



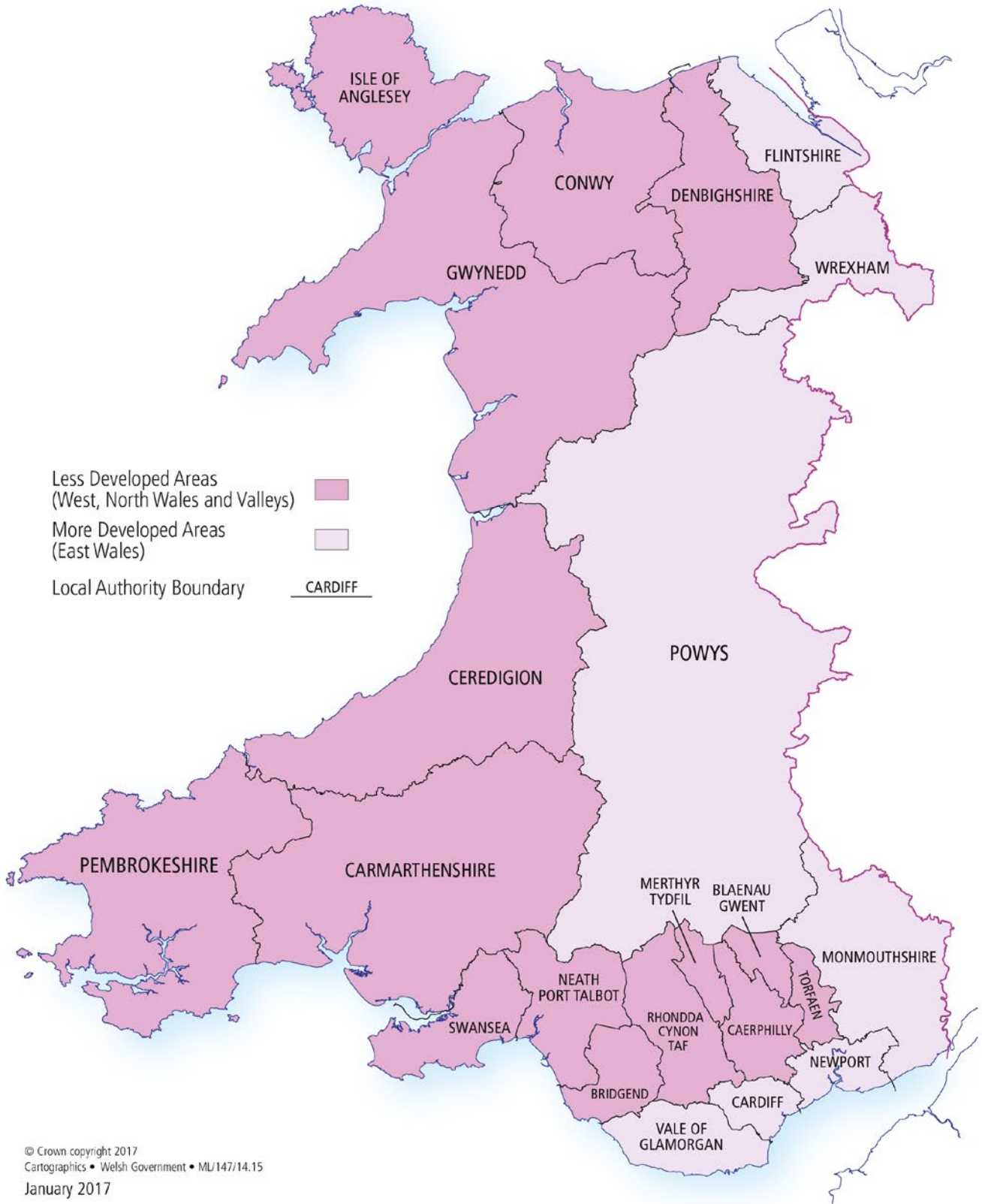
Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

West Wales and the Valleys European Social Fund Programme 2014-2020

2022 Annual Implementation Report Summary



European Structural Fund Programme Regions in Wales for 2014-2020



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Introduction

Wales is benefiting from over **€2bn** of EU funds through four Structural Funds programmes covering the 2014-2020 period, driving a total investment of over €3.7bn.

As part of this, just under €805m has been allocated to less developed areas through the West Wales and Valleys European Social Fund, which aims to drive economic growth by investing in the following priority areas:

Priority	EU budget	Total Budget
Tackling Poverty through Sustainable Employment	€169m	€214m
Skills for Growth	€309m	€427m
Youth Employment and Attainment	€222m	€298m
Public Services Reform and Regional Working	€9m	€12m
Containing COVID through Capacity	€80m	€108m
Technical Assistance	€16m	€22m
Total	€805m	€1,081m

Programme progress

Progress on programme delivery returned to relatively normal, following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some changes made by operations to respond to the pandemic have continued where appropriate, such as online and remote delivery of support. However, many operations have returned to delivering face-to-face support as public health concerns eased.

In March 2022, following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, WEFO updated its participant eligibility guidance to include additional guidance on the eligibility of Ukrainian nationals in Wales to access support. By the end of 2022, the Welsh Government had fully committed the allocation of EU funds to 74 projects through the European Social Fund in West Wales and the Valleys.

Tackling Poverty through Sustainable Employment

EU funds are supporting projects that are increasing the skills and employability of economically inactive and long-term unemployed people, plus helping reduce underemployment and absence rates of employed people with work-limiting health conditions. Good progress has been made with outputs during the year showing particularly high levels of participation by long-term unemployed participants and participants with a work-limiting health condition or disability.

Skills for Growth

EU funds are being invested in a range of initiatives that are improving basic, technical and high-level skills of working people across Wales. The priority achieved overall good progress against target indicators over the year and by the end of 2022, the priority had fully committed funds to 22 operations.

Youth Employment and Attainment

Young people across Wales are benefiting from EU funded training and employment opportunities, taking part in projects to increase the take-up and attainment of STEM subjects while EU funds are also being invested in increasing the skills of early years and childcare workers. Across the Priority, indicators linked to training-based interventions were performing well, with both the proportions of young people completing their STEM training and employees from the early years sector gaining qualifications showing good progress.

Public services reform and regional working

EU funds are supporting projects to stimulate new regional solutions, planning and service models, helping organisations to innovate and work together on a regional basis to find new ways to tackle some of the challenges they are facing and improve the delivery of public services. Indicators have shown good progress has been made in terms of participation with the projects as well as the level of processes, methods and tools being developed.

Containing COVID through Capacity

During 2022, a retrospective operation was approved in this priority. The operation, which was awarded £35m funds, was led by the Welsh Government's Health Department with local health boards and NHS trusts from across West Wales and the Valleys as joint beneficiaries. The operation is expected to have supported the employment of over 2,500 additional health and social care staff during the Coronavirus response as well as the purchase of some 165 million items of PPE.

Highlights

Key stats:

- Over 30,000 people helped into employment or self-employment.
- Over 104,000 new qualifications achieved.
- Almost 7,000 people progressing into further learning or training.
- Over 45,000 NEET Participants (16–24 years of age).
- Over 24,000 participants at Risk of becoming NEET (11–24 years of age).
- Just over 11,000 young female participants (11-19 years of age) engaging with a STEM operation.

Other highlights:

- Swansea University's EU funded Science for Schools Scheme, part of the Trio Sci Cymru project, won the Outstanding Contribution to Public Engagement at the 2022 Research & Innovation awards, for its science workshops for young people in South Wales nurturing curiosity and engagement with science.
- Grwp Llandrillo Menai's TRAC project, which received £38m EU funds and ran from 2016, celebrated their achievements at their final event in December. The project resulted in a 66% decrease in the number of 16-24 aged learners who have become NEET. Learners receiving TRAC support improved their attendance, developed enhanced skills, such as resilience, communication and positive mental health and have gone on to achieve success on their course and in their future careers.
- In March, ION Leadership, led by Swansea University, held a hybrid event to mark the success of more than 35 learners on the ION Leadership ILM Level 5 Leading Growth and ILM Level 3 New Leaders programmes. Honorary Fellows and celebrity well-wishers including singer Beverley Knight, former Wales rugby international Rupert Moon and TV farmer Gareth Wyn Jones joined the successful cohort for a ceremony which also featured drone footage of participating organisations from across north and mid-Wales.
- EU funded Technocamps published their Annual Report for 2021 highlighting their successes through the year promoting STEM subjects in schools and supporting digital upskilling across Wales, which saw 382 workshops delivered, 156 schools engaged and over 6,840 learners engaged.



Science for Schools Scheme receiving the Outstanding Contribution to Public Engagement award



ION Leadership Graduates



TRAC 11-24 team,



Technocamps workshop

Success Stories

Workways+

The training provided by EU funded Workways+ to help Alun Sturley find a job also enabled him to save his father's life.

EU funded Workways+ led by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council helps people with barriers to employment improve their lives and job prospects through skills training, work experience, employment and volunteering opportunities.

Health issues and lack of qualifications had meant Alun struggled to find employment, but after registering with Workways+ they were able to provide him with expert support and mentoring. Workways+ identified and funded Alun to successfully complete a first aid training course to enhance his skills.

It was while visiting his family that Alun recognised the signs that his father was having a heart attack and he immediately started CPR, working on him for 15 minutes until the paramedics arrived. Alun's first aid training saved his father's life and led to him being presented with a British Heart Foundation Heart Hero Award to recognise his amazing, life-saving achievement.

Alun said: "I am so grateful for the support Workways+ has given me. They are a nice team of people that work hard to help people get on. Helping my dad means the world to me and that is down to the first aid training I had. Workways has boosted my confidence and helped me with practical support. I can't thank them enough".



Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship gave Matthew Clark a new focus after shielding during the pandemic.

20-year-old Mathew had wanted to work in the RAF after his A-Levels until a medical condition left him unable to join the military. Demoralised about this during lockdown and working as a delivery driver, Matthew saw an apprenticeship opportunity on Facebook with West Wales Airport in Ceredigion, he applied and was successfully got the position.

The Welsh Government Apprenticeship programme backed by £206m EU funds has supported over 130,000 people into apprenticeships, providing opportunities to gain vocational skills to build a sustainable career.

In his role as Air Traffic Engineer Apprentice, Matthew is responsible for maintaining the specialist equipment in the control tower, ensuring the smooth running of on-site systems and completing daily checks on the radio system and the met station to make sure they're accurate.

Matthew said: "The skills and experience I'm gaining are quite specialised which is why an apprenticeship is a great path into the industry for me. 6 months into the role, the team already trust me to do some tasks independently and I'm also working towards completing an advanced course in equipment maintenance."

My apprenticeship isn't just a job, it's a sustainable career path. The benefits are endless – I can learn from specialist professionals and receive hands-on practical training, all whilst earning a wage. Working at an airfield is pretty cool and I feel excited to go to work when I wake up in the morning. What more do you need?"



Apprenticeships, Matthew Clark