



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

West Wales and the Valleys

European Social Fund Programme 2014-2020

2017 Annual Implementation Report - Summary



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EUROPEAN UNION



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Welsh Government

Cronfa Gymdeithasol Ewrop
European Social Fund

1. Introduction

This is a summary of the third Annual Implementation Report for the West Wales and the Valleys European Social Fund Programme, covering the reporting year of 2017.

Overview

Wales benefits from around €2.4bn of EU Funds through the four Structural Funds programmes 2014-2020. This includes around €200m under the West Wales and the Valleys European Social Fund (ESF) Programme to help deliver economic growth by promoting high levels of sustainable employment, developing a skilled and responsive Welsh workforce now and for the future.

The Managing Authority for the Programme is the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO), within the Welsh Government.

About the Programme

The West Wales and the Valleys ESF Programme focuses on three key areas:

- targeting poverty and social exclusion through promoting sustainable employment;
- investing in a skilled workforce; and
- investing in our young people to ensure the best start in life.

The Programme facilitates the development of a balanced portfolio of investments targeting short-term issues, through securing improvements against key indicators such as employment outcomes and qualifications, whilst also seeking to achieve longer term outcomes such as addressing structural issues on youth unemployment and NEETs and increasing the quality of childcare.



Programme priority areas:

Priority 1: Tackling Poverty through Sustainable Employment

- Increase the employability of those closest to the Labour Market at most risk of poverty.
- Increase the employability of Economically Inactive and Long Term Unemployed people aged 25 and over, who have complex barriers to employment.
- Reduce under-employment or absence rates for employed individuals with work limiting health conditions and / or other barriers to sustainable engagement with the Labour Market.

Priority 2: Skills for Growth

- Increase the skills levels, including work relevant skills, of those in the workforce with no or low skills.
- Increase the number of people in the workforce with technical and job specific skills at an intermediate and higher level.
- Increase the number of people with graduate degrees or equivalent undertaking research and innovation activities with enterprises.
- Improve the position of women in the workforce.

Priority 3: Youth Employment and Attainment

- Reduce the number of 16-24 year olds who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).
- Reduce the number of those at risk of becoming NEET, amongst 11-24 year olds.
- Increase the take up of and attainment levels in STEM subjects amongst 11-19 year olds.
- Increase the skills of the Early Years and Childcare workforce.

Priority 4: Technical Assistance

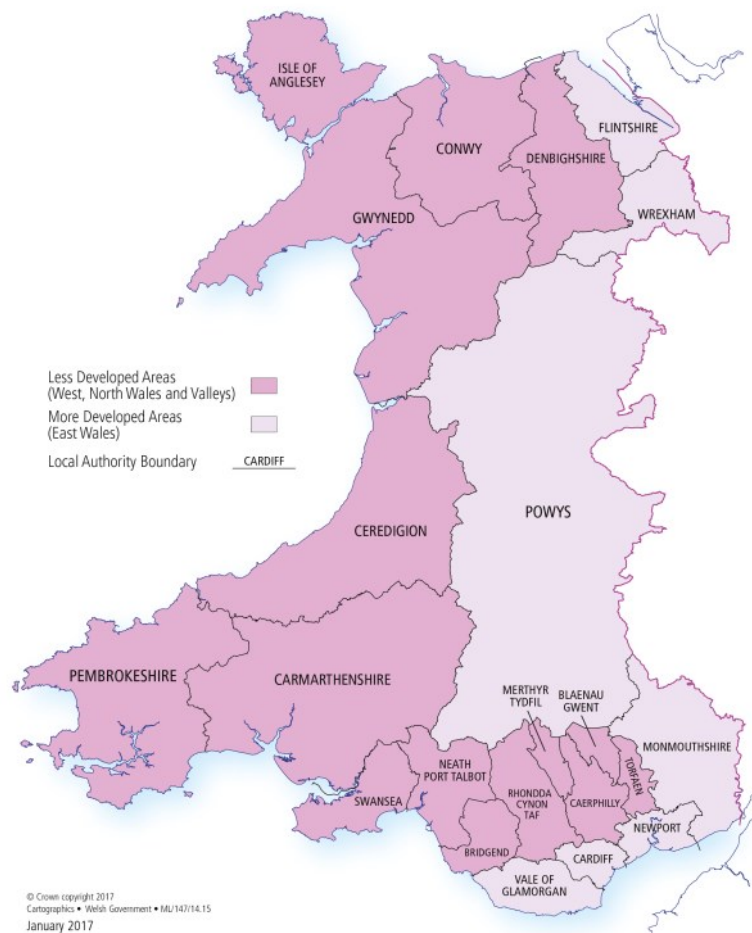
- Ensure the efficient and effective management of the Programme.
- Provide high quality advice to key partners involved in the design and delivery of projects.
- Enhance the integration and complementarity of investments with other European Structural and Investment funds and wider European Commission-led and Sector based programmes.

Budget available under each of the Programme's Priorities:

Priority	EU Budget	Total Budget ¹
Priority 1: Tacking Poverty through Sustainable Employment	€196m	€248m
Priority 2: Skills for Growth	€348m	€482m
Priority 3: Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency	€245m	€329m
Priority 4: Technical Assistance	€16m	€22m
Total available under the Programme	€805m	€1,801m

¹ The amount from the EU Budget combined with match funding

European Structural Fund Programme Regions in Wales for 2014-2020



2. Programme Progress

Overview

By the end of 2017, the Welsh Government had invested €637m of EU funds to 47 projects, driving a total investment of €984m in West Wales and the Valleys.

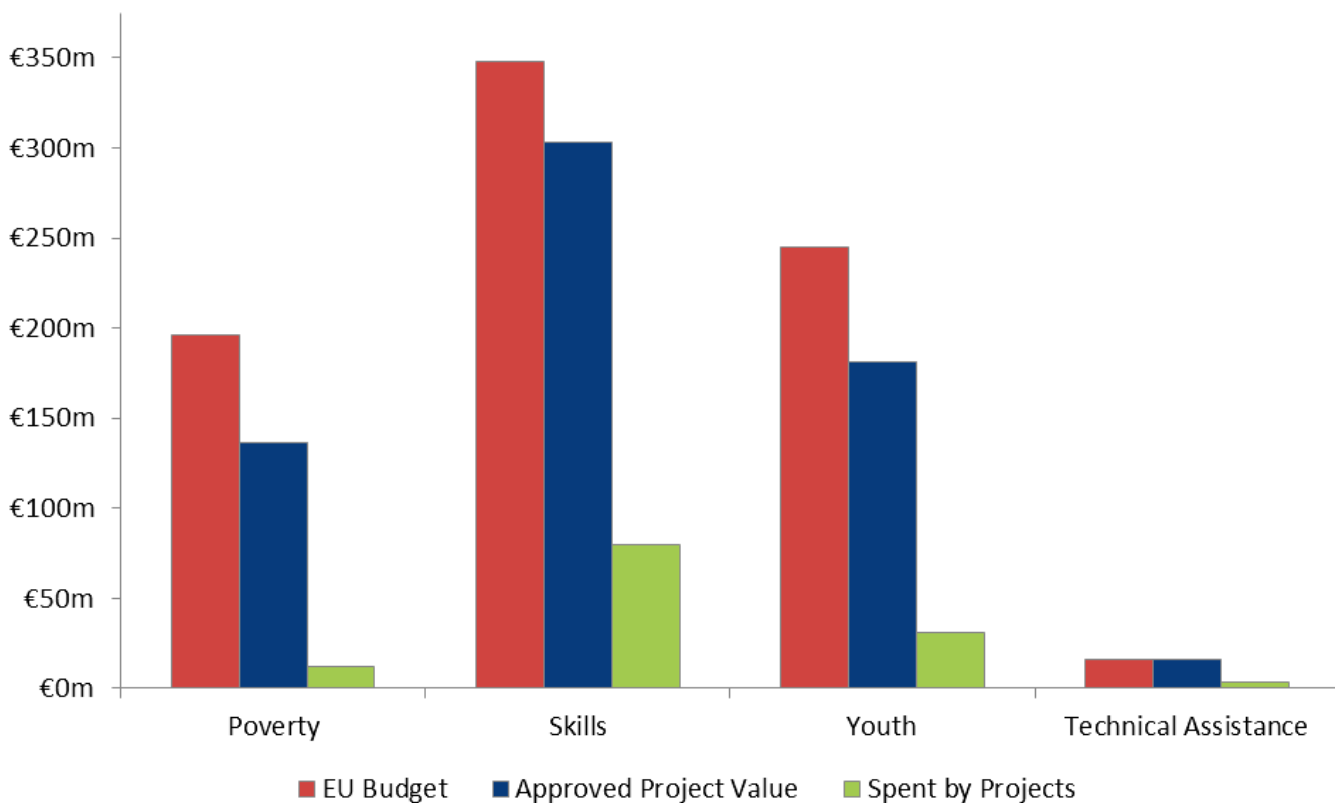
Good progress was made across a number of the Programme indicators during 2017, including:

- around 89,000 people supported, of which over 25,000 are young people
- over 26,500 qualifications gained
- around 5,300 people supported into employment
- almost 3,900 people entered into further learning

Financial Progress

The following chart shows, at Priority level, the total allocation of EU funds, and how much funds has been invested in and spent by projects.

Chart 1: EU Funds: Budget, Approved and Spent



3. Progress by Priority

Priority 1: Tackling Poverty through Sustainable Employment



Helping people into sustainable employment is key to reducing levels of poverty and increasing social inclusion. EU funds are helping to tackle the barriers that prevent people from finding work and are focused on increasing employment and economic activity across Wales.

By the end of year, 70% (€137m) of the EU funds available within this Priority had been invested in ten projects. Most of the investments made throughout the year were for existing beneficiaries to expand the activities and/or extend the lifecycle of schemes.

The employment scheme Workways+, which was already supporting long-term unemployed people and economically inactive into work throughout south west Wales, was awarded further EU funds to increase the scale of the project and help a further 2,000 people.

To help achieve Programme targets for underemployed participants, WEFO launched a funding call in summer 2017 to support more project proposals.

EU investments made to schemes through this call include the Better Jobs Better Futures for the over 25s project, led by Gower College Swansea. It provides tailored support to help 600 people into work and works with local employers to expand and strengthen their workforce.

By the end of the year projects benefiting from EU funds within this priority had supported over 15,900 participants, of which over 2,400 participants entered employment.



Case Study: Workways+

Backed by £17.5m of EU funds, the Workways+ scheme is helping long-term unemployed people in South West Wales into work by providing training and paid work experience opportunities.

The scheme offers one-to-one mentoring, support with job-seeking and interview skills, and the chance to gain new qualifications.

Workways+ aims to support 6,000 people across South West Wales by 2020. One participant who has benefited from the support is James from Pembroke who was unemployed for 20 years after suffering from severe anxiety and depression while at university. He wanted to improve his situation and self taught himself computer programming, hardware installation and troubleshooting before being referred to Workways+.

His Workways+ personal mentor arranged some work placements, which led to a three-month paid work opportunity with a digital printing specialist.

James flourished in his new role, learnt new workplace skills and used his programming skills to help expand the company's products and services. A vacancy became available after completion of the work experience placement and he secured full time employment.

James said: "Having a job has made a big difference. I've got more confidence and enjoy getting up and going to work doing something I love. I am using my programming skills to develop new products in the company. If I hadn't had help from Workways, I wouldn't have had this opportunity. I am so much happier now and my anxiety levels have reduced considerably."



Priority 2: Skills for Growth



Raising skills and access to training will help create a strong and diverse workforce capable of addressing labour market challenges and driving economic productivity and business growth. EU funds are helping to increase vocational skills and higher level skills. EU funds are also helping to reduce gender inequalities, increase workforce diversity, and are supporting the progression of women in the workforce.

By the end of the year, around 87% (€303m) of the EU funds available within this Priority had been invested in 16 projects, including the Welsh Government's Apprenticeships programme and Bangor University's Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships (KESS 2).

Investments throughout the year focused on expanding the activities and / or extending the lifecycle of schemes. Additional EU funds were awarded to extend Working Skills for Adults II, led by Torfaen County Borough Council, and the Materials and Manufacturing Academy, led by Swansea University.

Good progress was made against the Priority's targets, with projects reporting the assistance of over 47,500 participants, of which over 18,300 participants achieved qualifications.



Case Study: Agile Nation 2



Supported by £5.6m of EU funds, Chwarae Teg's Agile Nation 2 project is helping women in work develop their careers through accredited leadership qualifications and mentoring. It is also supporting businesses to implement equality strategies and modern working practices.

More than 1,400 women will benefit from the scheme. One participant said: "With the support from Chwarae Teg, I took the plunge to apply for a new role. I used evidence from my Chwarae Teg journey within the interview process, which I believe helped me get the job.

"Since the course, my annual salary has increased by over £5,000 and will continue to do so by 5% each year for the next 3 years. Not only did Chwarae Teg help me increase my salary but I also moved from a company and position at risk to a permanent contract within a stable organisation.

"I am now in a management role, where I manage myself, working with people from different backgrounds and coaching them into taking steps to move them closer to employment.

"In the near future I will be working towards managing a team using all this experience. Now I will always be looking to progress and develop myself as much as possible. A new, happier me!"



Priority 3: Youth Employment and Attainment



Supporting young people who are Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET) will help reduce youth unemployment and improve their career and life prospects. EU funds are focused on raising achievement levels, reducing early school leaving and supporting those most at risk of becoming NEET.

By the end of the year, 74% (€181m) of the EU funds available within this Priority had been invested in 15 projects, including the two EU investments made during 2017 for NEET projects ADTRAC, led by Grwp Llandrillo Coleg Menai, and Cam Nesa, led by Pembrokeshire County Council.

By the end of the year, projects had supported over 20,000 young people demonstrating significant progress against targets for reducing numbers of NEETs or at risk of becoming NEET.

Project performance forecasts are encouraging, which will allow remaining funds to be invested in important niche areas, such as improving the take-up of STEM subjects, especially for young women and girls, and preventing young adults already in further education but at risk of dropping out and becoming NEET.



Case Study: TRAC 11-24 (West Wales and the Valleys)

TRAC 11-24 in North Wales is helping to reduce the number of young people aged 11-24 at risk of becoming NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training).

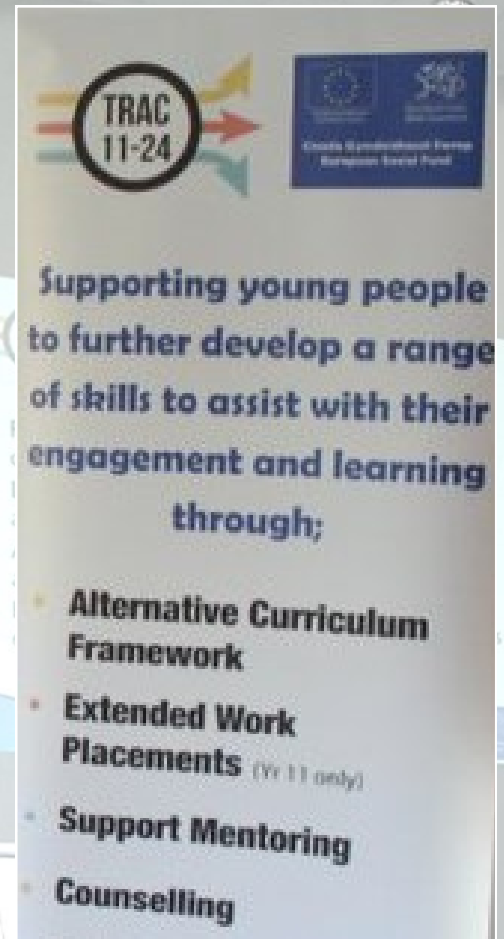
Led by Denbighshire County Council, the scheme is supported by £9m from the EU Funds and is being delivered in partnership with Local Authorities and Further Education colleges. It works closely with schools to identify and support young people at risk of becoming disengaged from education and training.

TRAC 11-24 provides a range of health and well-being support that compliments, but does not duplicate mainstream services. These include counselling, wellbeing and attendance advice, courses and work placements and bespoke advice from Careers Wales.

Students who experience learning difficulties are given mentors with expertise in a variety of issues including housing, welfare and health and wellbeing so that students can focus on their learning and ensure their continued engagement in education.

The project aims to support over 9,000 young people and has already seen many excellent outcomes including:

- work placements offering permanent roles
- colleges offering unconditional places
- improved wellbeing scores
- qualifications in a variety of vocations
- hundreds of young people developing new skills to help shape their future
- stronger family relationships and many new found friendships and connections.



Priority 4: Technical Assistance

Technical Assistance is an essential resource, utilised by WEFO and other partners, for supporting the effective delivery of the Programme.

By the end of 2017 EU funds worth 16m (around 100% of the priority's allocation) had been invested in six projects. This includes revenue support for WEFO to effectively deliver the programme, the four 'Regional Engagement Teams' based in North Wales, Mid Wales, Swansea Bay and South East Wales, and Intermediary Body revenue support for the WCVA. No further commitment is anticipated.



More information about the West Wales and the Valleys ESF Programme can be found on the Welsh Government website [here](#)



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