# European Update for Cheshire and Warrington Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise Sector 1st March 2021

## Highlights

ESF call deadline 11th March

ESF Extensions

Skills for Jobs

UK-Shared Prosperity Fund

## ESF calls

The two ESF calls for Cheshire and Warrington, both have deadlines of 11th March.

### www.gov.uk/european-structural-investment-funds

## ESF Reserve Fund

National Lottery Community Fund has considered committing a further £59m (plus its own match) to extend ESF-BBO projects that were delivering. This was agreed nationally late January, with extensions up to June 2023. They will now undertake a process through their own Board to confirm funding for individual projects, which should be completed by the end of this month.

Some ESFA funded ESF projects are being extended, and it is thought that other ESF projects across England may be extended by up to 50% if they are delivering.

## Operational Programmes

The final revision of the ERDF Operational Programme was agreed with the European Commission on 16th December and published on [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) on 4th January.

The final revision of the ESF Operational Programme should be available on [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) soon.

### www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-european-regional-development-fund-operational-programme-2014-to-2020

### [www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-social-fund-operational-programme-2014-to-2020](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-social-fund-operational-programme-2014-to-2020)

## ESIF Coronavirus Response Page

The ESIF Coronavirus Response Page is helpful for ESF, ERDF and EAFRD Projects, with a Q&A for each fund. It was updated on 12th January (ESF), 19th January (EAFRD) and 2nd February (ESF) to clarify the responses to some questions. All projects still to be completed by 2023.

### [www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-coronavirus-covid-19-response](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-coronavirus-covid-19-response)

## UK-Europe Agreement

### The Trade and Co-operation Agreement of 24th December goes into detail about what will happen post Brexit, although much is still to be discussed and agreed

Existing ESF and ERDF funding will continue up to 2023, but will eventually be replaced by the UK-Shared Prosperity Fund. GB will no longer be part of Erasmus+, and will set up a Turing Fund. We will not come under State Aid rules, but instead will have Subsidy Control, likely to be similar.

### [www.gov.uk/government/publications/agreements-reached-between-the-united-kingdom-of-great-britain-and-northern-ireland-and-the-european-union](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agreements-reached-between-the-united-kingdom-of-great-britain-and-northern-ireland-and-the-european-union)

[*https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/eu-uk-trade-and-cooperation-agreement-new-relationship-big-changes-brochure\_en*](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/eu-uk-trade-and-cooperation-agreement-new-relationship-big-changes-brochure_en)

## Skills for Jobs

The Skills for Jobs White Paper (Jan 21st) looks to copy the successful German model, increasing productivity through practical FE style training. Page 52 para 116 refers to support for those furthest from learning or jobs.

“The UK Shared Prosperity Fund Employment and Skills Programme will provide crucial ‘first step’ provision for some of the most vulnerable in society. It will offer bespoke, locally targeted employment, social inclusion, and skills provision to help those furthest from learning and the labour market move closer towards, enter into, and progress in education and work. We will align this fund with our overall vision for skills, making sure its primary objective is to help individuals get the support they need to get great jobs and progress in their careers and that the delivery mechanism supports our locally led approach to skills provision.”

### <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9120>

### [www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-for-jobs-lifelong-learning-for-opportunity-and-growth](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-for-jobs-lifelong-learning-for-opportunity-and-growth)

## UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Some more information is becoming available while we wait for an expected announcement around the 3rd March Budget. A 15th January letter from Stephen Barclay in reply to a Scottish MP referred to it operating UK-wide, and was taken by some to mean the funding was not devolved. However, on 22nd, the Local Government Chronicle reported on Robert Jenrick addressing an LGA Forum - said UK-SPF would have localism at its heart. Said a prospectus for the UK-SPF Pilots (and Levelling Up Fund) should be announced within weeks. Direct relationship between Central Government and Local Councils unimpeded by LEPs and other bodies. Says LEPs are a mixed bag, implies won’t be involved - the UK-SPF should be managed and delivered by local government wherever that is in the UK.

The Skills for Jobs White Paper (above) refers to support for those furthest from learning/jobs.

So latest suggestions seem to be for UK-SPF to be very much local (local authority) based - but little mention of third sector. Still not clear whether this will be allocation by competition or by need. But if the prospectus for the April 2021 Pilots (£220m) is about to be announced, then local Partners (including third sector) should be working together now to prepare proposals.

### [www.lgcplus.com/finance/breaking-councils-in-driving-seat-over-shared-prosperity-fund-jenrick-insists-22-01-2021](http://www.lgcplus.com/finance/breaking-councils-in-driving-seat-over-shared-prosperity-fund-jenrick-insists-22-01-2021)

## The Forum

The TCA of 24th December confirmed there would be a Civil Society Forum (p16 Article INST 6), which will be consulted on the Agreement and any supplementing agreement. The four national sister organisations representing the third sector in each country (WCVO, NICVA, SCVO and NCVO) have been putting together this inclusive Forum, and we expect a first meeting of interested organisations shortly.

## State Aid - Subsidy Control

Now that we have left Europe, we do not have to follow State Aids rules, so we are writing our own (calling them Subsidy Control). But - they need to fit with European State Aids, as well as World Trade Organisation rules (for goods) and other trade agreements.

BEIS published a fifty page consultation document on 3rd February with 43 questions (deadline for completion is a quarter to midnight on 31st March. There is a reference to stakeholder events on “a number” of topics, but these don’t seem to be ready yet.

As well as a British name for State Aids, Services of General Economic Interest (SGEI) is now called SPEI (Services of Public Economic Interest).

###  [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/subsidy-control-designing-a-new-approach-for-the-uk](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/subsidy-control-designing-a-new-approach-for-the-uk)

## Turing - bids from March

Many were surprised when our Government announced on 24th December that we would withdraw from Erasmus+, despite previous promises that we would remain. At the time, little information was available concerning a UK replacement, other than the name - Turing.

A website was launched on 6th February, and a useful report published on 18th (links below).

It is a one-way scheme, only funding people from GB to go abroad (in contrast to Erasmus which is based on reciprocity). £110m will be available, for around 35,000 participants from schools, HE and FE (including VET - Vocational Education and Training). Applications open for eligible organisations in March (six week window), decisions expected by July, placement from September. Q&A webinars will be launched in March. There may or may not be a second bidding round. If Covid persists, there could be changes. As with the old Erasmus in the UK, it will be run by Ecorys.
Projects have to focus on -

 Global Britain

 Levelling up

 Developing key skills

 Value for UK taxpayers

Placements can be from two weeks to a year. The website shows calculations for costs, which include travel, cost of living, and administration. Extra support is available for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those with special educational needs.

It is stated that the global nature of Turing will vastly increase the opportunities in English speaking countries (so participants will often not need to be exposed to a foreign language).

It is expected that this will reduce the numbers of students visiting us. Scotland and Wales are unhappy that we have left. Ireland considers it so important that it is paying so that Northern Ireland residents will still be in Erasmus+

### www.turing-scheme.org.uk

### https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9141

**Network for Europe**

info@networkforeurope.eu