now is replicated** in terms of the amount of funding available, the types of projects supported and the eligibility criteria. This should include funds designed to promote non-discrimination and protect equality and the rights of the person.

2) **avoid a temporary pause in funding when the current funding round ends in 2020.** This is to protect projects that promote equality and human rights against the financial pressure of a ‘cliff edge’ in funding, and to prevent abrupt closure of projects that rely heavily on EU funds.

3) **continue to tackle inequality and support marginalised communities by targeting funding at disadvantaged groups sharing protected characteristics and at-risk groups.** In line with this, the cross-cutting themes of equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming should be maintained. In compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, consideration should be given to the needs of all relevant protected characteristic groups in designing the new funds.

4) **maintain long-term funding and stability** to provide the vital, sustained, support for severely marginalised people who benefit most from meaningful engagement for several years.

5) **simplify and streamline processes** to reduce the administrative burden on organisations, and diversion of, resources away from project delivery. The application process should be tailored to the needs of smaller organisations.

6) **improve the flexibility of funding** so that it is easier and simpler for projects to:

   a. find match funding
   b. move funds around within programmes
   c. make changes to projects once they are underway, and
   d. cover overhead and core costs, which is particularly important for smaller organisations.
7) ensure funding and decisions are devolved to the appropriate level, giving proper consideration to devolution, localisation and targeting of funds – while simultaneously supporting a Britain-wide strategy. This will enable devolved governments and local authorities to cater to the needs of national and local populations.

8) improve data collection and monitoring of protected characteristics and at-risk groups so that project outcomes can be properly evaluated by governments and other local authorities. Evaluation should take on board the views of marginalised groups and consider how projects can be improved in future. Data collection requirements and processes must be designed in a way that minimises administrative burden, and adequate time and resources should be allocated to enable such monitoring and evaluation to take place.
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

EU structural funds, including the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF), support economic development across all EU countries. The ERDF aims to address imbalances between regions through projects focused on small and medium-sized enterprises as well as the digital agenda and the low-carbon economy.\(^2\) The ESF has a focus on employment and education.\(^3\)

There is a seven-year funding period and projects typically last three to four years.

The ESF and ERDF are used to provide funding to some of the most disadvantaged groups in the UK and have significant implications for people with certain protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, such as women, ethnic minorities, disabled people and older and younger people. The UK Government has made a commitment to replace EU structural funds with a UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), the details of which are currently unknown. At the time of writing, the Government is still to consult on the SPF.

1.2 Aims of the research

The aims of this research are:

- to gain a better understanding of how EU Funds are currently used, and have been used in the past, to promote equality and human rights across England, Scotland and Wales, and analyse funding at regional level within those three countries

- to understand what the economic and social impact could be on people with particular protected characteristics if these funds (structural and other funds

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relevant to equality and human rights) are not maintained, as well as the impact on wider civil society

- to explore the challenges of operating within the current EU funding regime, and identify opportunities for making improvements in the context of a future funding regime, and

- to develop priorities and to make recommendations on the proposed UK Shared Prosperity Fund, based on evidence of need and an analysis of how funds have been utilised in the past.
2 Methodology

2.1 Literature review

We reviewed quantitative and qualitative literature sources for the funding periods 2014–20 and, for further background, 2007–13. This included documentation on ESF- and ERDF-funded projects in England, Wales and Scotland. We also studied data and literature from fund management authorities and organisations funded by the EU. Some data was provided directly to us by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in England and by the Scottish and Welsh governments.

Our literature search terms included the following in different combinations: ESF; ERDF; protected characteristics; impact of EU funds on equality and human rights; EU structural funds + women, age, young people, ethnic minorities, disabled people, sex. We also looked in some cases at funds that fall outside the European Structural and Investment funds, such as the Daphne Programme, and its successor, the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC). It should be noted that the review did not cover all EU funding that is relevant to equality and human rights.

We reviewed the evidence on the protected characteristics of beneficiaries of EU-funded projects in order to assess the impact of loss of funds for each of these. However, the data on this is patchy, with data collection better for some protected characteristics than for others. Generally, we found better data on age, race, sex and disability than on the other protected characteristics. Figure 2.1 gives an overview of protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and relevant EU fund target groups. Our findings can be viewed in full in chapter three.

In line with the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s mandate, which covers GB, this report does not cover Northern Ireland.
Figure 2.1 Protected characteristics and relevant EU fund target groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010</th>
<th>Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership (in employment), pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevant EU fund target groups</td>
<td>Young people, disabled people, people from ethnic minorities, women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Stakeholder interviews and case studies

To supplement the literature review, we carried out 16 interviews, mostly by telephone, with selected stakeholders from across Great Britain – six in England (including two from one organisation), five in Wales and five in Scotland. The purpose of the interviews was to explore the potential impact of the loss of EU funds and discuss the risks and challenges ahead. The interviews contextualise and add depth to the quantitative data presented in chapter three. They also helped us to develop the case studies in this report, some of which are summarised in chapter 3 with full details of all provided in the annex.

We selected the interviewees from national governments, local authorities, NGOs and strategic grant makers or fund administrators. The interviews were semi-structured and followed an agreed topic guide (provided in the annex). We asked interviewees for their views about the strengths and weaknesses of the current funding scheme. We also explored what shape the SPF should take and the broader implications of the removal of EU funds for those with protected characteristics. The thematic findings from the interviews are presented in chapters four and five. The full list of the organisations we interviewed is provided in the annex.

The primary research conducted for this report is qualitative, not quantitative, and therefore not statistically representative of any particular group. Due to resource and time constraints, a relatively small number of interviews was conducted. The views
expressed in their interviews are those of the individuals interviewed, rather than the official, policy view of their organisations.
3 What’s at stake? How EU funding affects equality and human rights in Britain

This chapter provides information on how EU funding is currently spent across Britain and the benefits experienced by people with certain protected characteristics. Each nation is dealt with in turn, with information provided on the scope of funding and its impact on different groups, such as younger people, disabled people and ethnic minorities.

A wide range of EU-funded projects currently operates in the UK: 211 in total. Over half of these focus on skills and work experience and a similar proportion is aimed at people with certain protected characteristics. The largest focus is on young people (31%), followed by disabled people (18%). Five per cent of projects focus on more than three protected characteristics (EDF 2018).

The distribution of EU funding varies considerably around Britain, depending on need. Figure 3.1 gives an overview of EU funding per head by region, compared with the UK average.
Figure 3.1 ESF and EDRF funding per person, per year by region, relative to the UK average

Source: House of Commons (2018a). UK average is €24 per person per year. Note that the Welsh figure is nearer the top of its band.
3.1 England

Overview

- European structural funding directed towards equality and human rights in England is estimated to be worth around €4.8 billion in the period 2014–20. The country receives €27 per person per year on average from ESI funds.

- The target groups for EU funding include young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), people aged 50 or over, women, disabled and minority ethnic people, people with multiple complex barriers and offenders and ex-offenders.

- EU funding benefits tens of thousands of disadvantaged people across the English regions. It is set to support 36,000 disabled people in the North West alone, for example, in the period 2014–20. Similarly, 150,000 migrants in London will benefit from the funding in the same period. Thousands of women – who are more likely to be unemployed or in low-paid, part-time positions than men – access services funded by the EU.

- EU funding is targeted on the areas in most need, although the majority of English regions are classed as ‘more developed’ by the EU (gross domestic product (GDP) per head is equivalent to, or greater than, 90% of the EU average).

- Six areas are classed as ‘transition regions’ (GDP per head is greater than 75% of the EU average but below 90%). These are in the North West, North East, Yorkshire & Humber, West and East Midlands and the South West. Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly is the only English region classed as ‘less developed’ (GDP per head is less than 75% of the EU average).

- The South West receives the most funding from the ESF and ERDF: around €1.5 billion in the period 2014–20. The North West receives €1.1 billion. The South East receives the least funding: €286 million. See figures 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 for more detail.

- In the period 2007–13, around €2.9 billion of European funding was spent in England. Among other outcomes, 500,000 people were helped into employment.
Figure 3.2 Classification of English regions: level of development for EU structural funds

Key
- Less developed regions (GDP/head < 75% of EU-27 average)
- Transition regions (GDP/head between >=75% and <90% of EU-27 average)
- More developed regions (GDP/head >= 90% of EU-27 average)

Development is based on GDP per person compared with the EU average. Source: European Commission. The less developed region is Cornwall and Isles of Scilly. Transition regions are Devon, Shropshire and Staffordshire, East Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, Lancashire, Cumbria, Tees Valley and Durham. It should be noted that there may be pockets of deprivation within developed regions.
Darker colour denotes greater number of beneficiaries. 2014–20 programming period.
Source: DWP. Note: figures have been rounded. These figures are compiled by looking at individual projects and counting the number of registered participants. Some target people who face multiple disadvantages and is it therefore not possible to assess exactly how many people who have specific protected characteristics benefit from these projects. Further, the actual figures for these categories are probably higher than those recorded here, as this information is not available for all projects. In addition, totals will be affected by potential double counting, as people may be benefitting from different types of project.
Figure 3.4 Levels of ESF and ERDF investment by region in England 2014-2020

Darker colour denotes greater levels of funding. 2014–20 programming period.
Source: DWP. Note that the breakdowns do not add up to the overall total in many cases, as the ESF and ERDF figures relate to projects approved, whereas the overall figure relates to the EU funds allocated to England.
Funding period 2014–20

In England, the ESF4 has provided significant support to many disadvantaged and at-risk individuals. This has been in the areas of employment support, education and training and the promotion of social inclusion (DWP 2015). ESF programmes and projects have targeted disabled people, lone parents, older workers, ethnic minorities, women, young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and individuals who lack basic skills.5

Table 3.1 provides an estimate of the number of participants by age, ethnicity, disability and sex in ESF projects in England (where the data permits) in the period 2014 – Q1 2018.6

Table 3.1 Estimated number of participants in English ESF-funded projects, by protected characteristic, 2014 – Q1 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investment priority</th>
<th>Age*</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Sex**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to employment</td>
<td>59,123</td>
<td>87,410</td>
<td>80,448</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustained integration for young people</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>62,080</td>
<td>18,177</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Employment Initiative</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,514</td>
<td>9,957</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active inclusion</td>
<td>45,326</td>
<td>88,127</td>
<td>72,684</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive labour markets</td>
<td>5,027</td>
<td>4,105</td>
<td>5,322</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong learning</td>
<td>47,680</td>
<td>33,013</td>
<td>18,230</td>
<td>45,660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DWP, customised data extraction based on provision contracted up to Q1 2018. *Programmes covering: those under 25, those above 50, and those above 54. **Employed females gaining and improved labour market status. Note: zero entries do not necessarily mean there are no participants with these characteristics, but they are not the key target groups.

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4 The ESF is part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme for England (2014–20). It includes funds from the Youth Employment Initiative in areas affected by high youth unemployment rates.


6 The estimates are based on England’s ESF Managing Authority’s quarterly management information cycles, which were provided by the DWP. The estimated number of participants with the different protected characteristics in ESF-funded projects – up to Q1 2018 – have been taken from programme indicators that correspond most closely with the respective protected characteristics.
For the 2014–20 funding period, €1.5 billion is available from the ERDF for England per year. Overall, including supplementary public and private funds, a total of €3.6 billion is available (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015). In practical terms, this means that in England, the regions that are prioritised are those in the 20% most deprived areas using the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

**Funding period 2007–13**

During 2007–13, the ESF programme in England targeted less developed regions, and was aimed at increasing regional competitiveness, raising employment and reaching those most in need (DWP 2011). The key priorities were:

1. to increase employment opportunities and tackle barriers for unemployed people and those facing disadvantages in the labour market⁷ (with approx. £1.5 billion available),⁸ and
2. to develop individuals’ skills and support an adaptable workforce (with approx. £825 million available) (DWP 2015a).

As in the 2014–20 programming period, the funding was targeted at disadvantaged groups. Approximately £5 billion was invested in total in England, half of which originated from the ESF and the other half from co-financing organisations and local funding (match funding). There were additional funds for programmes and projects aimed at tackling barriers to employment and improving the skills of the local workforce in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (approximately £77 million was made available from ESF funds).

By May 2015, the DWP reported 521,000 unemployed or inactive participants had been helped into jobs; 262,000 participants had gained basic skills; 682,000 participants had gained qualifications at International Standard Classification of Education level 2 or above; and 533,000 disadvantaged young people had been helped to enter employment, education or training.⁹

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⁷ For the purposes of ESF-funded projects, labour market disadvantage is considered to stem from one or more of the following factors: belonging to black minority ethnic communities; not having English as a first language; being a lone parent; being disabled or having a long-term illness; having adult or childcare responsibilities; being over 50; being long-term unemployed (out of work for longer than one year); young people not in employment, education or training (NEET); offenders and ex-offenders; individuals with problems related to citizenship or visas; those facing alcohol or substance abuse issues; those who possess no or low level qualifications/skills.

⁸ The DWP documentation quotes in pound sterling rather than euro.

Case studies

These are some examples of EU-funded projects in England, which currently support people with certain protected characteristics. The full case studies can be found in the appendix.

Young people

‘DurhamWorks’ is run by Durham County Council with several delivery partners. It aims to support almost 6,000 15-24-year-old unemployed County Durham residents into employment, education or training through intensive and long-term support.

Disabled people

The ACE project (Able, Capable, Employed) is a £5.5-million, London-wide project that aims to support 1,000 Londoners who are disabled or have long-term health conditions into sustainable employment.

Ethnic minorities

The Migrant Engagement project runs in the South East Midlands. It is run by the Polish British Integration Centre Ltd and works with hard-to-reach ethnic minority communities in the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership area to improve people’s employability, skills and contribution to the labour market.

Women

The Single Parent Employment Pathway, managed by Gingerbread with £660,000 of ESF funding, supports single parents (the vast majority of whom are women) into employment, education and training in the Liverpool City Region. Individual advice and guidance sessions with a support worker help each participant to identify their needs. They are then offered opportunities such as volunteering and ‘job clubs’, which focus on CV writing and building interview skills.

Job seekers in Cornwall

Participants in the ‘Who Dares Works’ initiative are preparing land for the conservation of Cornish Black Bees, which play a very important part in local bio-diversity. The initiative is a partnership of 17 organisations, led by Active
Plus, funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund, helping people in West Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to get back into training, education and work. The work involves building fences, chicken runs and other facilities on a farm. Benefits include boosting confidence and wellbeing while also gaining valuable work experience. One participant said, ‘before being given this opportunity I was unemployed for five years because of poor mental health. After completing this course, I have been given the opportunity to meet new people and my self-worth has increased. This course has opened up many new opportunities and I’m confident it will result in finding full time employment.’ According to Mark Yeoman, the Who Dares Works Partnership Manager, there are multiple benefits for local communities, the environment and the local economy: ‘This activity is a win-win-win that brings together all aspects of sustainable development.’
3.2 Wales

Overview

- ESI funding directed towards equality and human rights in Wales is worth around €3.5 billion in the period 2014–20. The country receives €140 per person per year on average from ESI funds. This is much higher than Scotland and England.

- EU funding aims to tackle poverty, social exclusion and unemployment in deprived areas of Wales. Amongst the beneficiaries are women, disabled people and people from ethnic minorities. Wales has a higher proportion of disabled people than the UK average (ONS, 2018).

- The funding also supports research and innovation in the business community. Since 2014, EU funds have assisted around 4,000 enterprises and established more than 800 new ones. 6,000 jobs have been created, nearly 10,000 people have been supported into work and 50,000 people have been helped to gain qualifications.

- West Wales and the Valleys is categorised by the EU as a less developed region; it has the highest proportion of Incapacity Benefit claimants in Britain (BIS, 2014). More than 80% of Wales’ European funding is spent in this part of the country. In the period 2014–20, EU funding is set to benefit thousands of people across this region. This includes 75,000 young people and around a quarter of a million people in disadvantaged communities.

- East Wales receives less funding but is still classed as a ‘transition’ region by the EU. Funding is set to support 36,000 young people and 3,500 disabled people. See figures 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 for more detail.

- Wales received approximately €2.1 billion from EU funds during 2007–13, which resulted in the creation of around 37,000 jobs and 12,000 enterprises.
Figure 3.5 Classification of Wales: level of development for EU structural funds

Source: European Commission. Development is based on GDP per person compared with the EU average. It should be noted that there may be individual pockets of deprivation within developed regions.
Figure 3.6 Beneficiaries of EU structural funds by selected characteristics – actual projects in place (Wales) 2014–20

Darker colours denote greater numbers of beneficiaries. 2014–20 programming period

Source: Welsh Government. Note: Figures have been rounded. These figures are compiled by looking at individual projects and counting the number of registered participants. Some target people facing multiple disadvantage and it is therefore not possible to assess exactly how many people who share specific protected characteristics benefit from these projects. Further, the actual figures for these categories are probably higher than those recorded here, as this information is not available for all projects. In addition, totals will be affected by potential double counting, as people may be benefitting from different types of project.
Figure 3.7 Levels of ESF and ERDF investment by region in Wales 2014–20

Darker colours denote greater levels of funding. 2014–20 programming period.

Source: Welsh Government. Note that the breakdowns do not add up to the overall total in many cases, as the ESF and ERDF figures relate to projects approved, whereas the overall figure relates to the EU funds allocated to Wales.
Funding period 2014–20

The EU structural funds (ESF and ERDF combined) and match funding are set to reach a total investment of over £3 billion across Wales during 2014–20 (Welsh Government 2018). The funding is intended to support young people into work, enhance research and innovation, support small businesses, expand green energy and develop poor urban areas.

During the 2014–20 programme, EU funds (ESF and ERDF combined) have so far assisted around 4,000 enterprises and established over 830 new ones. They have also created over 6,000 jobs, supported 9,600 people into work and helped 49,800 people to gain qualifications (Welsh Government 2018).

The West, North Wales and Valleys ESF programme is set to reach a total investment of around £1.1 billion over the current funding period. It aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion by helping disadvantaged people develop their skills and find employment. It also aims to tackle inequalities faced by young people, women and minorities in the labour market (Welsh Government 2014). EU-funded organisations are therefore expected to set appropriate targets for reaching young people, older people, disabled people, people from ethnic minorities and those with caring responsibilities (Welsh Government 2014).

ESF funding in East Wales is set to reach a total investment of around £500 million in the period 2014–20. There is a particular focus on gender inequality in this region. EU funding aims to address the gender pay gap, improve workplace flexibility, reduce ‘occupational segregation’ (which leads to women dominating low-paid occupations) and enable women to enter typically male-dominated industries (Welsh Government 2014b).

Funding period 2007–13

Wales received around £1.8 billion from the EU during 2007–13. Combined with match funding, approximately £3.4 billion was spent in Wales in this period. The funds enabled 234,000 people to obtain qualifications and 73,000 people to find employment. The funds also created 37,000 jobs and established 12,000 enterprises (Welsh Government 2014a). Nearly 300 employment-related projects were supported across Wales, resulting in the delivery of 33,000 apprenticeships and 12,000 traineeships. 15,000 jobs were created for 16-24-year-olds across Wales. ESF-funded projects were targeted in particular at ethnic minorities, disabled people and women (WEFO 2017).

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10 Welsh government documentation quoted in pound sterling.
Case studies

These are some examples of EU-funded projects in Wales which currently support a range of groups and communities. The full case studies can be found in the appendix.

**Young people**

The Agri-Academy Junior Programme inspires those aged 16 to 19 to consider a career in the food and farming industry. Participants are provided with media training, mentoring, networking opportunities and help with personal development.

**Ethnic minorities**

The Achieving Change through Employment programme (ACE) helps people from ethnic minorities and migrants to develop their skills (including language skills) and find employment. One of the project’s case managers said, ‘I know that they’d been nervous about accepting support from a charity like us, but they have said that they had such a good experience…it feels really good to know that if they need to find work again in the future [thanks to us] they’ll know what to do’.

**Disabled people**

The Active Inclusion Fund is supported by the ESF and provides financial support for a range of organisations that work with unemployed people. It aims to reduce the disability employment gap. The most recent round of funding, announced in June 2018, will see £3.5 million allocated to 25 organisations across Wales. Activities include training, work placements and confidence-building activities.

**Women**

The Agile Nation 2 project operates in West Wales and the Valleys and provides career guidance and training to disabled and socially excluded women, who often find it difficult to progress in their careers. ESF funding has contributed about €9 million to this project. The project is estimated to have helped 6,000 women and between 800 and 900 businesses.
3.3 Scotland

Overview

- European funding directed towards equality and human rights in Scotland is worth around €1.1 billion in the period 2014-20. The country receives €47 per person per year on average from ESI funds – more than England, but much less than Wales.

- EU funds are intended to tackle poverty and social exclusion. Around half of all funding is aimed at supporting employment, particularly youth employment.

- Scotland is divided into two large areas for the purposes of allocating EU funding. The Highlands and Islands is categorised as a transition region and is set to receive around €200 million in 2014–20. The Rest of Scotland is classified as a more developed region and is set to receive around €650 million in the same period. Because of a lack of data, we are unable to provide an overview of the project beneficiaries.

- In 2007–13, the ESF supported over 800 projects across Scotland, with an estimated €450 million spent.
Figure 3.9 Classification of Scotland: level of development for EU structural funds

Source: European Commission. Development is based on GDP per person compared with the EU average. It should be noted that there may be individual pockets of deprivation within developed regions, for example the Dundee area.
Figure 3.10 Levels of ESF and ERDF investment by region in Scotland

Darker colours denote greater levels of funding.
Source: Scottish Government. 2014-2020 programming period. Note that the breakdowns do not add up to the overall total in many cases, as the ESF and ERDF figures relate to projects approved, whereas the overall figure relates to the EU funds allocated to Scotland. A targeted Youth Employment Initiative runs in South Western Scotland.
Funding period 2014–20

In the period 2014–20, Scotland will receive €476 million from the ERDF and €465 million from the ESF, which includes a separate allocation for youth employment of just over €46 million. Nearly half the overall funding (48%) will go to employment and youth employment measures, with 21% on social inclusion and 29% on increasing skills levels. The remaining 2% will be spent on technical assistance, which supports the management of the funds in Scotland (Scottish Government 2015).

The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) Strategic Intervention aims to help young people, particularly those not in employment, education or training (NEET), into work in South West Scotland. EU funding has been provided to colleges in this area to meet this objective. So far, the Scottish Government has committed £59 million from the YEI to this intervention, alongside an additional £30 million from partner funding. The YEI operations are aiming to assist almost 20,000 individuals (Scottish Government 2017).\(^\text{11}\)

The ‘Developing Scotland’s Workforce Strategic Intervention’ gives a major boost to skills development. It uses European funds to expand Scotland’s Modern Apprenticeship programme in sectors including science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). It is also creating a work-based learning approach through the use of apprenticeships and vocational skills training.

There is also a focus on tackling poverty and inequality. The ‘Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategic Intervention’ supports people to participate in society and tackles poverty, unemployment and social disadvantage.

Funding period 2007–13

EU Structural Funds during the 2007–13 period created jobs and raised productivity in a bid to tackle a lack of skills, low pay and unemployment, particularly among the younger generation. During this period, Scotland also sought to use EU funds to make lifelong learning more accessible, to bring more under-represented groups into the workforce, and to improve the skills of its entrepreneurs and managers in small and medium-sized enterprises.

The European Structural Fund 2007–13 Programmes supported over 800 projects across Scotland, with an estimated €450 million being distributed across the country.

\(^{11}\) Scottish Government documentation quotes in pound sterling rather than euro.
Data on programme participants in Annual Implementation Reports show that the projects covered the following groups: young people (15–24 years), older people (55–64 years), migrants and disabled people.

**Case studies**

These are some examples of EU-funded projects in Scotland which currently support or have supported a range of groups and communities. The full case studies can be found in the appendix.

**Young people’s mental health**

A Prince’s Trust project, supported by ESF funding, provides support for young people to develop their team-working skills, overcome challenges and achieve their ambitions. One participant, Rachel, had experienced mental health conditions. The project reports that every day on the project saw Rachel improve: she gradually became aware of her positive qualities and learned how to put them to use. During a residential week away, she overcame her social anxiety by leading and supporting other young people who were struggling. She said: ‘if I hadn’t got involved with The Prince’s Trust, I’d never have realised what I’m capable of and would still be depressed and not doing anything. Now, for the first time in years I have manageable goals to achieve and a positive path in front of me’. Rachel is now studying art and design at college and hopes to develop a career in art therapy.

**Disabled people**

Progress Fife helps disabled people to realise their full potential through accredited training, further education and sustainable paid employment. The project provides work placements, builds job application skills and helps people to manage health conditions and disabilities in the workplace.

**Ethnic minorities**

The Bridges Programmes supports the social, educational and economic integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Glasgow. Sita (not her real name) is an asylum seeker from Ivory Coast who has been living in Scotland since 2011. Sita completed the Women’s Empowerment Course at Bridges Programmes and then trained as a mentor to other female refugees/asylum
seekers. She regularly volunteers in her community and serves as an inspiration to other at-risk women.

**Women**

The Harris Tweed Training and Development Programme in the Outer Hebrides was supported by ESF funding. The project offered flexibility and part-time hours to women with caring responsibilities. 126 people took part.

**Facilitating employment in Shetland**

The Moving On Employment Project in Shetland helped people facing multiple barriers to employment by providing them with short-term work projects. Project managers assessed participants to understand their specific needs and circumstances and a tailored action plan was formulated to help them move forward. The project provided employer matching, hands-on support to people while employed and education and training opportunities. During 2013–14, 155 people were supported, with a majority going on to find employment.
4 Focus of future funding: concerns and potential risks

The interviews and literature review we conducted indicate that there is widespread concern among stakeholders across England, Scotland and Wales about the future of funding. This chapter sets out the various concerns, drawing on our literature review and stakeholder interviews.

4.1 Impact on voluntary sector organisations

The Government’s commitment to replace EU structural funds with the SPF is welcome. However, a lack of detail in relation to the amount, scope, focus and operation of the proposed fund has meant that interviewees’ concerns are yet to be fully allayed. While the Government will face many competing demands as we leave the EU, in our view, whenever possible, the protection of equality and human rights should be prioritised.

There is concern that voluntary sector organisations working on equality and human rights could face closure due to loss of funds if not appropriately replaced by the SPF. An interviewee from the Welsh Government said:

The third sector might face collapse. There has been an overreliance on EU funds and there is a real nervousness about what will happen next.

One interviewee noted that large parts of the voluntary sector in Scotland are ‘propped up’ by EU funding, particularly those organisations working to enhance skills and employability. Inclusion Scotland, which is a charity campaigning on behalf of disabled people, issued the following statement after the Brexit referendum result in 2016:

The many third sector organisations that rely on European funding [in Scotland] appear to face a bleak future (Inclusion Scotland, 2016).
There is particular concern that EU funding will not be replaced by similar funds after Brexit which, according to the Local Government Association (LGA) in England, would cause a €10.5 billion (£8.4 billion) funding gap for local areas in England when funding is no longer available (LGA, 2017). As noted in section 4.4, the charitable funding sector is very unlikely to be able to plug the gap left behind.

The threat posed by the loss of or changes to EU funds is felt keenly across local government and its partners in the voluntary sector:

Areas will receive a financial loss if funding is stopped or paused. Organisations, including the voluntary and community sector, that currently deliver EU funded projects will have to close down if there is not a continuation of funding. Without a replacement funding stream in place and operational by 1 January 2021, local areas will see a massive reduction in resources and their ability to create jobs, support businesses and develop their economies. (LGA, 2018)

4.2 Impact on projects to promote equality and human rights

Despite the Government’s commitment to establish a new fund, participants were concerned that projects aimed at promoting equality and protecting human rights may not receive adequate financial support in future. There were concerns, for example, that the SPF may not have the same focus on equality and human rights concerns as current EU funds. It was felt that there would be a disproportionate impact on people with certain protected characteristics, as well as a reduced focus on social inclusion and human rights.

Disproportionate impact on people with certain protected characteristics

One interviewee from the Welsh Government said:

A lot of policy areas would struggle and things would have to be rejigged. There would be a huge gap and we wouldn’t be able to fill it, which would inevitably impact on equality – those who need the funds the most might not be able to access them.

An interviewee in Scotland highlighted the impact on disabled people:
There is a significant amount of money received from the EU, and the loss of that would be huge, particularly on employability support programmes and skills training of disabled people. The funds have allowed disabled people’s organisations to apply for significant funding – we believe as much as 19% of EU structural funds directly support disabled people. Given that we are already seeing smaller disabled people’s organisations shutting down due to austerity-driven cuts, Brexit may well exacerbate this trend if sufficient and similarly targeted replacement funding is not available and will also lead to greater competition between the remaining disabled people’s organisations for alternative funding. (Inclusion Scotland)

An interviewee at the Welsh charity Chwarae Teg, which focuses on supporting the economic development of women, felt that many of its existing beneficiaries would lose support as they could not afford to pay for services. An interviewee from the Women’s Organisation in England felt that there may be a ‘loss of interest in gender and disadvantage in general. This could have wider implications for society in terms of social regression.’

A survey of voluntary sector organisations in Scotland found that 80% of respondents felt that leaving the EU would have a negative impact on human rights and equality (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations – SCVO, 2016).

**Reduced focus on social inclusion and socio-economic equality**

Some interviewees expressed concern that the focus on social inclusion and socio-economic equality may be lost if the UK Government chooses to prioritise economic growth above other concerns in designing the SPF. An interviewee from the National Lottery Community Fund 12 in the UK was worried that ‘the more marginalised communities may be left behind and inequalities increase’.

An interviewee from the SCVO highlighted the fact that EU social funds have made a huge difference to investment and support of equality and human rights in Scotland, tackling poverty and improving employability.

The Scottish Government (2016) has warned of serious consequences for local government in Scotland, as many economic regeneration projects are funded by the

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12 The National Lottery Community Fund (formerly the Big Lottery Fund) is a non-departmental public body responsible for distributing funds raised by the National Lottery for good causes. Since 2004 it has awarded over £6 billion to more than 130,000 projects in the UK.
EU. Interviewees in Scotland raised particular concern about the wellbeing of more remote communities, many of which have high levels of poverty and inadequate infrastructure.

**Reduced focus on human rights**

If the SPF is not designed appropriately, there is a risk of a funding gap for projects promoting access to rights. In the absence of EU funding aimed at promoting fundamental rights, projects tackling violence against children, for example, may no longer be possible. Referring to projects about fundamental rights, an interviewee from the Children’s Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) said:

> It’s really hard to get funding for that kind of work [in the UK]. There are pretty limited sources of funding for that kind of work out there and the pots are getting smaller and smaller. EU funding was a pretty good source for organisations working in human rights and equality, for example issues of violence against children. EU funding has its issues, the projects are onerous to manage, but they do provide funding for lots of the issues that these NGOs work on.

The same interviewee also noted that the EU was particularly receptive to CRAE’s work on children’s rights:

> The European Commission was always very responsive, and that is because of the legislation that existed in the EU, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Children’s Rights Strategy. It was obviously an organisation that recognised children as rights holders, so it was an advantage when seeking funds.

**4.3 Risk to partnerships**

The ERDF has enabled the development of strong partnerships between national and local organisations in regions across Britain. These partnerships provide mutual guidance, information and support on equality and human rights issues. 39% of Scottish charities are, or have previously been, part of European networks, projects, collaborations or learning exchanges (SCVO 2018). EU-coordinated networks and forums are therefore under threat.

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13 EU funding for such projects is currently primarily funded from the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC), which is not an EU structural fund.
The future of funding for equality and human rights

Focus of future funding

The Women’s Organisation in England said:

EU funding has transformed cities like Liverpool. It would be catastrophic if the infrastructure [improvement] wasn’t continued. The cohesive element for many organisations is that there is a resource that they are managing – the EU funds – which ensures good cooperation. EU funding has also transformed people’s lives…as a result of EU investment and planning.

In Wales, an interviewee from the charity Chwarae Teg expressed concerns about losing partnerships with business:

…it would be catastrophic if the infrastructure [improvement] wasn’t continued. The cohesive element for many organisations is that there is a resource that they are managing – the EU funds which ensures good cooperation. EU funding has also transformed people’s lives…as a result of EU investment and planning.

In Wales, an interviewee from the charity Chwarae Teg expressed concerns about losing partnerships with business:

…we have been able to get businesses in Wales to focus on their equality and diversity practices, and this would be lost if we were not able to operate in the same way.

Another interviewee in Wales expressed concerns about losing links to the labour market:

One immediate impact would be on the number of apprenticeship places that are currently being supported and the number of opportunities for young people. (WEFO)

4.4 Inability to plan for the future

There was also frustration among those we interviewed that the perceived lack of details about the SPF proposals left them unable to plan for future contingencies.

The interviewees from organisations receiving EU funding said they were trying to explore alternative sources of funding, but were unclear where replacement funding could come from, if not from government sources. Interviewees were very doubtful that grant-making bodies such as trusts and foundations, who currently provide £6.5 billion to the voluntary sector, will be able to plug the gap. The Association of Charitable Foundations (ACF) has said that ‘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 [voluntary and community sector] to provide essential support to those communities’ (EDF 2018, p. 8). Interviewees anticipated a difficult environment, with increased competition for shrinking funds.
One interviewee in Wales noted that:

_We are considering what contingency plans would be necessary, but there would be a huge loss if the funding was not replaced across many policy areas._

There have been concerns about the need for organisations at the local and regional level to be involved in the design of the fund. The LGA has called on the UK Government to commit to working with local authorities to develop a UK replacement fund that ensures local areas ‘continue to thrive and contribute to the national wealth of our nation’ (LGA, 2017).

In Scotland, interviewees had been exploring alternatives, although funding streams were deemed to be relatively scarce. The LEADER\(^\text{14}\) funding stream, which supports rural development, is one source of funding that currently complements the ERDF. Participants said they were looking into this, in the hope it could mitigate the loss of EU funds.

The SCVO has argued that the Scottish Government should put in place contingency plans to ensure that the charitable sector, and equality and human rights in general, are not weakened after Brexit. It has also stated that if there were to be a ‘hard Brexit’, this may push many of the least well-off in Scotland into greater hardship, ultimately leading to a rise in demand for the services provided by voluntary sector organisations (SCVO 2018).

An interviewee from the Wales Co-operative Centre spoke of the need to diversify funding streams:

_We are not underestimating the challenges ahead. We will have to continue to diversify and our chief executive is looking at new sources of funding. We just have to continue to do a really good job so that when the funding does come to an end, funders will come to us._

Ultimately, all those facing competing demands for funding should, wherever possible, use equality considerations to aid the difficult process of prioritisation.

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5 The road ahead: challenges and opportunities

The UK Government has made a commitment to replacing EU Structural Funds with a UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), the details of which are unknown at the time of writing. It is important that the SPF retains the advantages of EU funding, while addressing its challenges. This chapter looks at how this could be achieved.

5.1 Building on the advantages of EU funding

This section sets out our findings on the positive features of the current funding regime. We argue that the design of a new fund should ensure the continuation of these features.

Maintaining (or extending) the level and scope of funding

As the previous chapters set out, EU funds currently provide significant support for equality and human rights across Great Britain, and there are widespread concerns about the impact of losing these funds. Our interviewees felt that a replacement fund should, as a minimum, replicate what has been in place up until now. Maintaining this funding would ensure vital projects can continue:

How the SPF is configured is crucial. We’re not expecting it to replace EU funding exactly. But the reality is that these services [supporting women] are needed, regardless of funding. (The Women’s Organisation)

A range of lobbying and pressure groups, and national governments, have issued statements about the need for funding. The Welsh Government has called on the UK Government to ensure that Wales is ‘not a penny worse off’ following Brexit (Welsh Government 2017). The UK-wide organisation Disability Rights UK, which supports disability rights, is calling on the UK Government to introduce funding that at least matches current EU funding for disability rights, including the match funding currently supplied by the UK Government. This will ensure the continuation of support for
disabled people in the areas of civic participation, employment and independent living (Disability Rights UK, 2017).

Some interviewees emphasised the importance of continuing funding for different types of project. This was the view of the CRAE in England:

It’s about the impact of the fund. The UK Shared Prosperity fund should be looking at issues that are not so popular. The challenge is going to be about funding policy and influencing work. A lot of our work has that element, it’s not just about service delivery or research. When we got money from the European Commission, they did fund that angle as well…. EU funds did provide a critical source for important work in the field of fundamental rights and there needs to be some kind of way of replicating that.

Reaching at-risk groups and those with certain protected characteristics

EU funding plays a crucial role in helping to reach those who are particularly at-risk and coping with multiple issues, including homelessness and substance use, for example, as detailed in chapter 3. For these groups, funding is often limited. The EDF (2018, p. 8) recognised this, noting that:

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.

It was clear from our research that a new funding regime should continue to support at-risk and protected characteristic groups, and could go even further in doing so. The Employment Related Services Association (ERSA) holds the view that the cross-cutting themes of equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming – which are covered by both the ESF and ERDF – should also be a feature of the new fund. This would maintain the focus on tackling inequality and ensuring marginalised communities have a voice (ERSA 2017). In addition, it notes:

A successor initiative should invest in services that support disadvantaged and hard-to-reach communities neglected by mainstream state provision. In doing so, it will help tackle the UK’s current skills gaps and productivity challenges and deliver a thriving labour market in line with the Government’s Industrial Strategy. Importantly, communities will also be better positioned to
generate local opportunities for themselves and withstand the impact of economic shocks by becoming more economically resilient.

Many interviewees agreed. They were keen that the SPF focussed on groups that have tended to be neglected, particularly those in deprived areas:

There is no focus on masculinity in the [Welsh] Valleys – of addressing the challenges young white men face since the loss of traditional industries. It would be great to think about the differential impacts of gender inequalities and work in relation to both women and men.

We also need to consider integrating a socio-economic focus within tackling inequalities. In some cases, FE colleges pay for bus fares and lunches for young people in poverty who previously had free school meals, to enable them to have access to further education. But what do you do if your local college doesn’t do this? This is where a socio-economic equality duty would be useful. (Researcher, Cardiff University)

Some interviewees also saw an opportunity to increase efficiency and effectiveness of funds by matching them to the specific needs of marginalised and disadvantaged groups across Britain.

**Retaining long-term funding**

Our research showed that many Government-funded employment interventions are driven by short-term, unrealistic targets, whereas in contrast the longer-term nature of EU funding supports multi-annual projects within the context of the seven-year funding period (typically three- or four-year projects) and allows meaningful engagement with individuals who are often socially disadvantaged and unlikely to find employment quickly and easily. This theme was touched on by many of our interviewees:

The ESF can fill the gaps where mainstream provision does not exist. Building Better Opportunities [a grant fund] allows grant holders to spend as much time as they need to with participants, especially those who are far from the labour market. Coaches and mentors all say that this is fantastic, as they are not under pressure to move individuals off the case book before they are ready…not many programmes can overcome these initial types of barriers and help individuals to build confidence (National Lottery Community Fund).
The time period makes a huge difference. You can’t plan on an annual or biannual basis...some people are on a three-year progression plan and this avoids a revolving door scenario between benefits and the labour market. (Welsh Government)

In Wales, an interviewee from WEFO said:

The nature of the target group, ie those who are hardest to reach, presents real challenges in engaging with these individuals, as they are so far from the labour market. Seven-year programmes mean that there is time for projects to engage and support this client group. There are still targets, but there is time to allow projects the space they need to work with these groups. There is a recognition that this is a long-term exercise.

The EDF (2018, p. 6) has also made the case for the continuation of longer-term funding to support work at the grassroots level, which it viewed as ‘essential to effective interventions and change on the ground’.

Our interviewees generally felt that longer-term funding was also important in order to allow for the recruitment and organisational development which is necessary to make projects effective:

A five-year project gives us time. If there is a project funded year-on-year, you can’t plan for anything. That would be a horrendous way to work. It creates staffing problems. To recruit the right people to work in social enterprise is very difficult and we really want to hang on to them. We don’t want them to be looking for other jobs while they’re doing their job. That’s not a good way to work. (Welsh Co-operative Centre)

Linked to this, the funding is seen as enabling projects to support organisations through periods of change necessary to implement project outcomes:

If you just had ordinary research funds, such as academic research funding, you couldn’t do the change management phase of projects. I wouldn’t have been able to pay two people to work alongside organisations to implement the changes that research has identified. That’s the beauty of ESF funds – you can actually support organisations to make the change. (Researcher, Cardiff University)
5.2 Addressing the challenges of EU funding

The main challenges of working with EU funding, as highlighted by our interviewees, centred on the administrative burden, issues around match funding, monitoring requirements and an overall lack of flexibility.

Reducing administrative burden

Applying for EU funding is often a lengthy and complex process and monitoring systems are onerous. These often ‘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’ (EDF 2018, p. 5).

Many interviewees felt that they had had to ‘jump through hoops’ when applying for funding and accounting for its use. This ate into project budgets considerably, and meant that not all of the funding actually found its way to beneficiaries. Essex County Council has estimated that in some cases beneficiaries only receive 80–85% of the original value of EU funding, due to administration costs. Other local authorities have made similar claims (Essex County Council 2018; LGA 2018).

Participants felt frustrated by the delays caused by excessive bureaucracy in the funding application process:

It’s the stop-start nature of the programmes that can be challenging. Some projects had to wait two years before they could get started, as there were delays in EU regulations being approved by the European Parliament, and then the allocation of the funding took time. It took the council a year to apply to the Scottish Government. So, there are many layers of bureaucracy. (Aberdeenshire Council)

Improving flexibility

Lack of flexibility in how the funding operates was also highlighted as a challenge. This was seen by one participant to have got worse over time:

This flexibility was greater under the 2007–13 programme, which enabled us to respond to the economic crisis more quickly. That level of flexibility would be welcome under the current programmes. (WEFO)
Some interviewees also felt that there was a lack of flexibility in making changes to projects once they were underway. This was the view of a researcher at Cardiff University:

Re-profiling [making changes to projects] is also an issue – if you want to change your research questions or substantive outputs or processes, or move something sizable from one budget line to another...you have to wait for approval again.

In a similar vein, the SCVO interviewee said that ‘the flexibility for third sector organisations to design projects based on need has been decreasing’. The interviewee from Chwarae Teg said there was a need for greater flexibility when it came to specifying beneficiaries. Likewise, the interviewee from Aberdeenshire Council said that the organisation has argued for the new fund to adopt a flexible approach to local management, but with cooperation across different areas.

The Welsh Government has stated that a new regional approach should encourage greater cross-border planning and investment to the benefit of Wales and the UK as a whole, while fully respecting devolved competences in these areas (Welsh Government 2017).

**Covering core costs and improving match funding requirements**

It has been argued that, under the new SPF, ‘the overhead costs\(^\text{15}\) of service providers should be covered. This is particularly important for smaller organisations, who often struggle to cover core costs in contracts and grants. At the heart of this is the need for a greater weighting towards upfront funding than was the case under ESF’ (ERSA 2017). One interviewee agreed:

If the Shared Prosperity Fund would try to go beyond what the EU funding was doing, there is also the issue of providing core funding for these organisations, not only project funding, so that they can do their work. (CRAE)

Match funding is a requirement whereby organisations need to find a specified proportion of a project’s total funding themselves. All European Structural and

\(^{15}\) ‘Overheads’ or ‘core costs’ are those which partly support your project but are also used by the organisation more generally, such as the cost of employees, volunteers, equipment, work space, etc. See: [https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/funding-guidance/full-cost-recovery](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/funding-guidance/full-cost-recovery) [accessed: 22 May 2019].
Investment Fund (ESIF) programmes require match funding. The European Social Fund (ESF) match funding rate is based on the region’s development category.

One NGO in Wales said that match funding can work very well, and in some cases it is sourced from private sector business. However, they felt that this should not be a requirement of funding and that there should be greater flexibility, including the option to either have the match funding or not. In Scotland, the match funding arrangements were not seen to be working well, particularly in the case of small projects.

**Improving monitoring requirements**

EU-funded organisations are required to complete a lot of detailed monitoring paperwork, particularly financial accounting. This was highlighted repeatedly by interviewees as a challenge, as it took up a lot of time, effort and resource to carry out correctly. There was also a risk of ‘clawback’ (funds having to be returned) for non-compliance with publicity requirements (such as not including a logo on all documentation), and if the paperwork was not completely in order:

> Errors are returned where the evidence does not support the figure claimed to the penny. There is no tolerance for rounding up or down… the audit requirement is such that we have chosen to exclude [some of] the costs from our [travel] claims…and SFC therefore must bear the cost. (Scottish Funding Council)

The interviewee from Aberdeenshire Council said that projects tend to be ‘process-heavy and over-audited to the extent that most of the potential for innovation has been stifled’. This can make the funds unattractive for smaller projects and community groups because the cost of applying exceeds the benefits. Excessive reporting was also seen as something that could often divert resources from the project funds:

> Reporting is a nightmare. We had to do timesheets every week and we had to keep all of the notes and the receipts for absolutely everything… I think that is definitely one of the massive downsides, especially when you have a small level of funding, because the staff time something like that takes… you end up actually getting less money to actually do the project. (CRAE)

The monitoring and evaluation data from most EU-funded projects are generally insufficient to make a comprehensive assessment of the impact across all nine
protected characteristics. It was felt that a well-designed successor programme should collect data on all protected characteristics and assist public authorities in fulfilling their obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010.

**Better devolution and localisation**

It has been argued that the SPF ‘should ensure that the devolved legislatures, local government and elected mayors have input into the allocation of funding. It is essential that the devolution settlements are respected and that devolved governments have control over how funding is distributed’ (ERSA 2017, p. 5).

Overall, interviewees felt that the new SPF should respect devolved administrations:

There is a strong case for the devolved governments to continue to decide on how to allocate funding in these areas, as they are best placed to make decisions based on knowledge of local issues. Future funding should be brought directly into Wales and not through a bidding process into a UK-wide fund.

The devolved governments understand the issues that they are dealing with in their own regions and it is important that these governments have the authority to allocate funds where they deem this to be necessary under devolved policy areas. (WEFO in Wales)

The need for stronger localisation and better targeting of funds was also a distinct theme from the literature and interviews. Some interviewees pointed out that the needs of a large urban area, are extremely different from a rural community, for example. In England the view from the LGA was that the different regions of England vary greatly, and so there is a real need for localisation to ensure that local authorities can cater to local needs, and to allow smaller organisations to win funding to deliver highly localised, targeted interventions (LGA 2017). In 2018, the LGA stated that:

Councils and local areas have already demonstrated ambition and innovation in how their allocation of EU funding has been spent, demonstrating why it is essential that the UKSPF needs to be determined at the local level. (LGA 2018)
Many of the frustrations around the current regime could be ironed out if the UK Government were to design a follow-on programme that is more tailored to the needs of the UK. For example, in 2018 the LGA stated that the UK Government:

…must grasp this opportunity to simplify and fully devolve a multi-year fund, to allow strategic management and long-term investment decisions in support of inclusive economic growth. The Government should not replicate the current policy silos, duplications, gaps and inconsistencies that exist in the [European structural funds] funding processes.

One participant felt that there are a number of issues that are unique to parts of Wales, such as the post-industrial Valleys area. The closure of mines in this area had resulted in reduced employment opportunities, particularly for men. It was felt that more funding was needed in this area:

We’re trying to be positive and to look on this as an opportunity. We have sometimes struggled to do what we want to do, as the [European] Commission has a focus on what it wants to do, rather than on Wales’ priorities. So this is an opportunity, and has motivated us to focus on what Wales needs. We have very different regional needs in Wales, so future funding can hopefully reflect that.
6 Conclusion and recommendations

EU funding provides essential support for thousands of people. It focuses on helping those who are disadvantaged or at-risk to learn new skills, find jobs and become more involved in their local communities. It also supports projects that have implications for fundamental human rights. The case studies in this report show that beneficiaries include young and older people, women, members of ethnic minority groups and disabled people.

Interviewees are worried about the future: despite the Government’s commitment to replace EU structural funds, people are concerned that a drop in funding will see a regression in equality and human rights across British society. Even a temporary pause or ‘gap’ in funding – as a result of a ‘cliff edge’ in 2020 – could threaten the sustainability of many projects. The lack of detail about the Government’s proposed Shared Prosperity Fund is a source of anxiety and uncertainty.

If the SPF does not replicate the strengths of the current EU funding regime then the voluntary sector and vital projects are likely to suffer – and equality and human rights with them. Projects will come to an end; entire organisations could fold. It is vital that the SPF builds on the strengths of EU funding streams and ensures continued support for some of the UK’s most marginalised individuals. These strengths include the provision of long-term funding, focusing on the most disadvantaged, and a funding infrastructure to enable and support extensive engagement with local and grassroots organisations.

At the same time, EU funding poses challenges too. Application processes are cumbersome, regulations too complicated and administration inflexible. This can sometimes act as a barrier and undermine the effectiveness of this funding. The SPF can overcome these hurdles by introducing simplified, streamlined processes and less centralised decision-making. In the wake of Brexit, the UK Government should make sure that the SPF builds on the strengths of the EU funding regime, while addressing the difficulties and frustrations it sometimes creates.

Britain’s withdrawal from the EU poses many social, economic and political challenges, including important questions over the continuation of financial support
for poorer regions and disadvantaged groups. There will be competing demands for funding but a dialogue is needed to ensure that equalities are taken into account. At the heart of the debate is a question about what type of country the UK wants to become in the future. Maintaining its funding commitments to equality and human rights will be a step in the right direction.

Our recommendations are for the Shared Prosperity Fund to:

1) **ensure that funding that has been in place up until now is replicated** in terms of the amount of funding available, the types of projects supported and the eligibility criteria. This should include funds designed to promote non-discrimination and protect equality and the rights of the person.

2) **avoid a temporary pause in funding when the current funding round ends in 2020.** This is to protect projects that promote equality and human rights against the financial pressure of a ‘cliff edge’ in funding, and to prevent abrupt closure of projects that rely heavily on EU funds.

3) **continue to tackle inequality and support marginalised communities by targeting funding at disadvantaged groups sharing protected characteristics and at-risk groups.** In line with this, the cross-cutting themes of equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming should be maintained. In compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, consideration should be given to the needs of all protected characteristic groups in designing the new funds.

4) **maintain long-term funding and stability** to provide the vital, sustained, support for severely marginalised people who benefit most from meaningful engagement for several years.

5) **simplify and streamline processes** to reduce the administrative burden on organisations, and diversion of, resources away from project delivery. The application process should be tailored to the needs of smaller organisations.

6) **improve the flexibility of funding** so that it is easier and simpler for projects to:
   a. find match funding
   b. move funds around within programmes
   c. make changes to projects once they are underway, and
   d. cover overhead and core costs, which is particularly important for smaller organisations.
7) **ensure funding and decisions are devolved to the appropriate level**, giving proper consideration to devolution, localisation and targeting of funds – while simultaneously supporting a Britain-wide strategy. This will enable devolved governments and local authorities to cater to the needs of national and local populations.

8) **improve data collection and monitoring of protected characteristics and at-risk groups** so that project outcomes can be properly evaluated by governments and other local authorities. Evaluation should take on board the views of marginalised groups and consider how projects can be improved in future. Data collection requirements and processes must be designed in a way that minimises administrative burden, and adequate time and resources should be allocated to enable such monitoring and evaluation to take place.
7 References


References


Equality and Human Rights Commission
May 2019


Annex

Interview guide for stakeholders

Interviewer to explain the project to the interviewee – we are carrying out a small number of interviews with stakeholders in order to supplement our desk research on the impact of the potential loss of EU funds on those with protected characteristics (under the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights landscape). The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. We would like to explore issues in depth through these interviews, and also provide a human dimension to the research by telling individual stories relating to the beneficiaries of funding. We are aiming to get a sense from the interviewees of what stands to be lost. Interviewees will be anonymised, although organisations may be named.

1. Could you tell me a little about your organisation and your role in it?

2. Can you tell me about the types of activities in which your organisation is involved?

3. If interviewee is involved in managing specific projects funded by EU structural funds and any other relevant European funding, such as the Rights, Equality and Citizenship fund: Please tell me more about the project(s) in which you are involved:

   a. Is the project/activity solely funded by EU funds or is there a requirement for match funding?

   b. What is the project aiming to achieve overall?

   c. How long has the project/activity been running?

   d. What is the target group of the project/activity?

   e. Which area/region is covered?
f. How many beneficiaries does the project/activity aim to reach? Did the project collect data on people’s protected characteristics? Do you know the breakdown of beneficiaries by protected characteristic (eg age, disability, ethnicity, etc)?

g. What form does the project/activity take? What kinds of activities are funded by the project?

h. Can you give me an example of an individual or a group of people who you have worked with who have been helped by this project/activity? Interviewer to ask interviewee about specific impacts on people with protected characteristics (eg disabled people, ethnic minorities, women, older people) and especially the difference that it has made to people’s lives. Interviewee should be encouraged to tell a story. NB this should relate specifically to people with protected characteristics.

i. What do you think would happen if this project/activity were no longer funded? Would you be able to obtain funding from elsewhere? If so, where would you look?

4. What is your view on the specific social impact on groups that you work with (eg disabled people, ethnic minorities, the LGBT community, older people etc), if EU funds are not maintained? This relates to employment support funds and generation funds. To interviewer: try to avoid this discussion becoming too broad and relating to Brexit.

5. What is your experience of the EU funding regime at present, as it relates to your organisation? What are the strengths? Are there any ways in which it could be improved? What would be the implications of those improvements? What is your experience of the application process? How do you find the matched funding process – is it a barrier?

6. How do you feel about the future in terms of funding sources for your organisation?

7. What plans do you have to support beneficiaries if the EU funding is lost? In particular, how do you aim to support those groups that you have identified above without access to this funding?

8. What advice would you give to the government to help it to set up a new fund to replace the EU structural funds (the Shared Prosperity Fund)? I.e. should it
try to replicate the focus of the EU structural funds, or should there be a new or amended focus? What are the most important things for it to know? Please explain why.

9. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your time
List of organisations providing interviewees

**England**

Department for Work and Pensions
Local Government Association
The National Lottery Community Fund (formerly Big Lottery Fund)
The Women’s Organisation
Children’s Rights Alliance for England (two interviewees)

**Wales**

Welsh Cabinet Office
Welsh European Funding Office
Welsh Co-operative Centre
Chwarae Teg
Cardiff University

**Scotland**

Scottish Government
Scottish Funding Council
Aberdeenshire Council
Inclusion Scotland
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
Full case studies

England

**DurhamWorks, Durham**

DurhamWorks is run in partnership by Durham County Council with several delivery partners. It aims to support 5,830 15-24-year-old unemployed County Durham residents into employment, education or training through intensive and long-term support, including innovative and engaging activities to develop motivation, work-related skills and work experience and increased employment opportunities. Project content follows extensive research undertaken with NEET young people and includes: transition, peer mentor and employment support; engagement and progression of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; and creation of the DurhamWorks New Employment Zone.

Evaluation shows the targeted sustained wraparound support provided by the project is effective in progressing participants into employment or education/training. The project has been particularly successful in engaging with priority groups (eg over 1,300 participants have declared a learning disability, disability, health or mental health condition).

The project has implemented a comprehensive employer engagement strategy which has focused on developing employment opportunities, to enable participants to progress into the labour market. This work is supported by Business Advisors, who have worked with employers to create opportunities for young people and provide ongoing support. To date the Business Advisors have supported 1,192 businesses, identified 970 apprenticeships, 848 employment opportunities and supported the development of 14 traineeships. Additionally, the project has also created a range of successful sector-based ‘routeways’ with direct employer links, in partnership with Jobcentre Plus.

Source: https://durhamworks.info/
The ACE project at The Theatre Royal Stratford East

The ACE project (Able, Capable, Employed), is a £5.5-million, London-wide project that aims to support 1,000 Londoners who are disabled or have long-term health conditions into sustainable employment, through the provision of tailored, specialist support. Led by Groundwork London, 11 organisations work together to deliver the project, helping employers identify and adapt vacancies, and finding capable, prepared and well-suited candidates who will make the most of and succeed in these roles.

Jim*, for example, came to ACE not having worked for two years. His ACE advisor encouraged him to apply for positions such as the one with Theatre Royal Stratford, which he says he would not have considered without her support. Jim* said: ‘Getting the job at the Theatre Royal Stratford has enabled me to buy Christmas and birthday presents for my young son for the first time in years! This has been really transformative for me – I have a sense of pride that was not there before’.

*not his real name

Source: https://www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/london/pages/stage-set-for-happy-workplace-ace-case-study

Migrant Engagement

The Migrant Engagement project runs in the South East Midlands. It is run by The Polish British Integration Centre Ltd and works with hard-to-reach ethnic minority communities in the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership area to improve their employability, skills and contribution to the labour market. The provision comprises a customised 10-week support programme with innovative elements informed by customer needs. This deals with identified needs and gaps in current provision, including: language, culture, self-esteem and a lack of awareness of the local labour market.

The project is currently on track and is planning to strengthen partnerships for referrals and to engage employers for their migrant skills register. They are targeting local libraries, shops, churches and drop-in centres to ensure full inclusion.
The project is expected to reach 856 participants.

Source: DWP

**Single Parent Employment Pathway**

The Single Parent Employment Pathway, managed by Gingerbread with £660,000 of ESF funding, supports single parents into employment, education and training in the Liverpool City Region. Individual advice and guidance sessions with a support worker help each participant to identify their needs. They are then offered opportunities such as volunteering, ‘Job Clubs’ including CV writing and interview skills, and skills and educational support.

The project exceeded its targets, with 210 single parents taking part by January 2017, 40 of whom found employment. By the end of the project at the end of 2018, Gingerbread expected that 460 single parents will have taken part, with 40 per cent moving into employment and 60 per cent going on to further training. The project ran from January 2016 to December 2018.

One project beneficiary is Esther, a single parent of four children, who had been out of work for 24 years and who has had multiple health conditions, which affected confidence in her own ability. Esther was given a place on a Gingerbread pre-employment course, which brought together a group of eight single parents with similar backgrounds who were looking for work. The group environment helped Esther recognise she was not the only person in her position and she had other people to relate to, and this helped her confidence as the course progressed. Esther was then placed at Marks & Spencer and was supported by Gingerbread and M&S coaches while on her placement. At the end of her placement, Esther accepted a fixed-term 16 hours per week contract with M&S.

Esther said: ‘I have had an enjoyable and amazing experience and can’t believe I could do it! This programme has given me the confidence in my own ability to return to work’.

Source: https://www.liverpoollep.org/funding/eu-funding/projects/single-parent-employment-pathway/
HMPPS Co-Financing Organisation (North West)

This project works with vulnerable women in order to facilitate their rehabilitation after their release from prison. It provides specialist support for women with a wide range of complex issues including offending behaviour, drugs and alcohol addiction, mental health, experience of domestic violence, learning difficulties, and homelessness. The project provides intensive support to enable them to overcome barriers. Participants engage in a number of one-to-one and group work activities including:

- parenting skills
- women’s empowerment, and
- adult numeracy and literacy.

They also work towards gaining accredited awards in Personal and Social Development, Employability and Community Volunteering. Relationships with charities and volunteering organisations are developed so that women are given the opportunity to gain volunteering experience.

The project is performing well against all its targets and has already supported 508 female ex-offenders to secure employment.

Total project value: £28,357,812 (ESF only).

Source: HMPPS

Summit House Support

Summit House Support was awarded ESF funding 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. Summit Support worked with a community vulnerable to isolation and social exclusion due to issues around their sexuality or gender identity. This population is adversely and disproportionately affected by a number of issues, including mental health conditions, substance misuse, discrimination and hate crime, sexual health and HIV infection and cultural sexuality issues.

The project used a recovery model approach, focusing on working with the service user to enable them to develop the skills and confidence that will
bring long-term change. By focusing on developing acceptance and responsibility, security and safety, emotional wellbeing, supportive relationships, coping skills, empowerment and social inclusion, it helped people to make progress along their own personal journeys and enabled them to fulfil their potential. It provided practical one-to-one support, expert information and guidance, peer and group support and a range of workshops on topics including money management, living well, healthy relationships and returning to work/education. It also organised social activities to help groups to integrate, reduce isolation and improve their mental health. These included art groups, cook and eat sessions, gardening, yoga and mindfulness. The project operated in Dudley and the Black Country until the end of August 2018.

Source: http://www.summithousesupport.co.uk

**Bosavern Workshop – Who Dares Works**

West Cornwall jobseekers have been helping with conservation at Bosavern Community Farm in St. Just, Cornwall, as part of a National Lottery-funded project, supported by EU funding.

Ten participants from Who Dares Works spent a week preparing land for the conservation of Cornish Black Bees, which are important to local biodiversity. Participants also fenced a chicken run and built a new, farm-sized compost heap, gaining valuable work experience and skills while boosting confidence and wellbeing. Who Dares Works is a partnership of 17 organisations, led by Active Plus, funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund, helping people in West Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to get back into training, education and work. Who Dares Builds, delivered by Rebuild South West, is one of the work-related opportunities that participants can undertake.

One participant, Ruby, said: ‘Before being given this opportunity I was unemployed for 5 years because of poor mental health. After completing this course, I have been given the opportunity to meet new people and my self-worth has increased. This course has opened up many new opportunities and I’m confident it will result in finding full time employment.’

Source: http://www.cornwallislesofscillygrowthprogramme.org.uk/case-studies/bosavern-workshop-dares-works/
Wales

Agri-Academy Junior Programme

Building on the success of the highly acclaimed Farming Connect Agri-Academy, which launched in 2012, the Agri-Academy Junior Programme was introduced in the spring of 2014. Developed by Menter a Busnes in collaboration with Wales YFC, which helped promote applications through its network of clubs, the aim of the Junior Academy is to inspire young people in Wales aged between 16 and 19 to consider a rewarding and interesting career within the food and farming industry. It is supported by funds from the ERDF.

The first intake of 14 candidates first got together for an intensive residential weekend of media training, mentoring and networking. The group’s next tuition programme was held at Treberfedd, an on-farm conference and activity centre in Ceredigion where the focus was on personal development, training and marketing. The candidates’ academy experience culminated in an invitation to visit the European Commission in Brussels, courtesy of NFU Cymru.

‘The Agri-Academy has inspired and motivated us all and we ended the experience with a clear steer on what we need to do if we’re to progress and develop both as individuals and business-people,’ said Sian Davies, a farmer’s daughter from Radnorshire who is studying for her A Levels at Builth High School.

Source: Welsh Government

Active Inclusion Fund

The Active Inclusion Fund is supported by the ESF and provides financial support for a range of organisations that work with unemployed or economically inactive people and help them to reduce the distance to the labour market. The most recent round of funding, announced in June 2018, will see £3.5 million allocated to 25 organisations across Wales.

Funding covers activities such as training, paid supported employment placements or practical activities aimed at supporting people to build their
confidence and motivation. The overall objective of the Active Inclusion Fund is to reduce the disability employment gap.

Source: Wales Council for Voluntary Action

**SOVA – Achieving Change through Employment (ACE)**

SOVA runs projects in Wales and England that focus on offenders and those at risk of offending, as well as on individuals with a broader range of complex needs. It provides services in the areas of independence, skills and employment, wellbeing and justice.

SOVA’s ACE project is funded by the ESF through the Welsh Government. It offers training and employment support for under-represented, economically inactive and long-term unemployed, Black and Minority Ethnic and migrant individuals aged 25 or over. The objective of the project is to support entry into sustainable employment. Among other activities, the project provides services such as: a ‘Rapid English Language’ e-learning course, providing 1-2-1 mentoring that supports efforts to move into employment or self-employment, and supporting the improvement of qualifications and work experience. The project also encourages women to participate.

One of the project’s case managers described the impact of the project on the lives of its participants: ‘I know that they’d been nervous about accepting support from a charity like us, but they have said that they had such a good experience that they’ll be recommending us to some of their friends. It feels really good to know that if they need to find work again in the future, thanks to Sova ACE, they’ll know what to do.’


Source: https://www.sova.org.uk/s00507-sova-ace
Agile Nation 2

The Chwarae Teg Agile Nation 2 project has two strands: a career development programme, which provides guidance and training to women to support career progression and which focuses on the importance of skills, role models and one-to-one mentors for career progression; and a business culture survey, which engages employers in creating more gender-balanced workplaces and providing more opportunities for women. The project runs in West Wales and the Valleys.

Total investment for the project is €12,129,587, with the ESF contributing €9,344,138 for the 2014-2020 programming period. So far, more than 1,100 women have enrolled in the Career Development Programme and almost 2,000 have engaged with it. As for the Business Culture Survey, 457 businesses were engaged, 274 enrolled, and 5,310 hours were spent with businesses to implement culture changes. To date, 177 businesses have adopted or improved equality and diversity strategies and 97 are completing the survey.

Overall, the two phases of Agile Nation are estimated to have helped 6,000 women and between 800-900 businesses.

A special effort was made to target more hard-to-reach women, such as those with a disability or a work-limiting health condition. These women are often discriminated against and can find it particularly difficult to progress in their careers in traditional working environments. This project is funded until June 2020.

Source: https://www.cteg.org.uk/

Pathways to Apprenticeship Programme

The aim of this programme is to combat youth unemployment by giving individuals over 16 job-specific skills, knowledge and professional qualifications. They will acquire a work-based qualification which will be at least level 2 from the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales. Regular progress checks are made to make sure that the employer is supporting the apprentice, who will receive a regular wage with paid holidays and the same benefits as other employees.
The programme ran from 2009/10 to 2013/14, in West Wales and the Valleys, funded by the Welsh Government and supported from 2010/11 onwards by funding from the European Social Fund. This funding supports the cost of an apprentice’s training and assessment.

The ESF contribution had particular targets in relation to young people in addition to those set by the Welsh Government. These were: 2,200 participants in total, 85% achieving qualifications, 60% entering further learning, 60% gaining other positive outcomes, 40% progressing into employment, 5% of learners from ethnic minority backgrounds, and 400 employers collaborating with education/training providers.

All participation targets except one (participants from ethnic minority backgrounds) were exceeded.


Scotland

The Prince’s Trust – Addressing Disadvantage Through Team

This project, supported by ESF funding, has been instrumental in providing support for young people to overcome challenges and achieve their ambitions. The project was a great success and was extended in 2011 with the addition of several new training courses.

One participant, Rachel, had been through a lot and experienced mental health conditions as a result. Her community health nurse referred her to Team because of her lack of confidence and social experiences. Every day on the project saw Rachel improve, particularly during one-to-one sessions with her Team leader. She became aware of her qualities, learned how to put them to use, and during a residential week away overcame her fear of groups by leading and supporting other young people who were struggling. She said: ‘If I hadn’t got involved with The Prince’s Trust, I’d never have realised what I’m capable of and would still be depressed and not doing anything. Now, for the first time in years I have manageable goals to achieve and a positive path in front of me.’
Rachel is now studying art and design at college and hopes to develop a career in art therapy.

Source: Scottish Government

Progress FIFE

This project aims to help disabled people to realise their full potential through accredited training, further education and sustainable paid employment. Operating in Fife, this project supports people to find and stay in work through training and practical support. This includes work 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 also be on offer. For those who are already in work, the project can help with ongoing training or other support.

Source: Capability Scotland

The Bridges Programmes, Glasgow

Sita (not her real name) is an asylum seeker from Ivory Coast who has been living in Scotland since 2011. A trained sociologist with an MSc in project management, she worked as part of a team dealing with influencing public policy in order to tackle poverty. Despite still waiting on a decision about her case, she has taken every learning and volunteering opportunity available.

In February 2012, Sita completed the Women’s Empowerment Course at Bridges to focus on her own personal development and, despite the uncertainty of her future, she decided to train as a Bridges mentor in order to support another refugee/asylum-seeking woman to settle in the city.

In order to keep her academic interests up to date she began to engage with the Open University through their Open Learn portal. She is also a
trained volunteer at Citizen’s Advice Bureau. She has also enrolled on Glasgow University’s ACTIVATE course, an access course in community development, and as a result was admitted to do a Higher National Certificate in Working with Communities at John Wheatley College which she is currently completing. She has recently taken up a research placement with the Poverty Truth Commission in Scotland and she continues to be an inspiration to everyone who meets her.

Source: The Bridges Programmes

Harris Tweed Training and Development Programme

The project, run by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council), was supported by ESF funding for a Harris Tweed Training and Development Programme in the Outer Hebrides. ESF funded a training and accreditation programme for the Harris Tweed industry, and two additional New Start Weaver Training courses were added in 2012/13.

The project also introduced flexibility to accommodate trainees who cannot participate on a full-time basis, in particular women, who are under-represented in the industry. The demand for weavers is a result of demand for Harris Tweed, particularly from women’s fashion designers. The programme supported 126 people.

Archie Campbell, Chair of Sustainable Development at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, said: ‘Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is delighted that the European Structural Fund has continued to provide a significant part of the funding for the Harris Tweed Training Development Project. The Comhairle is grateful to the European Social Fund, as well as our other partner organisations, for the additional funding they provide to help deliver this forward-looking project for the revitalised Harris Tweed Industry.’

Source: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Moving On Employment Project (Shetland)

This Shetland-based project aims to help people facing multiple barriers to employment by providing them with short-term work projects throughout
Shetland. People are assessed to understand their specific needs and circumstances and an action plan is formulated to help them overcome their barriers. People then have an opportunity to participate in a real-life project. The project provides employer matching, hands-on support to people while employed, and education and training opportunities for as long as it is required.

During 2013-14, according to the project’s annual report, 155 people were supported by Moving On. Sixty-nine per cent of people using the services successfully moved into employment, education or training and 76 per cent of service users were still in a positive destination such as work following discharge from services. Moving On also set up and oversaw 70 paid and unpaid work placements throughout Shetland.

ESF funding ran until the end of March 2015. Since April 2015, Moving On has provided two new services offering support to individuals with barriers to employment on a one-to-one basis:

- The Transition Support Service, provided to young people aged 16-25 years old with additional support needs and/or autistic spectrum conditions. The service will provide tailored one-to-one support to access volunteering, work experience and employment.

- The Job Brokerage service, which is part of Shetland Island Council’s Employability Pathway, providing one-to-one support to help participants find work placements and paid work.

Source: Moving On
Contacts

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