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Research Report

Ex Post Evaluation 2007-2013 Structural Funds in Wales

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EX POST EVALUATION 2007-2013 STRUCTURAL FUNDS IN WALES

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Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Explanation
AIR	Annual Implementation Report
APS	Annual Population Survey
BME	Black Minority Ethnic
CCT	Cross Cutting Theme
CIE	Counterfactual Impact Evaluation
DRT	Demand Responsive Transport
EC	European Commission
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ERP	Economic Renewal Programme – A Welsh Government Strategy
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
FIT	Feed in tariff
Gothenburg strategy	The EU's strategy for sustainable development
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
ICT	Information, communication and technology
IDBR	Inter Departmental Business Register
LFS	Labour Force Survey
Lisbon strategy	The Lisbon Strategy was an action and development plan devised in 2000 for the economy of the EU between 2000 and 2010.
LLWR	Lifelong Learning Wales Register
NRP	National Reform Programme

NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
ONS	Office for National Statistics
OP	Operational Programme
PDO	Project Development Officer. These are WEFO officials
PMC	Programme Monitoring Committee
PSM	Propensity Score Matching
R&D	Research and Development
RCE	Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programme
RME	WEFO's Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Team
SET	Spatial European Team
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises defined as employing fewer than 250 people
TEN-T	Trans-European Transport Network
UK	United Kingdom
WEFO	Welsh European Funding Office

Executive Summary

About the Ex Post Evaluation

The Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) commissioned an ex post evaluation of the 2007-2013 European Structural Funds Programmes in Wales in 2016. The Programmes subject to this evaluation are:

- West Wales and the Valleys European Social Fund (ESF) Convergence Programme
 - Priority 1: Supplying young people with skills for learning and future employment
 - Priority 2: Increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity
 - Priority 3: Improving the skill levels and the adaptability of the workforce
 - Priority 4: Modernising and improving the quality of our public services
- East Wales ESF Regional Competitiveness and Employment (RCE) Programme
 - Priority 1: Increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity
 - Priority 2: Improving the skill levels and the adaptability of the workforce
- West Wales and the Valleys European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Convergence Programme
 - Priority 1: Building the knowledge based economy
 - Priority 2: Improving business competitiveness
 - Priority 3: Developing the strategic infrastructure for a modern economy
 - Priority 4: Creating an attractive business environment
 - Priority 5: Building sustainable communities
- East Wales ERDF RCE Programme
 - Priority 1: Knowledge and innovation for growth
 - Priority 2: Business competitiveness for growth

- Priority 3: Tackling climate change
- Priority 4: Regeneration for growth

The aim of the ex post evaluation is to evaluate what the Structural Funds in Wales have achieved in each Priority and to identify any lessons that can be learned for the implementation of the 2014-2020 Programmes and the design of any future Programmes.

For each Priority, the evaluation has examined whether aims and objectives have been met, whether the Cross Cutting Themes (CCT) objectives have been achieved, whether the Programmes contributed to Welsh, national and EU policy aims and objectives, whether there have been any unintended consequences (positive or negative) and what factors are associated with any successes or failures in the Programmes.

The evaluation also considered and assessed evidence relating to impact, where possible drawing on credible estimates of the counterfactual.

Methodological Approach

A four stage methodological approach was adopted which focused entirely on secondary, desk based analysis of existing data, information and evaluation evidence. No additional, primary research was conducted as part of the ex post evaluation. The methodological stages consisted of:

- an inception phase to agree the detailed work programme, to develop a template and associated guidance for producing Priority review reports and to establish data requirements relating to performance and expenditure;
- a scoping phase which involved a literature review of Programme documentation, a review of the Welsh economy's performance between 2007-2015 to contextualise the wider conditions in which the Programmes were implemented, a review of the availability, coverage and robustness of programme and project level evaluation evidence and the preparation of a scoping report;

- the preparation of nine, peer reviewed Priority level review reports (five of which related to the ERDF Priorities and four to the ESF Priorities). The reports each contain 10 chapters covering scope, intervention logic, fit and performance, CCTs, barriers and success factors, impact, assessment of the evidence base and conclusions;
- project management, reporting and dissemination of key findings which included a presentation to the WEFO's 2016 annual conference.

A full list of the evidence sources examined and analysed as part of the review is set out in Section 2.2 of the main report. In summary, the evidence included:

- Operational Programme (OP) documents and accompanying Strategic Frameworks, Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) reports, Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs), monitoring information and various UK and Welsh Government policy documents;
- various Programme level evaluation reports including multiple ESF Leavers and ERDF Business Surveys;
- project level evaluation reports relating to a total of 193 projects (109 ERDF and 84 ESF).

Intervention Logic and Strategic Fit

The 2007-2013 ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes in Wales consisted of a well-defined and rationally designed set of Priorities. Each of the Priorities, with the partial exception of ESF Convergence Priority 4 were based on a sound intervention logic.

The Priorities and their intended activities contained justifiable aims which set out to address the needs and market failures identified in the underpinning socio-economic analysis. The Priorities also demonstrated clear and plausible linkages with Welsh Government, UK Government and EU policy objectives.

A fundamental contextual feature of the 2007-2013 Programming period was the unprecedented global financial crisis and its negative effects on the

economy of Wales. The challenging and unstable macroeconomic conditions meant that the implementation environment was very different to the situation that existed when the Programmes were being designed and developed.

These external forces also led to some significant policy responses such as the introduction of the Economic Renewal Programme. At the same time, the UK Government introduced a major reform package to its welfare to work policies. When taken together, these externalities had a major bearing on the delivery of projects funded by the 2007-2013 Programmes, not least in terms of affecting the nature and scale of the demand for different types of support.

A key conclusion of this evaluation is that despite the unprecedented conditions within which the Programmes were initially implemented, the overall intervention logic remained sound. There was also an appropriate degree of flexibility which enabled those overseeing the implementation of the Programmes to respond constructively to rapidly changing conditions and circumstances.

Not all of the ERDF and ESF indicators fitted neatly with the activities of funded projects or in some instances the logic flow at Priority level. For instance, the new job creation target did not fit neatly with the innovation or aspects of the infrastructure related ERDF Priorities. In this context, a number of key learning points have been identified which should be borne in mind for the design of future, domestically funded programmes in light of the UK's decision to leave the EU. Of particular significance is the need to ensure that results and impact indicators are fully aligned with, and are appropriate to, the nature of activities being funded. A further conclusion is the need to take account of the 'lag' that inevitably exists before the full effects of results and outcomes become evident and for this to be factored into monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

Performance

At a Priority level, performance in relation to the outputs and result targets has been mixed.

Performance was strong in relation to:

- number of enterprises assisted (ERDF P1 and P4 Conv);
- new job creation (ERDF P2);
- new enterprise creation (ERDF P2 Convergence and RCE);
- increased export levels (ERDF P2);
- premises created or refurbished (ERDF P3 and P5 Convergence);
- number of visits to Wales (ERDF P4 Conv);
- number of young participants (ESF Convergence Priority 1);
- number of participants gaining qualifications (ESF Convergence Priorities 2 and 3 and RCE Priorities 1 and 2);
- number of employers assisted (ESF Convergence Priority 3 and RCE Priority 2).

However, there have also been a number of disappointing performances.

Performance was particularly weak in relation to:

- new job creation (ERDF P1, P3, P5 Convergence and ERDF P4 RCE) – though in this context the job creation targets did not fit particularly well with the policy intentions of the Priorities or the type of interventions funded;
- profit benefit (across the ERDF Priorities);
- number of participants entering further learning (ESF Convergence Priority 1);
- number of employers assisted (ESF Convergence Priority 2);
- the CCT targets in general.

In terms of financial expenditure, the Priorities have been well managed with most showing financial outturns that came very close to the ERDF or ESF budget allocations taking into account some virement and re-distribution of funds approved by the PMC.

Cross Cutting Themes

There was a good level of buy-in to the principles and objectives of the CCTs. However, performance in terms of targets and achieving the CCT objectives has been very poor. The CCT targets were too output orientated and were

inadequate in terms of capturing some of the more subtle, but significant benefits of CCT activity. This is a key learning point that should inform the incorporation of CCTs and in particular appropriate CCT indicators in any future programmes.

There was a general lack of evidence to suggest that the CCTs had been integrated into the delivery of project activity, though this was much more likely to occur in projects that had an inherent focus on either equality or environmental sustainability. Despite this, there have been very encouraging examples of good practice in relation to the CCTs. These include innovative practices to improve equal opportunities in the workplace, inclusive community consultation, accessibility improvements to the public realm and the development and application of renewable materials and energy sources.

A key learning point relating to the implementation of CCTs is the need to ensure that resources are dedicated to ensuring that appropriate capacity and expertise is in place at a project level to promote integration and meaningful delivery.

Outcomes and Impacts

The nature of this ex post evaluation, with its focus on examining pre-existing evaluation evidence means that it has not been possible to undertake a robust, net impact analysis at either Priority or Programme level. There are several reasons for this, including the fact that Programme level evaluation evidence did not give complete coverage and the adoption of divergent methodological approaches to examining gross to net effects and a general lack of robust counterfactual impact evidence at project level.

The evaluation sets out a number of high level conclusions relating to outcomes, impacts and key learning points. Given the UK's impending departure from the EU, these conclusions are structured around the key areas of people, businesses and infrastructure rather than the more detailed and technical architecture of the 2014-2020 Operational Programmes. It is

important to note that both ESF and ERDF Priorities and projects contributed to a number of the outcomes for people and businesses.

It also needs to be borne clearly in mind that there are substantial considerations and variations in relation to the levels of direct attribution as well as deadweight and displacement which affect Programme results and impacts. For the reasons made clear in the report, it has not been possible to take account of these factors at either Priority or Programme level due to the different methodologies adopted.

People

In terms of impacts on people, there is evidence that the 2007-2013 Structural Funds Programmes contributed to:

- positive employment outcomes, both in terms of job creation and the safeguarding of existing jobs. The latter of these (jobs safeguarded) is considered as an unintended outcome since this was not a formal result indicator within the 2007-2013 OPs;
- improvements in generic and work related skills;
- improved employability and increased prospects of securing and sustaining work;
- positive soft outcomes including improved confidence, positive behavioural changes and greater positivity about work;
- positive (though, overall modest) achievements relating to people entering further forms of learning;
- progression within the workplace.

There is also evidence that the 2007-2013 Programmes led to a number of other outcomes for people, including:

- increased awareness of the importance of resource efficiency and recycling;
- engagement in various forms of volunteering;
- improved attendance and reduced unauthorised absenteeism in education and training.

Key learning points from the 2007-2013 EU Structural Funds Programmes in relation to future policies, programmes and interventions aimed at supporting people include:

- the need to ensure that interventions targeting young people adopt individualised and holistic approaches which combine emotional as well as skills development components. These interventions are most effective when delivered by experienced staff that have the ability to develop positive relationships with young people;
- the need to adopt a tailored set of outcome indicators which reflect the direct impact of interventions aimed at young people within the education system (e.g. around absenteeism, attendance and retention rates);
- that for interventions supporting people into work, supporting those that are furthest away from the labour market is likely to generate the greatest levels of additionality. Specifically, future programmes should have a clearly defined focus on high quality, client-led services that can be flexibly delivered and co-located with complementary services at the point of delivery;
- the need to ensure that any future programmes supporting people (e.g. with skills development and workplace progression) also take full account of positive outcomes for employers and businesses in particular;
- the need to ensure a focus on the lower skilled and those least likely to access training;
- the continued importance of a strong focus on excluded groups, particularly disabled and older workers;
- the need to provide a coherent approach to employer engagement;
- the importance of having a more coherent and consistent approach in terms of co-financing training activity with employers, in order to nurture future sustainability.

Businesses

In terms of impacts on businesses, there is evidence that the 2007-2013 Structural Funds Programmes contributed to:

- improvements in company turnover;
- improvements to both productivity and profitability for businesses;
- positive impacts on product and process innovation (including from ESF interventions);
- positive influence on people's decision to start a business;
- improvements to the financial resilience, governance and sustainability of social enterprises.

There is also evidence that the 2007-2013 Programmes led to a number of other effects for businesses, including:

- improved relationships between business and academia;
- an improved external profile of Wales (and Welsh institutions) in relation to research and R&D activity.

Key learning points from the 2007-2013 EU Structural Funds Programmes in relation to future policies, programmes and interventions aimed at supporting businesses include:

- the need to focus indicators and evaluation activity relating to business interventions more on outcomes and 'what difference is being made' rather than being overly preoccupied with outputs and 'how much is being done';
- the need to test the levels at which targets are set to ensure that these are SMART in nature;
- the need to take account of a number of factors (beyond just short-term job creation prospects) in identifying businesses that have growth potential;
- that targeting and prioritising business support activity makes sense. Optimising the mix of universally available information (e.g. via on-line platforms) and more intensive and expensive forms of support should be a key strategic priority;

- support for businesses is most effective when information, advice and guidance is effectively joined up with access to finance at the point of delivery;
- the need to ensure in-built CCT capacity and expertise and to present (and evaluate) this activity using language that businesses understand and can relate to.

Infrastructure

There is evidence that the 2007-2013 Structural Funds Programmes contributed to:

- an increase in the capacity of public transport systems along with increased passenger numbers and reduced dependence on car usage;
- company expansion (and job creation) through availability of newly developed business space;
- improvements relating to 'sense of place' and confidence levels in the perceived prospects of towns and areas where physical regeneration took place;
- positive impacts relating to town centre viability, though in reality the evidence in some instances related to the Structural Funds having slowed the effects of general decline rather than having reversed downward trends.

There is also evidence that the 2007-2013 Programmes led to a number of other (in some instances unintended) outcomes and effects relating to infrastructure, including:

- innovations in public transport (specifically demand responsive transport solutions);
- some negative unintended consequences. These included disruption (mainly to small businesses) whilst public realm/physical regeneration construction works took place. Some of the transport related schemes also arguably led to trade being taken away from some towns as transport improvements made it easier for people to travel to and shop in cities;

- positive outcomes for social enterprises including cultural changes, strengthened partnerships and collaborative working relationships.

Key learning points from the 2007-2013 EU Structural Funds Programmes in relation to future policies, programmes and interventions aimed at developing infrastructure include:

- the need to ensure that programme level indicators, particularly result and impact indicators appropriately reflect the breadth and scope of potential infrastructure investment activities;
- the need to strengthen the robustness of pre-developmental market testing activity to explore market failure, latent demand levels and to produce realistic assessments of the potential social, economic and environmental benefits of infrastructure projects;
- the need for all stakeholders and the evaluation processes adopted to reflect the lifespan over which economic benefits generated by infrastructure investments can reasonably be expected to occur;
- the need to retain some flexibility within the design of future programmes to enable infrastructure projects to respond to any major changes in the external environment;
- the need to invest in up-front and inclusive forms of public consultation in relation to infrastructure and public realm projects.

Finally, an over-arching conclusion is the need to continue to explore quasi-experimental forms of counterfactual evaluation (which applies equally to people, business and infrastructure investments) to strengthen the robustness of the analysis of impact of future programmes regardless of whether they are EU funded.

1.0 Introduction

OB3 (Old Bell 3 Ltd.) was appointed by the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) in February 2016 to undertake an ex post evaluation of the 2007-2013 European Union (EU) Structural Funds Programmes in Wales. The team assembled to undertake the evaluation included researchers from Regeneris Consulting and Cardiff University.

1.1 The 2007-2013 Programmes - Overview

The objectives and priorities of the 2007-2013 Structural Funds programmes in Wales were made consistent with the Lisbon¹ and Gothenburg² strategies and were developed in the context of the UK National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) which explained how the Structural Funds were to contribute to the overall UK National Reform Programme (NRP) for growth and jobs.

The Programmes subject to this ex post evaluation are:

- West Wales and the Valleys European Social Fund (ESF) Convergence Programme
 - Priority 1: Supplying young people with skills for learning and future employment
 - Priority 2: Increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity
 - Priority 3: Improving the skill levels and the adaptability of the workforce
 - Priority 4: Modernising and improving the quality of our public services

¹ The Lisbon Strategy was an action and development plan devised in 2000 for the economy of the EU between 2000 and 2010. The Lisbon Strategy intended to deal with the low productivity and stagnation of economic growth in the EU through the formulation of various policy initiatives to be taken by all EU member states. Source: Europa.eu

² As a complement to the Lisbon Strategy, the EU adopted a strategy for sustainable development at the Gothenburg Summit in 2001. Source: Europa.eu

- East Wales ESF Regional Competitiveness and Employment (RCE) Programme
 - Priority 1: Increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity
 - Priority 2: Improving the skill levels and the adaptability of the workforce
- West Wales and the Valleys European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Convergence Programme
 - Priority 1: Building the knowledge based economy
 - Priority 2: Improving business competitiveness
 - Priority 3: Developing the strategic infrastructure for a modern economy
 - Priority 4: Creating an attractive business environment
 - Priority 5: Building sustainable communities
- East Wales ERDF RCE Programme
 - Priority 1: Knowledge and innovation for growth
 - Priority 2: Business competitiveness for growth
 - Priority 3: Tackling climate change
 - Priority 4: Regeneration for growth

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Ex Post Evaluation

WEFO committed to carrying out an ex post evaluation of the 2007-2013 Programmes in its 2007-2013 monitoring and evaluation plan.

The aim of the ex post evaluation is to:

‘Evaluate what the Structural Funds Programmes in Wales have achieved in each Priority and to identify any lessons that can be learned for the implementation of the 2014-2020 Programmes and the design of any future Programmes’.

The specific objectives of the ex post evaluation are to assess for each Priority:

- whether the Priority has achieved its aims and objectives;
- whether the Cross Cutting Themes (CCT) objectives have been achieved;
- whether the Programmes have contributed to Welsh, national and EU (Lisbon and Gothenburg) policy aims and objectives;
- whether there have been any unintended consequences of the Programmes (positive or negative);
- what factors are associated with any successes or failures in the Programmes.

The evaluation also considered the relevance of the Programmes by assessing the extent to which the objectives and design are consistent with (a) challenges and concerns in a particular sector or programming area and (b) the needs and priorities of target groups.

Finally, the evaluation considered and assessed evidence relating to the impacts of the Programmes using, wherever possible a credible estimate of the counterfactual.

1.3 Structure of the report

This report draws on the findings and conclusions of nine detailed Priority review reports prepared as part of the ex post process³. These Priority review reports are based on a combination of the secondary evidence sources outlined in Chapter 2.

This is therefore a summative, over-arching report that reflects on the main themes identified at Priority level.

³ The Priority Review Reports can be accessed on the Welsh Government website's research pages.

In the remainder of this report, we set out:

- details of the methodological approach adopted and some of the key methodological issues and considerations in undertaking the evaluation (Chapter 2);
- findings in relation to intervention logic (Chapter 3);
- findings in relation to external forces that influenced implementation (Chapter 4);
- findings in relation to Priority level performance and achievements (Chapter 5);
- findings in relation to the CCTs (Chapter 6);
- findings in relation to evidence of impact at a Priority level (Chapter 7);
- key learning points (Chapter 8);
- conclusions (Chapter 9).

2.0 Methodology

In this chapter, we detail the approach taken, the evidence sources available and a number of methodological considerations and issues which arose during the course of the ex post evaluation.

2.1 Approach

A four stage methodological approach was adopted which focused entirely on secondary, desk based analysis of existing data, information and evaluation evidence. No additional, primary research was conducted as part of the ex post evaluation. The methodological stages consisted of:

An inception stage which included:

- an initial inception meeting with WEFO officials, held on 11th March 2016;
- developing a template and associated guidance for the production of Priority review reports. A copy of the template and associated guidance used to produce the Priority review reports is included in the accompanying technical appendix;
- the development of spreadsheets setting out our requirements in terms of monitoring information relating to performance against the achievement of targets and expenditure. The spreadsheets were duly completed by WEFO officials and returned to the evaluation team.

A scoping exercise which included:

- an initial review of Programme documentation to understand a) the intervention logic and b) the original activity and results targets for each Priority and how (and why) these were changed during the Programmes' lifetime;
- preparing a short review paper analysing the Welsh economy's performance from 2007-2015 in order to contextualise the wider conditions in which the Programmes were implemented;

- reviewing the availability, coverage and robustness of project level evaluation evidence relating to operations funded under the 2007-2013 Programmes;
- preparing a scoping report submitted to WEFO in June 2016.

The preparation of nine, peer reviewed Priority review reports (five of which related to ERDF Priorities and four to ESF Priorities). Each review report is structured as follows:

- the scope of the Priority;
- the intervention logic and policy context;
- an assessment of the fit of funded projects with the Priority level intervention logic;
- an assessment of performance in relation to output and result targets and expenditure;
- an assessment of cross-cutting theme implementation;
- an assessment of common barriers and success factors emerging from programme and project level evaluation evidence;
- an assessment of impact;
- an assessment of unintended consequences;
- an assessment of the availability and quality of evaluation evidence (drawn from the scoping exercise);
- conclusions.

Where there were corresponding Priorities for West Wales and the Valleys and East Wales, these were combined in an integrated Priority review report.

Project management, reporting and dissemination, which included:

- regular communication with WEFO officials throughout the evaluation;
- presenting emerging findings at WEFO's 2016 annual conference;
- drafting this final report.

2.2 Evidence Sources

The evidence sources used to inform the ex post evaluation included:

- the four Operational Programme (OP) Documents;
- Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) reports and papers;
- Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs);
- monitoring information on output and result indicators and Priority level expenditure;
- the thematic and spatial Strategic Frameworks which were intended to a) guide prospective project sponsors as to the aims, objectives and targets of the Operational Programmes and b) assist WEFO in selecting and prioritising projects. There were eight ERDF Strategic Frameworks⁴, eight ESF Strategic Frameworks⁵ and five spatial Strategic Frameworks⁶;
- various policy and strategy documents of direct relevance to each of the Programme Priorities.

Programme level evaluation evidence included:

- the ex ante evaluations of the 2007-2013 Structural Fund Programmes in Wales;
- a feasibility study of methodological approaches to undertake impact evaluation of 2007-2013 Structural Fund Programmes in Wales;
- two ERDF Business Surveys commissioned by WEFO. One reported in 2012 and the second reported in 2016;
- five annual ESF Leavers Survey Reports covering the period 2009-2013;

⁴ Relating to Sustainable Transport, Enterprise, Materials Efficiency and Waste Management, Community Economic Development, Climate Change, Innovation, Technology R&D, Business Finance and ICT Infrastructure and Exploitation.

⁵ Relating to Skills for the Knowledge Economy, Raising the Skills Level of the Workforce, Promoting Gender Equality in Employment, Supplying Young People with Skills for Learning and Future Employment, Increasing Employment and Tackling economic Inactivity, Improving Skill Levels and the Adaptability of the Workforce and Modernising and Improving the Quality of our Public Services.

⁶ Relating to Swansea Bay: The Waterfront and Western Valleys, South East Wales, Pembrokeshire – The Haven, North West/North East Wales and Central Wales

- an evaluation of the Effectiveness of Implementation in the 2007-2013 Structural Funds Programming Period;
- an evaluation of ESF Convergence Priority 2: Increasing Employment and Tackling Economic Inactivity;
- a thematic evaluation of ESF Convergence Priority 1 in West Wales and the Valleys;
- a thematic evaluation of ESF Convergence Priority 3 and ESF RCE Priority 2;
- a thematic evaluation of ERDF Convergence and RCE Priority 2;
- a cross-cutting themes evaluation;
- an evaluation of the Spatial European Teams (SETs).

In terms of project level evaluation, we reviewed evidence in the form of evaluation reports relating to a total of 193 projects, broken down as follows:

ERDF

- ERDF P1 (Convergence and RCE): 21 of 33 projects;
- ERDF P2 (Convergence and RCE): 19 of 25 projects;
- ERDF P3 Convergence: 19 of 31 projects;
- ERDF P4 Convergence and P3 RCE: 20 of 29 projects;
- ERDF P5 Conv and P4 Comp: 30 of 37 projects.

ESF

- ESF P1 Conv: 16 of 20 projects;
- ESF P2 Conv and P1 Comp: 31 of 35 projects;
- ESF P3 Conv and P2 Comp: 31 of 36 projects;
- ESF P4 Conv: 6 of 7 projects.

2.3 *Methodological Issues and Considerations*

Programme level evaluation evidence

At a Programme level, impact and Counterfactual Impact Evaluation (CIE) evidence was drawn mainly from the ESF Leavers' Surveys and the ERDF Business Surveys. The ESF Leaver's Survey involved a CIE approach that compared the labour market experiences of 'treated' survey respondents with the experiences of similar, matched groups of people in the wider labour market sourced from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Population Survey (APS). The matched groups were identified using Propensity Score Matching (PSM) techniques.

The most recent (2016) ERDF Survey attempted to match assisted enterprises with the ONS Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR). However, there were difficulties with this process and a lack of matches with ONS datasets meant that it was not possible to use PSM techniques to create a control group. This resulted in a manually created control group being developed. However, the researchers concluded that 'at best' this could 'only provide a partial examination of impact'⁷.

It is also important to note that the ESF⁸ and ERDF⁹ surveys did not provide complete coverage in terms of all Priorities and Measures across the four 2007-2013 OPs which means that Programme level impact evaluation evidence has not been available for some Priorities. This meant an increased emphasis and reliance on project level evaluation in the Priorities not covered which presented a number of methodological challenges in terms of consistent analysis of effects and impacts at Priority level.

⁷ ERDF Support for Business Evaluation. February 2016. SQW, Aston Business School and BMG Research. Page 73.

⁸ The ESF Leavers' Surveys covered Convergence Priority 2, Convergence Priority 3, RCE Priority 1 and RCE Priority 2. They did not cover ESF Priority 1 Convergence or ESF Priority 4 Convergence.

⁹ The ERDF Business Surveys covered Convergence Priority 1, Convergence Priority 2, Convergence Priority 5 (Theme 2 Only), RCE Priority 1 and RCE Priority 2. They did not cover ERDF Convergence Priority 3, ERDF Convergence Priority 4 and ERDF RCE Priority 3 ERDF Convergence Priority 5, Theme 1 and ERDF RCE Priority 4.

Project level evaluation evidence

Most of the ERDF and ESF project level evaluations provided by WEFO for examination were final, summative reports although in a number of instances (particularly for some ERDF infrastructure projects) final evaluations had been undertaken before all funded capital projects had been completed and were fully operational. A critique of the methodological approaches adopted by project evaluations is provided in each of the Priority review reports.

Most (ESF and ERDF) project evaluations used mixed methodological approaches, combining literature reviews, analysis of monitoring data and primary research with participants and other stakeholders. Most also used some form of survey approach to gather information on process and impact from participating beneficiaries though different approaches were adopted, with telephone surveys generally yielding more robust sample sizes than web surveys.

Most project evaluations triangulated the evidence sources available to them to greater or lesser degrees, though some relied heavily on survey data.

Very few projects attempted CIE approaches that went beyond seeking the subjective views of project beneficiaries and stakeholders. This was attempted, via quasi-experimental methodologies for a number of projects under ERDF Priority 2 (Convergence and RCE) and ERDF Priority 5 Convergence and its sister Priority 4 in RCE. The evidence from these CIE approaches provided a partial, but inconclusive picture (particularly given major externalities such as the prevailing macro-economic forces) and was used to help contextualise other findings such as those gained from surveys.

3.0 Intervention Logic and ‘Fit’

In this chapter, we outline our findings in relation to the intervention logic for the OP Priorities and the extent to which the aims and objectives were aligned with key policies and the issues, challenges and opportunities identified for the respective Programme areas. The chapter also reviews the evidence relating to the coverage and ‘fit’ of funded projects in relation to the various Priorities.

3.1 *The ERDF Priorities*

The intervention logic for the five Convergence ERDF Priorities and the four RCE ERDF Priorities was clearly articulated. There was a well-defined rationale in terms of the design of the Priorities which addressed specific market failures and needs set out in the analysis underpinning the two OPs.

In each of the Priority areas, there were clear and justifiable aims along with a logical range of indicative actions (supported by the relevant Strategic Frameworks) which fitted with Welsh Government policy aspirations at the time the ERDF OPs were developed. In terms of Welsh Government policies, there were clearly articulated linkages across the ERDF Priorities with a range of devolved strategy documents, including¹⁰:

- Wales: A Vibrant Economy;
- Wales for Innovation;
- Wales Science Strategy;
- The Wales Spatial Plan;
- Entrepreneurship Action Plan;
- Social Enterprise Strategy for Wales;
- International Trade Strategy;
- Wales Transport Strategy;
- Environment Strategy for Wales;
- Wales Energy Strategy;
- Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy;

¹⁰ This is not intended as a fully exhaustive list.

- Achieving our Potential (Tourism Strategy) for Wales;
- Property Strategy for Employment.

These domestic policy linkages were further emphasised in the ERDF thematic and spatial Strategic Frameworks. A number of new policy responses and developments were instigated early-on in the lifespan of the OPs, not least as a response to the global economic downturn. We consider the effects of these issues in terms of implementation in Chapter 4 (External Forces).

The ERDF Priorities were well-aligned with the European Commission's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (also referred to as the Lisbon Strategy). Specifically, the ERDF Priorities were in-tune with the Commission's objectives to:

- improve conditions and access to finance for research and innovation that can create growth and jobs;
- to speed up the roll-out of high-speed internet and reap the benefits of a digital single market for households and firms;
- support the shift towards a low carbon economy and promote energy efficiency;
- improve the business environment, notably for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)¹¹.

The ERDF Priorities (in both the Convergence and RCE areas) were also consistent with the European Commission's Gothenburg agenda for sustainable development¹². Specifically, this was via the inclusion of a cross-cutting theme on Environmental Sustainability and through the specific aims of ERDF Convergence Priority 5 (Building Sustainable Communities) and RCE Priority 4 (Regeneration for Growth).

¹¹ Communication from the Commission. 'Europe 2020'. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Brussels, 2010. Pages 5 and 6.

¹² Communication from the Commission. A Sustainable Europe for a Better World: A European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development. Brussels, 2001.

Our findings in respect of the intervention logic and complementarity of the ERDF Priorities with key policies mirror those of the ex ante evaluators¹³.

Table 3.1 provides a summary overview of the extent to which projects funded via the ERDF OPs fitted with and provided coverage against Priority level aims and objectives. More detailed analysis is contained within each of the Priority review reports.

¹³ Ex Ante Evaluation of the 2007-2013 ERDF Convergence Programme. Final Report, March 2007. DTZ.

Table 3.1: ERDF Projects – Fit with and Coverage against Priority Aims and Objectives

ERDF Priority	Summary of main findings on project fit
1 Convergence 1 RCE	There was good coverage in terms of core projects focused on innovation, research and development (R&D) support, SME finance and information, communication and technology (ICT) adoption. These core projects were supplemented by additional, specialist projects that provided a tailored offer for specific sectors.
2 Convergence 2 RCE	The range of projects provided good coverage against the Priority aims and objectives, though some operations were less focused on the Welsh Government's priority sectors than might have been expected given the policy focus in this area. Projects were clearly aimed at addressing gaps and market failures relating to access to finance with a range of repayable and non-repayable products. However, many of the businesses supported by Priority 2 projects were micro or lifestyle in nature despite a clear policy emphasis within the OP on targeting growth potential businesses.
3 Convergence	<p>Projects provided a good level of coverage against the Priority level aims and objectives. However, there were a number of notable gaps and imbalances, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvements to the TEN-T¹⁴ network focused mainly on road improvements (mainly trunk roads) rather than rail; • • a limited focus on improving connections to ports; • modal shift projects¹⁵ that focused principally on passengers (e.g. park and ride type facilities), with very few

¹⁴ Trans-European Transport Networks

	<p>focused on freight interchanges;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited coverage of projects (beyond the Valleys Rail Strengthening project) that aimed to directly promote urban agglomeration which was extensively covered in the OP.
4 Convergence 3 RCE	<p>These Priorities supported a diverse range of projects which were well aligned with the aims and objectives of the Priorities. In terms of the balance and coverage of funded projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there was a pronounced focus on domestic energy efficiency with less of a focus than might have been expected on SME energy efficiency; • there was a major focus on investing in coastal and flood defences with investment generally appearing to have concentrated more heavily on addressing risks rather than capitalising upon opportunities.
5 Convergence 4 RCE	<p>Both of these Priorities funded spatially targeted packages of regeneration support consistent with the objectives of focusing on the revitalisation of deprived towns and communities. Priority 5, Theme 2 also funded project activity in-tune with and provided good coverage against community economic development objectives. There were no obvious gaps. There was no stand-alone project designed specifically to address the aim of promoting social inclusion through cultural and heritage activities, though several projects advised and supported social enterprises involved in this type of activity.</p>

¹⁵ Modal shift means replacing a saturated means of transport with another to make the first less congested. Modal shift actions can also have the objective of taking freight off the roads and transfer it to other forms of transport. Source: Europa.eu

3.2 *The ESF Priorities*

In the Convergence OP, the intervention logic relating to ESF Priorities 1, 2 and 3 was clearly articulated and well-defined. This was also true of the corresponding ESF Priorities 1 and 2 in the RCE OP. Overall, these Priorities set out a well-constructed rationale for intervention which addressed issues and challenges highlighted in the analysis underpinning the two OPs. However, as the ex ante evaluators noted, the intervention logic could have been further strengthened by a clearer differentiation (within Priorities and Themes) between helping individuals and assisting the economy¹⁶.

In contrast, the intervention logic for Convergence Priority 4 (Modernising and improving the quality of our public services) was less clearly articulated. The focus of Priority 4 on improving public services (rather than directly supporting individuals) introduced a new type of intervention to the 2007-2013 Programmes. While there was a logical flow between the analysis of need and the intended actions, the outputs and outcomes did not fit particularly well with these, focusing more on processes rather than actual changes or improvements in public service delivery. The ex ante evaluators noted a lack of consideration in the socio-economic analysis of the OP specifically relating to issues around public service delivery¹⁷. The logic of focusing this Priority on West Wales and the Valleys, when arguably improvement of public service delivery was a national issue was also fundamentally questioned by the ex ante evaluators.

Each of the ESF Priorities (including Convergence Priority 4) fitted clearly with Welsh Government policy aspirations at the time the OPs were developed. In terms of devolved, Welsh Government policies, there were clearly articulated linkages with a range of strategy documents, including¹⁸:

¹⁶ Ex Ante Evaluation of the 2007-2013 ESF Convergence Programme. Final Report. March 2007. DTZ. Page 27.

¹⁷ Ex Ante Evaluation of the 2007-2013 ESF Convergence Programme. Final Report. March 2007. DTZ. Page 16.

¹⁸ This is not intended as a fully exhaustive list.

- The Skills and Employment Action Plan;
- The Learning Country 2 (Education and Lifelong Learning Strategy);
- Word Talk, Numbers Count: Strategy to Improve Basic Literacy and Numeracy in Wales;
- 14-19 Learning Pathways;
- Reaching Higher (Long Term Strategy for Higher Education in Wales);
- Making the Connections: Delivering Beyond Boundaries (Public Service Reform).

There were also clearly articulated linkages with relevant non-devolved, UK Government policies in relation to welfare to work, though as we explore in Chapter 4 (External Forces) major policy changes to the welfare to work agenda, specifically the introduction of the Work Programme fundamentally influenced the implementation phases of many ESF operations.

The ESF Priorities were well-aligned with the European Commission's Lisbon Strategy. Specifically, the ESF Priorities were in tune with the Commission's objectives to:

- enhance the performance of education systems and to facilitate the entry of young people into the labour market;
- to modernise labour markets and empower people by developing their skills with a view to increasing labour market participation and better match labour supply and demand, including through labour mobility;
- ensure social and territorial cohesion so that the benefits of growth and jobs are widely shared and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion are enabled to live in dignity and take an active part in society¹⁹.

The ESF Priorities were also consistent with the objectives of the Gothenburg agenda, specifically in the priority areas set out by the Commission to combat

¹⁹ Communication from the Commission. 'Europe 2020'. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Brussels, 2010. Pages 5 and 6.

poverty, to address social exclusion and to supporting people with care responsibilities to remain in work longer²⁰.

Our findings in relation to the intervention logic and policy linkages for the ESF priorities are consistent with those of the ex ante evaluators who concluded that the Programmes were robustly and coherently designed and were internally consistent and in line with external policies at Welsh, UK and EU level²¹.

Table 3.2 provides a summary overview of the extent to which projects funded via the ESF OPs fitted with and provided coverage against Priority level aims and objectives. More detailed analysis is contained within each of the Priority review reports.

²⁰ Communication from the Commission. A Sustainable Europe for a Better World: A European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development. Brussels, 2001. Page 10.

²¹ Ex Ante Evaluation of the 2007-2013 ESF Convergence Programme. Final Report. March 2007. DTZ

Table 3.2: ESF Projects – Fit with and Coverage against Priority Aims and Objectives

ESF Priority	Summary of main findings on project fit
1 Convergence	Projects funded under Priority 1 demonstrated a good fit with the aims and objectives outlined in the OP and the Strategic Framework. Indicative activities were well covered and there was a clear focus on adding value to mainstream educational provision. Projects were wide-ranging but clearly focused in terms of the intended target audience.
2 Convergence 1 RCE	Projects demonstrated a good fit with the Operational Programme and the Strategic Framework, although the nature of initiatives funded reflected the changing labour market conditions experienced over time. This meant that a greater proportion of resources was allocated to support unemployed rather than economically inactive participants. Project level evaluations pointed to some evidence of duplication between funded initiatives as well as between initiatives and mainstream employment provision.
3 Convergence 2 RCE	While projects fitted well with the Priorities and relevant Strategic Frameworks, there were some gaps principally in terms of targeting disadvantaged groups. This was most evident in the case of the RCE OP where the Priority was arguably too broadly drawn given the resources available. Moreover, while the funding split between the three Themes of the Convergence Priority was broadly as envisaged, participants as a whole were better qualified, and were more strongly positioned in the labour market than had been expected. Some projects focused on supporting new entrants to the labour market taking more of the resources available for this purpose than might have been expected.
P4 Convergence	Projects and sub-projects funded under Priority 4 suffered from problems of poor design and lack of clarity which

	stemmed from issues with the intervention logic and outputs and result targets that were not well aligned with the nature of intended interventions.
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4.0 External Forces

In this chapter we examine external factors (also commonly referred to as externalities) outside of the control of the Programmes and those involved with implementation but which nevertheless had a significant bearing on delivery, performance and outcomes.

The findings set out in this chapter in particular relating to the global economic downturn and UK recession are fundamentally important in terms of contextualising the evidence (e.g. on performance and impact) considered in subsequent chapters of this report.

4.1 *Macroeconomic conditions*

Shortly after the approval of the 2007-2013 OPs, the global financial crisis occurred and the UK economy entered a recessionary period. The difficult and unstable macroeconomic conditions directly affected the implementation of funded projects (and thus the Programmes as a whole) in a number of important ways. Programme and project level evaluation evidence shows that projects were affected for example by:

- the reduced availability of match funding from the private, public and third sectors. This included difficulties relating to match funding for ESF and ERDF projects as well as difficulties at beneficiary level for businesses and employers (e.g. in leveraging match finance for training employed staff or financial investments such as grants due to cash-flow constraints);
- a sharp increase in unemployment and a reduction in job vacancies which affected the nature of demand for and take-up of ESF operations. This resulted in operations channelling support to participants who were much closer to the labour market and ‘work ready’ than was originally envisaged;
- an increase in the numbers of young people interested in entering training or further learning due to a lack of job opportunities;

- a change in the nature of business support services with suppressed demand leading many businesses to move away from a mind-set of growth to one of consolidation and survival;
- a dampening of demand for R&D support reflecting a general lack of business confidence;
- changing consumer behaviour patterns, affected both by the prolonged economic downturn and by increased on-line transactions which affected, for instance, town centre prospects and viability;
- greater challenges in persuading employers to invest in training during recessionary conditions.

Taken together, these factors meant that some initial output and result targets (specifically those associated with job creation and profit benefit) which were set for projects before the financial crisis unfolded turned out to be overly ambitious in light of lower demand and the very different implementation environment.

4.2 Policy Responses

In light of the challenging macroeconomic conditions, a number of policy responses were introduced by the Welsh Government. The most notable of these was a new economic development strategy published in July 2010, *Economic Renewal: A New Direction* (commonly referred to as the 'ERP'²²).

According to the 2016 ERDF Support for Business Evaluation, this had a 'pronounced impact' on the ERDF Priorities by 'signalling a greater focus on innovation, a move towards priority sectors and a greater emphasis on repayable finance'²³. Specifically, evaluation evidence shows that the ERP led to a number of key alterations to the ERDF Priorities and guidance contained in the associated Strategic Frameworks, including:

²² The ERP was the Economic Renewal Programme, the programme of research and consultation undertaken to develop *Economic Renewal: A New Direction*

²³ ERDF Support for Business Evaluation. February 2016. SQW et al. Page 5.

- further concentration and prioritisation of ERDF resources. This included a virement of €48m out of Priority 2 and into Priority 3 in December 2010;
- narrowing the Welsh Government's policy focus on priority sectors (the ERP reduced this from 10 to six sectors²⁴);
- targeting business support on 'high-potential start-ups' with support to lifestyle oriented businesses migrating to less costly and universally available on-line platforms;
- ending the use of general business grants with a move to re-payable finance where there was evidence of 'clear market failure'²⁵.

Evaluation evidence suggests that some of these alterations resulted in adverse effects on project implementation. For instance, the thematic evaluation of business support found that changes resulting from the ERP policy had 'directly affected project delivery and Programme performance, resulting in delays in delivering outputs as changes were fed through as well as impacts on spend/financial commitments as projects were closed'²⁶.

Following on from the ERP, some further alterations were made to the package of business support projects as a result of work undertaken by the Micro Business Task and Finish Group. This had resulted in 'some projects being affected and one closed but the level of activity and expenditure was not significantly affected'²⁷.

In terms of the ESF Priorities, one of the major policy developments related to the UK Government's welfare to work reforms (the Work Programme²⁸) and

²⁴ This was subsequently increased to nine priority sectors: Source: <http://gov.wales/topics/businessandconomy/our-priority-sectors/?lang=en> (Accessed June 2017)

²⁵ ERDF Support for Business Evaluation. February 2016. SQW. Page 5.

²⁶ Thematic Evaluations. Enterprise Support. Final Report. Page 31.

²⁷ WWV ERDF Convergence Programme 2007-2013. Annual Implementation Report 2013. Final Version. Page 90.

²⁸ The Work Programme is a UK government welfare-to-work programme introduced in Great Britain in June 2011.

the introduction of the Universal Credit²⁹. Evaluation evidence shows that these policy developments had a profound impact on the delivery of ESF projects given that they could no longer engage participants supported by the Work Programme. This (alongside higher unemployment created by the recession) contributed to the shift in focus to supporting participants closer to the labour market which was confirmed by evidence from the ESF Leaver's Surveys.

Overall, while there were significant changes in macroeconomic conditions and major policy developments, the intervention logic for the various ERDF and ESF Priorities remained sound. However, there was one exception to this in the form of ESF Priority 4 where there appeared to be little evidence to suggest that policy decisions relating to downward pressure on public sector expenditure following the economic downturn had been taken into consideration.

²⁹ Universal Credit is a social security benefit introduced in the United Kingdom in 2013 to replace six means-tested benefits and tax credits.

5.0 Priority Level Performance and Achievements

WEFO's Research Monitoring and Evaluation (RME) team provided monitoring information at Priority Level on cumulative achievements against output and result targets as well as expenditure outturns. This information was analysed in detail in the nine Priority review reports produced as part of this ex post evaluation exercise.

Detailed tables summarising performance at Priority level are provided in a technical appendix to this report. Thus, the analysis that follows in this chapter is a high level narrative summary of our key findings in relation to performance at a Priority level.

5.1 ERDF Priorities

Appropriateness of ERDF indicators

Before setting out our findings on performance, we first reflect on the evidence base in relation to the appropriateness of the selected ERDF indicators. The review of Programme and project level evaluation evidence highlighted a number of issues which included that:

- in relation to ERDF Priority 1: the output and result indicators were appropriate for Theme 1 but were less well suited to Theme 2 (specifically the indicators on job and enterprise creation) which was focused on ICT infrastructure and adoption. This misalignment was exacerbated by the specialist nature of the activities funded;
- in relation to ERDF Priority 2: the profit benefit indicator was found not to have been particularly appropriate in the context of co-operative businesses that prioritised member benefits over profit generation. AIRs also noted that the profit benefit target had been problematic more generally on the basis that beneficiaries 'perceived difficulties in

attributing profit benefit to structural fund support'³⁰. Moreover, the indicators for individuals financially supported to set up a new enterprise and social enterprises financially supported were not particularly appropriate. The AIRs reported that this was due to a lack of demand for this type of activity³¹;

- in relation to ERDF Priority 3: there was a narrow focus on public transport within the indicator framework. This did not fully reflect the scope of activity within the OP which encouraged greater agglomeration, promoting the movement of freight from road to sea/rail, investment in the TEN-T network and accessing key services. Although these types of activities were reflected in the impact indicators, there appeared to be a misalignment between the rationale for intervention and the chosen output/result indicators;
- in relation to ERDF Convergence Priority 5 and RCE Priority 4: project evaluators noted some concerns about the appropriateness of the job creation target to physical regeneration and in particular public realm projects. The job creation target was also a poor fit with the embryonic nature of many of the social enterprise organisations being supported given that they were simply not ready to recruit staff. Evaluators also found that more established social enterprises were preoccupied with survival rather than growth (so were less focussed on staff recruitment).

Overview of performance at ERDF Priority level

Table 5.1 provides a summary overview of findings in relation to performance against the output and result targets at ERDF Priority level.

³⁰ West Wales and the Valleys ERDF Convergence Programme. 2007-2013. Annual Implementation Report 2013. Final Version. Page 90.

³¹ East Wales ERDF Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programme. 2007-2013. Annual Implementation Report 2013. Final Version. Page 83.

Table 5.1: ERDF Priorities – Performance

ERDF Priority	Summary of main findings on performance (outputs and results)
<p>1 Convergence 1 RCE</p>	<p>The Convergence Priority substantially exceeded an output target relating to new innovation centres and R&D floorspace. However, the RCE Programme did not deliver anything against its corresponding output target which stemmed from a difficulty in attracting applications from suitably well developed and deliverable projects. The Convergence Programme exceeded the indicator for number of businesses assisted which suggested a greater focus on business support activities than originally expected. Conversely, in the RCE OP the target was reduced substantially mid-way through the Programme. Both Programmes provided financial support to a greater number of SMEs than expected while both Programmes also exceeded the targets set for collaborative R&D agreements, though these were set at very low levels (10 in RCE and 20 in Convergence) in relation to the budget available. The target relating to broadband rollout was missed, though the reasons for this were not clear from the evidence reviewed.</p> <p>Performance against result indicators for these Priorities was also mixed. Both Programmes performed strongly against results which recorded tangible R&D and innovation related outcomes (e.g. new products, processes or services registered) though the original targets were very modest and were increased substantially mid-way through.</p> <p>Both Programmes underperformed substantially against their targets for jobs created. Evidence shows that the job creation targets were set too high and that little consideration was given to the ‘lag’ in achieving job creation results</p>

	<p>for the more indirect R&D and Innovation type activities funded under these Priorities. Both Programmes also performed poorly against the profit benefit target which was partly due to difficulties in securing appropriate evidence from assisted enterprises.</p>
<p>2 Convergence 2 RCE</p>	<p>In the Convergence area, there was a generally solid performance against the output targets with some narrowly missed (e.g. enterprises assisted) and some over-achieved (e.g. enterprises financially supported). However, there was no cumulative performance data against two of the targets (financial assistance to individuals and financial assistance to social enterprises) due to a lack of demand for these services and the targets having effectively been removed.</p> <p>In terms of results targets, there was a very positive performance against the gross job creation target (22,000 jobs against a target of 11,000), the new enterprise creation target, the increase in export levels and the visitor economy related targets. However, there was under-performance in relation to the profit benefit target resulting from the economic conditions and challenges in securing sufficient evidence to support profit gains from beneficiary businesses. The cross-cutting theme targets were also missed.</p> <p>In the RCE area, there was evidence of over-performance against the main output targets, which were understandably much less challenging than for the Convergence area, but nevertheless may have been too modestly set given the scale of the outputs achieved in terms of enterprises assisted and individuals setting up new enterprises. Performance against results targets in the RCE area was positive in relation to gross new job creation and enterprises created with both targets having been substantially over-achieved. However, in-line with the</p>

	Convergence area, there was under-performance on the profit benefit target (for the same reasons), the CCT targets and investment induced. The number of new/lapsed visitor target was substantially over-achieved though the visitor expenditure target was missed.
3 Convergence	Most output targets were met or surpassed. The only exceptions to this related to the number of intermodal facilities and new railways created. This was due at least in part to a decision by the Welsh Government to concentrate resources on a smaller number of larger intermodal facilities, and not to take forward a number of large railway investments. In contrast, a number of result indicators were not met. Most notably, the number of gross jobs created was missed by a very large margin. This may be due partly to a timing issue and the fact that demand for new employment premises has been suppressed due to challenging economic conditions, but it also appears to stem partly from a lack of robust property market evidence about latent demand levels for new employment sites in the project planning stage.
4 Convergence 3 RCE	Performance against output targets was mixed for both Priority 4 Convergence and Priority 3 RCE. Both Priorities met their output target for number of environmental management initiatives. An output target for enterprises assisted was exceeded in the Convergence Priority but was missed in the RCE Priority. The number of renewable energy projects was missed by some margin in the Convergence Programme (the cumulative outturn here was just four projects against a target of 25). This largely reflects the difficulty noted in the 2009 AIR of using ERDF alongside Feed in Tariffs (FIT) and the resultant effect of this on the number of projects delivering this type of activity.

	<p>Convergence Priority 4 was seeking to deliver against 12 result targets but it only met four of these (reduction in greenhouse gases, enterprises created, people benefitting from flood protection measures and the number of visits to the Programme area). Although RCE Priority 3 was reporting against a smaller range of result indicators (eight in total) it also underperformed against most of its results targets and only met two of the eight (gross jobs created and people benefitting from flood protection measures). Challenges caused by external influences on the Programme had a clear and unavoidable effect on performance. For example, AIRs noted that enterprises assisted were expected to flow largely from the Energy Generated activity but the incompatibility of FITs with assistance from the Programme meant that performance against both of these output targets was lower than expected. This then translated into poor performance against linked results (investment induced, enterprises operating environmental management systems and enterprises adopting or improving strategies and monitoring systems).</p> <p>The AIRs also suggest that the under-performance against some targets could reflect their being set at an inappropriately high level given the nature of Priority activities and the timescales over which they might reasonably be expected to create impacts.</p>
5 Convergence 4 RCE	<p>For Priority 5 Convergence, performance against the output targets was generally good. Four of the six targets were either met or exceeded with one (organisations assisted) being substantially over-achieved. The target for number of physical improvement schemes was narrowly missed, while the target for individuals financially supported to start a social enterprise was missed by some margin. There was a plausible explanation for this in the AIRs with the main reason being that people sought information, advice and guidance rather than finance at the very early, pre-developmental stages of the start-up process. Six of the nine results targets were either met or</p>

exceeded in Priority 5. The hectareage of premises created or refurbished was comfortably exceeded as was the number of enterprises accommodated, the level of induced investment, number of people accessing services and social enterprises created. However, while the monitoring information shows that over 1,000 gross new jobs were created which in itself is a positive achievement, the overall gross job creation target (of 6,200) was missed by a considerable margin. The job creation target at Priority level was identified as having been unlikely to be met at an early stage and highlighted as such in several AIRs. Reasons for this included the prevailing macro-economic conditions but also the fact that the nature of the interventions approved under Priority 5, Theme 1 were unlikely to facilitate short term employment creation (beyond construction work). There is evidence both in AIRs and in project level evaluations which shows that the job creation target was not a particularly good fit and that the target of creating over 6,000 gross new jobs was substantially over ambitious.

In terms of Priority 4 of the RCE OP, the only output target of investing in four regeneration schemes was met in full. There was also a strong performance against results targets with four of the five targets having been comfortably exceeded. The only target to fall short was for gross jobs created (32 achieved of a much more modest target of 40) with the same reasons being cited for this under-performance as in the Convergence area.

5.2 *ESF Priorities*

Appropriateness of ESF indicators

Before setting out our findings on performance, we first reflect on evidence in relation to the appropriateness of the selected ESF indicators. The review of Programme and project level evaluation evidence highlighted a small number of issues which included that:

- in relation to ESF Priority 1, the target for participants gaining a qualification was found to have been inappropriate for some project activities given that they were targeting young people aged between 11 and 13 years old. In this context, several project level evaluations argued that projects were better placed to have a direct impact upon pupil attendance and retention levels within education – important outcomes which were not necessarily being reported to or captured by WEFO. Aligned to this, the lack of long-term data available for supported participants to evidence any future progression (be that in terms of entry to further learning or qualifications obtained) limited the evidence base available on the overall impact of Priority 1 funded interventions;
- there was poor alignment between the output and result indicators chosen for ESF Convergence Priority 4 and the overall outcomes set for the Priority. The indicators chosen largely related to processes rather than being designed to capture actual changes or improvements in public service delivery.

Overview of performance at ESF Priority level

Table 5.2 provides an overview of findings in relation to performance against the output and result targets at ESF Priority level.

Table 5.2: ESF Priorities – Performance

ESF Priority	Summary of main findings on performance (outputs and results)
1 Convergence	<p>The output target for number of participants (11-19 year olds) was substantially exceeded (nearly four-fold) with 134,031 participants engaged against a target of 35,000. All other output targets were also exceeded other than the proportion of projects which integrated sustainable development into their provision, at just over half doing so. This was an impressive performance by projects in engaging such a large number of participants over the course of delivery – the baseline data³² suggests that 248,500 participants aged between 11 and 19 years old formed the baseline for this Priority, hence the Priority would have reached and engaged just over half of this overall population.</p> <p>In terms of performance against results Indicators, the Priority performed exceptionally well having exceeded its targets of participants gaining qualifications and participants gaining other positive outcomes. However, it is noteworthy that the proportion of all participants assisted who gained a qualification or other positive outcomes formed a fairly low proportion of the total number of participants supported (i.e. only 19 per cent of all participants gained a qualification whereas the original indicator suggests that some 30 per cent would do so).</p> <p>The Priority did not achieve its target for the number of participants entering further learning having only achieved 59 per cent of its 21,000 target. This is particularly disappointing given that the Priority assisted a higher number of</p>

³² Operational Programme Annex K p.4

	<p>participants than was originally set. No targets were set for the number of participants entering employment. However, monitoring information shows that 4,617 people did so.</p>
<p>2 Convergence 1 RCE</p>	<p>Both Convergence Priority 2 and RCE Priority 1 far exceeded their target for engaging participants – with nearly twice as many participants having been engaged in Convergence Priority 2 (254,652 against the revised target of 135,000) and three times as many in RCE Priority 1 (45,258 against a target of 14,000). Performance against other output indicators was somewhat more mixed – particularly in terms of the number of employers assisted across the Convergence area (with only 1,972 employers having been assisted against a target of 5,000) – although this target was exceeded in the RCE area. Furthermore, the targets relating to the proportion of projects using soft outcome measurement systems or integrating sustainable development into their provision were not met in either of the Priorities.</p> <p>In terms of performance against results indicators, both Priorities performed strongly having exceeded all targets for participants gaining qualifications, entering employment and achieving other positive outcomes. The proportion of all participants engaged who gained a qualification formed a higher proportion of the total number of participants supported (e.g. in the case of Convergence Priority 2, 31 percent of all participants gained a qualification compared with the original proportion of 23 percent). Achievements against the result indicator of participants entering further learning was somewhat more disappointing with the outputs reported across both Priorities falling short, significantly so in the case of RCE Priority 1.</p>
<p>3 Convergence</p>	<p>In the case of both Priorities the majority of the headline targets were comfortably exceeded, the only significant</p>

2 RCE	exceptions relating to the gender balance and to the proportion of employers reported as having adopted or improved equality strategies or systems
4 Convergence	<p>In terms of outputs and results, many of the targets were comfortably exceeded, particularly those most clearly related to processes, for example dissemination initiatives and collaborative agreements. By contrast, the targets relating to individual participants, including the results indicator of secondments, were generally not met, with total participant numbers being less than 18 percent of the target and secondment placements being only 22 percent of the target. To some extent this reflects the extent to which many of the projects were focused not on individual training and progression but organisational and systemic change. This highlights the misalignment between the indicators chosen and the overall thrust of the Programme logic. By contrast, more employers were engaged than had been anticipated. Performance was also poor against the results targets related to the CCTs, with no employers recorded as having adopted or improved Environmental Management Systems and only a handful recorded as having adopted or improved equality and diversity strategies and monitoring systems³³.</p> <p>Successive AIRs provided relatively little information as to the reasons for the under-performance of the Priority against the agreed indicators, except to refer to the difficulties in stimulating projects to come forward and subsequent delays in projects achieving and recording outputs.</p>

³³ This issue is examined in further detail in the Chapter on Cross Cutting Themes.

6.0 The Cross Cutting Themes (CCTs)

In accordance with Articles 16 and 17 of regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and Article 6 of regulation (EC) No1081/2006, the cross-cutting themes of equal opportunities and environmental sustainability were built into the ERDF and ESF OPs for 2007-2013.

A consistent set of objectives for both the ERDF and ESF OPs was developed.

The equal opportunities CCT objectives for the 2007-2013 OPs were to:

- increase the number of individuals who have multiple disadvantages accessing employment and self-employment;
- increase the numbers of women, black, minority ethnic (BME) people and disabled people securing training and employment in higher paid and higher skilled sectors and self-employment;
- challenge occupational segregation by increasing the numbers of women and men training or retraining in non-traditional areas, focusing on those areas where there are skills shortages;
- increase the numbers of employers and training organisations to develop equality and diversity strategies, including monitoring systems and methods for feeding in improvements.

The environmental sustainability CCT objectives for the 2007-2013 OPs were to:

- reduce emissions of greenhouse gases to help limit the extent of climate change and help to adapt to its effects;
- promoting sustainable transport;
- promote the efficient use of natural resources;
- promote the sustainable management of the land, sea and inland waters;

- improve the quality of the local built environment and opportunities to access green space;
- minimise the risk of pollution and other environmental hazards thereby safeguarding the health of communities and the environment³⁴.

A programme level evaluation of the CCTs found that during the 2007-2013 Programme period, project sponsors who ‘discussed the inclusion of appropriate CCTs’ at an early stage in the development of project business plans were more likely to have achieved meaningful integration. In this context, it found that where ‘the aims are created collaboratively and the benefits of CCTs are more clearly understood, success is more likely’³⁵.

In addition to this headline finding, the CCTs evaluation also found evidence that:

- there was ‘considerable buy-in to the worth of the CCTs’ although some stakeholders did not fully understand their role or potential in assisting with delivery
- projects that had successfully implemented CCTs also transferred legacy benefits to the host or sponsor organisation as a form of added value. A key learning point in this respect is the need to communicate the potential benefits and added value of the CCTs;
- significant value had been added by the WEFO CCT team with good levels of project interaction. However, the evaluation found that it was impossible to expect that with relatively limited resources, the CCT team could have delivered highly intensive guidance and support to all projects;
- there was ‘widespread criticism’ of early versions of CCT guidance issued by WEFO. The main criticisms were that guidance was overly complex, did not relate sufficiently well to target beneficiary groups and was not particularly user friendly;

³⁴ Source: Operational Programmes.

³⁵ WEFO Cross-cutting Themes Evaluation. Equality and Sustainability. March 2015. Cognition. Pages 78 and 79.

- there was occasional lack of consistency between advice on CCTs issued by Project Development Officers (PDOs) and the CCT team which led to some confusion;
- there was a perception (mainly amongst project sponsors) that measurement and assessment of CCTs was ‘seen as inappropriate’ and that monitoring and evaluation arrangements did not fully ‘capture a lot of the real value of CCTs’. In this context, the evaluation found that measurement of CCTs could be improved by focusing on more outcomes focused metrics that go beyond basic output measurements. It also found that progress towards CCT achievement should be part of regular reporting and that this helped to ‘keep the CCTs embedded in project work’;
- there was a perceived ‘lack of incentive’ resulting in some projects affording the CCTs a low level of priority. The evaluators also noted that there was a ‘lack of sanctions’ for non-achievement in relation to CCT objectives and targets;
- some projects viewed the CCTs as a ‘tick-box’ exercise with some of the output focused issues highlighted in relation to monitoring and reporting exacerbating this issue³⁶.

Turning specifically to the CCTs at Priority level, **Table 6.1** sets out evidence from the review of ERDF project level evaluation reports and the ERDF Business Evaluation. **Table 6.2** sets out CCT evidence from the review of ESF project level evaluation reports and ESF Leavers’ Surveys.

³⁶ Ibid.

Table 6.1: ERDF Priority Level Evidence: CCTs

ERDF Priority	Summary of main findings on CCTs
1 Convergence 1 RCE	<p>Overall performance in respect of CCT targets was poor and the evidence suggested that CCT related activity had not been fully embedded into project delivery. There were some examples of innovative approaches to CCT delivery which helped to maximise the additional impact of the CCTs without overburdening project delivery staff. The projects that either had dedicated specialist CCT staff, or which adopted a robust referral based approach, had been most successful in integrating the CCTs into delivery.</p>
2 Convergence 2 RCE	<p>Overall, there was evidence of some positive progress in delivering the CCTs, though a consistent finding in project level evaluations was relatively low recall (in relation to CCT specific support) by assisted businesses. A key finding was that businesses do not necessarily recognise the support they received as being about equalities or environmental sustainability. However, it was clear that the CCTs had not been a prominent or integrated feature of delivery for some Priority 2 projects.</p> <p>A key learning point for the future integration of CCTs is therefore the importance of presenting advice relating to the themes in business friendly language and for evaluation activity to be aware of and use this same language in research aimed at gathering feedback and evidence from supported enterprises.</p> <p>There was evidence of good practice relating to CCT delivery in Priority 2, though not all projects were equipped with CCT expertise. Ensuring appropriate capacity and capability and incorporating this as part of delivery was a</p>

	key success factor.
3 Convergence	There was little evidence of any systematic effort to promote the CCTs by the projects funded under Priority 3, and only limited evidence of the positive steps that were taken. This stemmed in part from the absence of any specific CCT indicator targets for this Priority, which meant that CCT considerations were not firmly embedded in project plans from the outset, other than in the case of one or two exceptions.
4 Convergence 3 RCE	There was a clear area of crossover between the objectives for the Environmental Sustainability CCT and the core aims and objectives of Convergence Priority 4 and RCE Priority 3. For many of the projects funded by these Priorities, Environmental Sustainability was central to their objectives, irrespective of the influence of the CCTs. As such, there were no specific targets set for the environmental sustainability CCT within these two ERDF Priorities. Projects funded under these Priorities were also expected to deliver against equality and diversity targets relating to adopting or improving equality strategies or monitoring systems. Performance in relation to these targets was very poor (3 percent in Convergence and 4 percent in RCE). While the original equality targets were considered ambitious, there is evidence to suggest that the equality CCT was not fully integrated in to the design and delivery of projects under these Priorities.
5 Convergence 4 RCE	Both of the CCT targets in Priority 5 Convergence were missed (there were no CCT targets for RCE Priority 4). There were a number of contributing factors to this, including that the targets, which were output orientated and defined around counting the number of organisations adopting or improving equalities or environmental plans did not fit particularly well with physical regeneration investment activity. They were however more attuned to the advice and support provided to social enterprises under Priority 5, Theme 2 where the evidence suggested that

	<p>beneficiary organisations were generally interested in and open to being supported to improve their policies and operations in relation to the CCTs.</p> <p>Beyond the issue of performance against the CCT targets however, there was evidence that there had been positive action in some of the Priority 5 projects. For instance, there was good practice in relation to inclusive community consultation activity, the use of sustainable building resources and accessibility improvements in the public realm. This was equally true of Priority 4 projects in the RCE area where there were no CCT targets suggesting that the targets themselves may have had little bearing on the extent to which CCTs were incorporated.</p> <p>A key learning point was that having dedicated CCT capacity and capability had been an important factor in ensuring a clear focus on delivering CCT objectives in an integrated way during project implementation.</p>
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Table 6.2: ESF Priority Level Evidence: CCTs

ESF Priority	Summary of main findings on CCTs
1 Convergence	Evidence in the project level evaluations showed that Equal Opportunities had been a central consideration in most projects' objectives in that they were specifically targeted at disadvantaged and minority groups of young people and were therefore able to demonstrate innovative and effective approaches to engagement and delivery. In terms of environmental sustainability, project level evaluations suggested that whilst a smaller

	number of projects deployed innovative approaches to delivery (e.g. via outdoor learning facilities and activities relating to environmental sustainability for young people) more could have been achieved in this area of work.
2 Convergence 1 RCE	A much greater focus was given to equal opportunities issues than environmental sustainability by projects – although this was primarily restricted to work with participants rather than with employers. Evidence of very good, innovative practices was found in relation to the delivery of equal opportunities work, but evidence of work on environmental sustainability was more sporadic.
3 Convergence 2 RCE	Performance in terms of the cross-cutting themes had been disappointing with only four percent of the assisted employers having adopted or improved equality and diversity strategies and monitoring systems against a target of 50 percent. The performance was even weaker in the RCE Priority with only 0.2 percent of the target (also set at 50 percent of assisted employers) having been achieved. Evaluation evidence suggests some limited success in terms of challenging occupational segregation, while in relation to environmental sustainability practices there was some, (albeit again limited) successes in promoting this with employers.
4 Convergence	Evaluation evidence in relation to Priority 4 suggests only limited success in addressing the equalities theme. Overall, projects had a mixed record for supporting (and by extension improving the progression of) disadvantaged groups. While the target for female participation was just exceeded (at 53 percent), it should be noted that the target of 52 percent was relatively modest given that women comprise a majority of the workforce within the public sector in Wales. Project-level evaluations provided little or no evidence in respect of whether Priority 4 projects attempted or succeeded in challenging occupational segregation. Only a small minority of employers (eight percent) were recorded as having adopted or improved their equality and diversity strategies

and monitoring systems. Evidence from project evaluations suggests that the main reason for this was that pre-existing statutory requirements for public bodies in respect of equalities meant that such strategies were already in place and that participating employers therefore saw little need to go further.

The project level evaluations provided little evidence with regard to the environmental sustainability theme and monitoring data recorded no examples of employers adopting or improving environmental management systems as a result of engagement.

7.0 Impact

In this chapter, we examine evidence of the impacts of the 2007-2013 Structural Fund Programmes in Wales.

The Priority review reports provide a detailed analysis of evidence in relation to impacts based on examining Programme and project level evaluation material. This chapter draws on the analysis contained in those Priority review reports by providing a summary of the main findings on impacts.

This is structured in order to provide a narrative assessment of the expected impacts for each of the Priorities which has been guided by the objectives set out in the respective OPs.

In addition, the chapter provides a summary of the evidence examined within the Priority review reports with regards to unintended (i.e. positive or negative) effects and consequences of the Programmes themselves.

7.1 Evidence of Impacts: The ERDF Priorities

Table 7.1 provides a summary overview of findings in relation to impact for the Convergence and RCE ERDF Priorities.

Table 7.1: Evidence of Impacts at Priority Level: ERDF

ERDF Priority	Summary of main findings on impacts
1 Convergence 1 RCE	<p>In the 2016 ERDF Support for Business Evaluation surveyed beneficiary businesses reported that these two Priorities had generated positive employment impacts in around 30 percent of cases with more than half (59 percent) of those reporting a positive impact stating a strong degree of attribution to ERDF support. Just under half (46 percent) of surveyed enterprises said that productivity and profitability had improved. Surveyed businesses receiving direct financial assistance were most likely to report positive changes to turnover levels. However, it should be noted that the CIE element of the ERDF Support for Business Evaluation found that a financial payment itself does not generate impacts, but rather works indirectly and in tandem with wider support mechanisms³⁷. More than a third (35 percent) of surveyed enterprises said that they were likely to create further jobs over the next five years as a result of ERDF support. This was notably higher in East Wales than for West Wales and the Valleys.</p>
2 Convergence 2 RCE	<p>Evidence from the 2016 ERDF Support for Business Evaluation showed that a fifth (20 percent) of new businesses surveyed said that it was unlikely they would have started trading without ERDF support. Around 30 percent of surveyed enterprises said that ERDF support had led to an impact on employment. Within this group, 75 percent stated that new jobs had been created. Just over half (52 percent) of surveyed enterprises reported that turnover had increased since receiving ERDF support. Just under half (46 percent) said that productivity and profitability had improved since receiving support. As with Priority 1, surveyed businesses receiving direct</p>

³⁷ ERDF Support for Business Evaluation. February 2016. SQW et al. Page 79

financial assistance were most likely to report positive changes to turnover levels. Nearly 80 percent of surveyed enterprises said that ERDF support had made some contribution to their performance, with 30 percent within this group stating that it had made a vital contribution. However, this should be taken in the context of the contrasting CIE evidence in the ERDF Support for Business Evaluation which found that financial assistance in isolation did not directly generate positive impacts.

In terms of attribution, over half of the enterprises surveyed via the 2016 Support for Business Evaluation were able to provide an estimate of annual attributable impact as a figure or percentage of turnover. The evaluation also found that in the majority of cases (86 percent of surveyed enterprises) there was no evidence of substitution effects, while the evaluators estimated displacement effects to be in the region of 35 percent.

The ERDF Support for Business Evaluation attempted a CIE approach, but there were a number of methodological limitations to this which restricted the analysis. The main conclusions from this exercise were that:

- ERDF assistance had an impact on employment and turnover, with ‘assisted firms growing seven percent faster than non-assisted ones’ and ‘turnover growing five percent faster (at a maximum) with assistance’³⁸;
- the effects on productivity ‘are less clear’ with ‘no significant statistical effect of ERDF support on productivity growth’³⁹;

³⁸ Ibid. Page 78.

³⁹ Ibid. Pages 78 and 79.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overall, ‘the results provided tentative support for the positive effects of ERDF support but there are major caveats in the analysis’⁴⁰. <p>Several of the Convergence and RCE Priority 2 project level evaluations attempted reasonably robust, survey based gross to net estimates, taking account of deadweight, displacement and multiplier effects. However, the analysis was not done in a consistent way across projects (e.g. some evaluations have performed gross to net on employment effects, others on turnover) which means that there were clear limitations in analysing this evidence at a Priority level.</p>
<p>3 Convergence</p>	<p>The analysis of impact of Convergence Priority 3 was limited to project level evaluation evidence. This showed that a large number of the public transport interventions were filling gaps in existing provision, meaning that displacement from other public services and deadweight were effectively zero. A number of the projects funded under Priority 3 successfully increased the capacity of public transport systems, increased passenger numbers and reduced dependence on car usage. Differences in the methodologies and indicators used to assess these impacts mean that it was not possible to derive credible quantitative estimates of net impacts on car usage or passenger numbers at a Priority level. However, given that all of the increase in capacity is unlikely to have taken place in the absence of ERDF investment, a large proportion of the 255 million gross passenger kilometres delivered can be assumed to be net additional.</p>

⁴⁰ Ibid. Page 79.

It is not possible on the basis of the available project level evaluation evidence to demonstrate there has been any significant impact on travel time savings as a result of the Priority 3 investments, other than some small savings on minor roads. This is partly due to the lack of available evaluation evidence for this Priority.

Based on the project level evaluation evidence reviewed, Priority 3 does not appear to have led to significant increases in the travel to work catchments of key centres. However, again, this may be a reflection of the limited evaluation evidence available.

Turning to impacts derived from the Strategic Infrastructure (Theme 2), while it is clear that the majority of newly developed and occupied business space had displaced demand from within the same area, there was evidence that moving premises had facilitated the expansion of some businesses, meaning the overall level of occupied space is likely to have increased. However, the occupancy *rate* is unlikely to have increased since the total stock of floorspace had also increased. It is difficult to establish with any degree of certainty what the net effect of Priority 3 has been on occupied space since this had not been measured by any of the relevant project evaluations.

The final outturn for Priority 3 shows that only 85 gross jobs were created, compared with a target of 1,000. In contrast, there were 1,296 jobs accommodated compared with a target of 825. This underlines the finding that the vast majority of jobs were relocated from within the same area. Given the low gross job creation figure, it follows that any net impact in this respect would also have been modest. It is not possible to determine precisely how many of these jobs would have been created in the absence of ERDF support, since none of the relevant

	project evaluations carried out business occupier surveys to examine deadweight effects or explore any form of counterfactual evidence in this regard.
4 Convergence 3 RCE	<p>The evidence for these two Priorities was limited to project level evaluations. Very few of the project evaluations attempted to quantify the net additional impact of activities in a robust way. This partly reflects the nature of the activities of many of the funded projects and the substantial methodological challenges that make assessing net additional effects difficult. For example, numerous tourism evaluations noted difficulty in assessing levels of deadweight and displacement associated with impacts on visitor numbers. Most of the evaluations that considered additionality did so in a light touch way, often using benchmark additionality metrics and assumptions to inform their estimations. This restricted a wider, Priority level assessment of net additional impacts.</p> <p>While recognising the inherent challenges of evaluating some of the activities funded under these Priorities it was clear that project evaluations relied heavily on pre-existing data, rather than new primary research relating to impact analysis. Moreover, there were few examples of evaluations which were informed by a detailed and tailored assessment of impact or additionality. These shortcomings in the evaluation evidence base make it very difficult to reach any clear conclusions about the overall economic, social and environmental impact of the Convergence Priority 4 and RCE Priority 3.</p>
5 Convergence 4 RCE	<p>The analysis in relation to impact specifically relating to Convergence Priority 5, Theme 1 and RCE Priority 4 was limited to project level evaluation evidence. This was varied, both in terms of the quality, robustness and consistency of methodological approaches used to assess impact. On that basis, it is not possible with any sufficient degree of rigour to use project level evaluation evidence as a basis on which to conduct gross to net</p>

estimations of impact at a Priority level.

It is possible however to conclude that individually, projects funded under these Priorities led to a range of positive impacts relating to sense of place and in particular levels of confidence in, and the perceived prospects of, towns and areas in receipt of physical regeneration investment. There is also some evidence, (albeit more mixed) that there have been positive impacts in relation to town centre/area viability for example in relation to commercial property vacancy, footfall rates, business performance and to a lesser extent indicators of poverty.

However, evidence of attribution is mixed and it is clear that powerful externalities (the economic downturn and consumer trends) had a major bearing on the extent to which it was possible to expect 'harder' economic impacts (particularly job creation) to have occurred. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that ERDF investment has been important in helping to mitigate and decelerate the effects of downward trends in relation to town centre vibrancy and viability. While some attempts at progressing counterfactual impact evaluation at project level are to be welcomed in terms of adding additional contextual analysis to the effects and impacts of interventions, the strength of the externalities affecting broader economic conditions has meant that little in the way of firm conclusions can be drawn from this work, particularly at a Priority level.

In terms of Convergence Priority 5, Theme 2, there was evidence at a project level that the job creation targets had proven to be challenging partly because of the embryonic nature of the social enterprises being supported.

	<p>There was evidence of positive impacts (at a project level) in relation to turnover gains for some social enterprises as well as improvements in relation to financial resilience, general governance and sustainability though there was a mixed picture in relation to attribution levels.</p>
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7.2 Evidence of other outcomes and unintended consequences: ERDF Priorities

The review of Programme and project level evaluation evidence highlighted a number of examples of other outcomes and unintended consequences arising from ERDF funded projects. A consistent finding (across the ERDF Priorities) was that projects had succeeded (to greater or lesser degrees) in safeguarding existing jobs with this being classified as an unintended outcome on the basis that it did not feature as a result indicator within the ERDF OPs.

Beyond jobs safeguarded, there was also evidence of a number of other outcomes which included:

- in relation to Convergence and RCE Priority 1: there was evidence that projects had led to improved relationships and partnerships between industry and academia. Specifically, project evaluations found evidence that cultural barriers (that can prevent industry/academic collaboration) had been reduced or removed. There was also evidence that some projects had contributed to improved relationships between universities while the broader research profile of Wales in key areas had been strengthened;
- in relation to Convergence Priority 2: there was some evidence of improved collaborative working between co-operatives;
- in relation to Convergence Priority 3: there was some evidence that projects had led to public transport innovation in relation to demand responsive transport (DRT) solutions. Some of the transport infrastructure projects had led to public realm improvements assisting the image of areas. In terms of strategic sites and premises, there was evidence that some of these projects had also resulted in visual improvements and had also helped unlock the potential of nearby sites. There was also some evidence of productivity benefits which arose as a result of new premises enabling businesses to operate more effectively;

- in relation to Convergence Priority 4 and RCE Priority 3: a number of project evaluations reported positive impacts on the general awareness of environment related matters with various beneficiaries. These included increased awareness of the importance of resource efficiency and reducing waste destined for landfill amongst supported businesses and communities. Some project evaluations also demonstrated positive outcomes in relation to volunteer engagement and the subsequent acquisition of new skills;
- in relation to Convergence Priority 5, Theme 1: there was evidence of some negative unintended consequences. These included disruption (mainly to small businesses) whilst public realm/physical regeneration construction works took place. Some of the transport related schemes also arguably led to trade being taken away from some towns as transport improvements made it easier for people to travel to and shop in cities.
- in relation to Convergence Priority 5, Theme 2: there was evidence to suggest that new or strengthened partnerships and collaborative working relationships and cultural changes had led to positive outcomes for some social enterprises.

7.3 Evidence of Impacts: The ESF Priorities

Turning to our assessment of the evidence of impact in relation to the ESF Priorities, **Table 7.2** provides a summary overview of the main findings.

Table 7.2: Evidence of Impacts at Priority Level: ESF

ESF Priority	Summary of main findings on impacts
1 Convergence	<p>Assessing the net impact of Priority 1 interventions is challenging given that so few project level evaluations could realistically undertake any meaningful counterfactual impact evaluation in light of the target audience supported (i.e. children and young people). This Priority was not covered by the ESF Leavers' Survey. The lack of robust CIE options limited evaluators' ability to test what would have happened in the absence of specific interventions. In the very limited number of cases where a CIE was attempted, the findings point to a positive impact although the transferability of the data itself in estimating the more macro level net impact of Priority 1 is limited.</p> <p>However, there is significant evidence via project-level evaluations of participants having achieved extensive soft or intermediate outcomes as a result of participation. Examples included increased confidence levels and positive behavioural changes. Project level evaluations revealed very little evidence to substantiate the indirect positive effects of funded interventions in terms of public expenditure savings, increased lifetime earnings for participants and reduced negative social behaviour. However, the data does suggest a positive impact.</p>

<p>2 Convergence 1 RCE</p>	<p>Project level evaluation evidence showed that generally high proportions of participants had achieved positive soft or intermediate outcomes whilst the proportion of participants achieving qualifications and securing work varied significantly across individual projects. Overall, projects only managed modest achievements against the indicator of participants entering further learning. The findings of the ESF Leavers' Survey and project level evaluations suggest that the interventions made a positive contribution to individual participants, particularly in terms of improving their employability. However, the levels of deadweight associated with interventions varied. Calculating the net impact of interventions funded is challenging. Where project-level CIE evidence has been available, the findings suggest that interventions made a positive difference to whether individuals were able to enter and sustain work. The CIE element of the ESF Leavers' Survey confirmed this, although it concluded that higher levels of additionality were found to be in place for interventions which supported formerly inactive participants (i.e. those furthest away from the labour market) in contrast to the more modest levels of additionality for the unemployed.</p>
<p>3 Convergence 2 RCE</p>	<p>Both the ESF Leavers' Surveys and project-level evaluations point to strongly positive subjective assessments of the difference made by the interventions both to individual participants and to businesses.</p> <p>Large majorities of participants reported enhanced generic and work-related skills, the conviction that participation would lead to longer term career development and (to an even greater extent) enhanced confidence and positivity about work, while in most cases, a significant minority reported progression in terms of wage increases and promotions (though this was true of smaller proportions of those involved in projects which succeeded in engaging with genuinely low-skilled workers).</p>

	<p>Similarly, the large majority of businesses engaged with many of the projects reported improvements in terms of productivity and efficiency, and in other benefits such as product and process innovation and improvement. In around half of the evaluations reporting on companies' views on the effect on turnover and profit, between a third and a half of businesses reported positive effects, with the other evaluations suggesting a difference made in only a relatively small proportion of businesses involved. Generally, projects which aimed to support businesses' own growth strategies were most successful in this regard, though these were often less successful at targeting the lowest skilled workers.</p> <p>For both learners and for employers, interventions under the Priorities would seem to have helped to stimulate a learning and training culture, albeit without generating sufficient buy-in to enable projects to become financially self-sustaining.</p> <p>While the evidence suggests many positive effects, the question of net impact is more difficult. The very limited attempts at CIE suggest little evidence of impact on participant progression compared with the counterfactual, in the case of both apprenticeships and essential skills interventions.</p>
4 Convergence	<p>Project level evaluation evidence suggested that while Priority 4 funded activities undoubtedly delivered a range of both individual and organisational benefits to those participating, in terms of boosting individual confidence and skills and supporting networking which stimulated new approaches to solving problems, the evidence on balance suggests that there has been limited impact in terms of the three indicators within the OP, improvement in the quality of public services, reduction in the costs of public service delivery and increased citizen satisfaction</p>

	<p>with public services. Project-level evaluations tend to suggest that process outcomes – improved levels of trust and willingness to collaborate, greater awareness of what other organisations can offer in terms of shaping and delivering public services, greater understanding of how to run partnership projects – have been more visible.</p>
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7.4 Evidence of other outcomes and unintended consequences: ESF Priorities

The review of Programme and project level evaluation evidence highlighted a small number of examples of other outcomes arising from ESF funded projects. While not strictly unintended consequences (since the outcomes themselves were intended and desirable from a policy perspective), these included:

- in relation to ESF Convergence Priority 1: there was evidence of a number of projects having improved levels of educational attendance, reduced unauthorised absenteeism, reduced permanent exclusions and better overall educational retention levels amongst participants;
- in relation to ESF Convergence Priority 2 and RCE Priority 1: there was some evidence of positive 'system' changes within the delivery infrastructure around employment (non-devolved) and skills (devolved) e.g. improved partnership working and enhanced delivery capacity;
- in relation to ESF Convergence Priority 3 and RCE Priority 2: there was evidence of projects having stimulated increased collaboration between higher and further education institutions. Projects also resulted in more applied research and engagement in workforce development activities.

8.0 Key Learning Points

In preparing the nine Priority review reports, we examined programme and project level evaluation evidence in relation to common barriers and success factors that affected implementation, performance, outcomes and impacts.

This chapter sets out a summary of the key learning points to emerge from this exercise with a view to informing the 2014-2020 Programmes and subsequent programmes of activity following the UK's departure from the EU.

Table 8.1 presents a summary of the main findings relating to the ERDF Priorities, while **Table 8.2** presents the main findings relating to the ESF Priorities.

8.1 The ERDF Priorities

Table 8.1: Summary of key learning points: ERDF

ERDF Priority	Summary of key learning points
1 Convergence 1 RCE	<p>Learning points relating to ERDF Priority 1 activity include that ERDF can be used effectively alongside Welsh Government resources to provide universal coverage of broadly cast types of R&D and innovation support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). However, evaluation evidence suggests that Programme targets for Innovation, R&D activity need to be set at a level that is realistic in light of the type and nature of indicative activities that Priorities are expected to support. For future programmes, targets should be set to reflect the balance of activities of different types and tested carefully against achievements of previous Programmes. The indicator framework should also include an appropriate set of quantitative measures of impact for innovation, R&D activities (e.g. increased turnover, net additional employment, new enterprises created and company level GVA), even if these measures only cover some categories of activity within the Priority.</p> <p>In terms of evaluation, work should be commissioned and managed in a way that ensures a robust, quantitative and ideally consistent evidence base in respect of impact, particularly for larger innovation and R&D projects. For larger projects, the availability of specialist in-house CCT staff helps to embed CCT into project activity, while smaller projects might wish to consider adopting a referral based approach to ensure that CCT activity is proportional to their scale of operation.</p>
2 Convergence	The evidence from these Priorities confirms that targeting certain types of enterprises (e.g. those with growth

2 RCE	<p>potential or sector specific) via business support interventions is complex. The evidence suggests that a rounded approach, taking account of a number of factors (not restricted to job creation potential) including critical events that unlock growth, the skills and capabilities of the people running the business and the knowledge and intelligence of advisors who know and understand the business can be particularly effective.</p> <p>Targeting intensive and more expensive advice and guidance services on growth potential businesses makes sense while making universal information available via on-line platforms. Business support services comprising financial support and information, advice and guidance generate the best outcomes when they are joined up and effectively integrated at the point of delivery.</p> <p>Evaluation evidence clearly shows that effective business support interventions are based on long-term aims and objectives which are well defined, recognised by businesses and linked clearly to their needs. Consistency in branding and promotion of business support service is also crucially important.</p> <p>While there has been progress in relation to the CCTs in relation to business support and access to finance, more could be done to promote integration. Evidence suggests that dedicated capacity and expertise relating to the CCTs is needed while advice relating to the CCTs needs to be presented in business friendly language. Evaluators need to be aware of and use this same language in research aimed at gathering feedback and evidence from supported enterprises. Some interesting approaches to estimating the counterfactual have been trialled, but there remain some key methodological limitations. A key aspect of developing CIE approaches is the</p>
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	<p>need to strengthen the quality and depth of project level monitoring information to improve the prospects of ‘matching’ treated businesses with ‘big data’ for counterfactual analysis.</p>
<p>3 Convergence</p>	<p>Key learning points relating to Priority 3 include the need for result indicators to better reflect the range of activities and how these contribute to broader transport objectives. For this Priority, there was a narrow focus on passengers on public transport which did not do full justice to the scope of activity that could be funded. For instance, a useful additional result indicator might have been ‘reduction in journey times on TEN-T routes’.</p> <p>The limited number of large rail projects and lack of any freight interchange facilities suggests a need for future programmes to undertake further preliminary work in order to explore whether such large and complex projects, which evaluation evidence suggests can generate greater economic and environmental benefits than road investments, can be brought forward.</p> <p>The evaluation process needs to better reflect the lifespan over which economic benefits are generated on infrastructure investments. The timing of evaluations was largely dictated by ERDF requirements, but it is clear in this case that it did not allow sufficient time for impacts to be generated and robustly assessed.</p> <p>The evidence also suggests there needs to be much greater scrutiny of the market failure evidence underpinning land and property interventions at the project approval stage. In particular, this needs to demonstrate clear evidence of latent demand for land or premises which projects intend to address.</p>

4 Convergence 3 RCE	<p>The evidence relating to Convergence Priority 4 and RCE Priority 3 showed that it is beneficial to maintain flexibility in Programme design to allow Priorities to respond to changes in the external environment. However, any changes in the expected balance of activity should be accompanied by updated targets which reflect any changes in expected commissioning activity or project performance.</p> <p>The evidence suggests that future programmes should ensure that they are underpinned by a robust and appropriate indicator framework which provides an adequate range of output targets to capture the main categories of activity expected. The indicator framework should also include an appropriate set of quantitative measures of impact. Evaluations should be commissioned and managed in a way that ensures a robust quantitative evidence base in respect of impact, particularly for larger, strategic projects.</p>
5 Convergence 4 RCE	<p>The evidence relating to these two Priorities suggested that direct, new job creation targets are not a particularly good fit with physical regeneration and public realm projects. The output orientated nature of the CCT indicators were also less suitable for physical regeneration and public realm projects where positive action and good practice occurred but was not necessarily captured by the monitoring system.</p> <p>Evidence shows that investing in inclusive public consultation (during design and implementation) has been an important component in ensuring successful physical regeneration and public realm projects and this should be carried forward as a key consideration in any future programmes.</p> <p>A number of interesting approaches to estimating the counterfactual were explored in some of the Priority 5 projects. While overall, the findings have been inconclusive, this work has provided helpful evidence to</p>

	contextualise research in treated areas and with beneficiary groups. These kind of quasi-experimental evaluative approaches should be encouraged in future physical regeneration, public realm and community economic development interventions.
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8.2 The ESF Priorities

Table 8.2: Summary of key learning points: ESF

ESF Priority	Summary of main findings on impacts
1 Convergence	<p>The evidence from ESF Convergence Priority 1 suggests that effective provisions targeted at young people generally adopt an individualised, holistic approach. These approaches need to combine emotional and educational provisions via advisors who can develop positive relationships with young people.</p> <p>Evidence showed that the varied performance of multiple partners within a single project can impact the overall performance of a large scale, strategic project. For interventions aimed at supporting young people, the evidence from Priority 1 underlined the need to adopt a tailored set of outcome indicators which reflect the direct impact of interventions aimed within the education system (e.g. around absenteeism, attendance and retention rates).</p> <p>In terms of monitoring, a key learning point was the need to consider improving the ways in which information relating to participant outputs and results is captured, particularly to reduce any under-reporting or inaccurate</p>

	<p>reporting of outputs as well as to enable the identification and analysis of longer-term, post-intervention outcomes. Future programmes should continue to explore CIE approaches to measure the difference made to participants over the medium to long term. In this respect, it would be worth further investigating the possibility of matching WEFO's central participant database with data available within the LLWR⁴¹ database.</p>
<p>2 Convergence 1 RCE</p>	<p>Evidence from these Priorities highlighted the need to ensure funded provision fully complements, rather than duplicates, other ESF funded and mainstream (i.e. non-devolved employment) provision. In this context, it will be important for future programmes to ensure that funded interventions do not have any conflicting outcomes and results to achieve.</p> <p>For future programmes, a key learning point is that supporting those most removed from the labour market is likely to generate the greatest levels of additionality. Other key learning points include the need to ensure that future programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a clearly defined focus on delivering high quality services which are client-led, flexible and co-located at the front-end delivery point; • continue to adopt outreach activities to target specific, particularly hard to reach, groups; • focus on improving systems to capture and report client outputs and results, with a particular focus on evaluative approaches that enable longer-term post-intervention changes to be identified; • contain appropriate mechanisms to manage the delivery of complex, large scale projects which are reliant

⁴¹ Lifelong Learning Wales Register

	<p>upon a plethora of sub-contractors, to ensure that any issues of under-performance can be efficiently addressed;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continue to explore robust CIE approaches to measure the difference made to participants. In this respect, it would be worth undertaking further work to explore how WEFO’s central participant database could be matched with either the Annual Population Survey (APS) produced by the ONS or the Labour Force Survey (LFS).
<p>3 Convergence 2 RCE</p>	<p>Evidence from these Priorities highlighted the importance of setting targets for and monitoring the effects on business performance as well as on individual participants’ position in the labour market.</p> <p>Other key learning points which might usefully inform future programmes aimed at improving the skills and adaptability of the workforce include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the need for realism and prioritisation in terms of the range of interventions to be funded, particularly where funds are more restricted (as was the case in the RCE Programme); • the need to be more rigorous in focusing on the lower skilled and those least likely to access training in the absence of ESF, and to pay closer attention to the extent to which interventions are leading to upskilling as well as reskilling, prioritising interventions which will enhance the level of qualifications held by participants; • the importance of a strong focus on excluded groups, particularly disabled and older workers;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the need to ensure that the balance of future workforce development programmes is tilted in favour of those already in the workforce, while recognising the importance of interventions such as apprenticeships; • the importance of qualifications in terms of - at the very least - the subjective view of participants of the relevance of participation to their progression within the labour market; • the need to provide a coherent approach to employer engagement both by individual interventions and at a programme level; • the importance of having a more coherent and consistent approach in terms of co-financing training activity with employers, in order to nurture future sustainability; • the need to identify and develop valid CIE approaches to measure individual progression in the labour market post-intervention. Ensuring the capacity for linking with HMRC⁴² data is likely to be crucial here.
<p>4 Convergence</p>	<p>Drawing lessons for future programmes is problematic, not least given the exclusion of these sorts of interventions from the 2014-2020 ESF Programmes. However, the experience of Priority 4 has highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the importance of setting realistic goals and targets, particularly for innovative areas of activity and for ensuring that there is a clear programme logic which links activities, outputs, results and intended impacts; • the need for realism in terms of the optimal range of interventions commissioned from relatively less well-funded Priorities; • the importance of ensuring that even for relatively small Priorities, consideration is given to the impact of

⁴² Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

	<p>the changing policy and funding environment, and under-performance is examined and explained;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the need to ensure that projects put forward by large organisations have the clear and unambiguous support of senior management.
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9.0 Conclusions

The 2007-2013 ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes in Wales consisted of a well-defined and rationally designed set of Priorities. Each of the Priorities, with the partial exception of ESF Convergence Priority 4 were based on a sound intervention logic.

The Priorities and their intended activities contained justifiable aims which set out to address the needs and market failures identified in the underpinning socio-economic analysis. The Priorities also demonstrated clear and plausible linkages with Welsh Government, UK Government and EU policy objectives.

A fundamental contextual feature of the 2007-2013 Programming period was the unprecedented global financial crisis and its negative effects on the economy of Wales. The challenging and unstable macroeconomic conditions meant that the implementation environment was very different to the situation that existed when the Programmes were being designed and developed. These external forces also led to some significant policy responses such as the introduction of the Economic Renewal Programme. At the same time, the UK Government introduced a major reform package to its welfare to work policies. When taken together, these externalities had a major bearing on the delivery of projects funded by the 2007-2013 Programmes, not least in terms of affecting the nature and scale of the demand for different types of support.

A key conclusion of this evaluation is that despite the unprecedented conditions within which the Programmes were initially implemented, the overall intervention logic remained sound. There was also an appropriate degree of flexibility which enabled those overseeing the implementation of the Programmes to respond constructively to rapidly changing conditions and circumstances.

Not all of the ERDF and ESF indicators fitted neatly with the activities of funded projects or in some instances the logic flow at Priority level. In this

context, a number of key learning points have been identified which should be borne in mind for the design of future, domestically funded programmes in light of the UK's decision to leave the EU. Of particular significance is the need to ensure that results and impact indicators are fully aligned with, and are appropriate to, the nature of activities being funded. A further conclusion is the need to take account of the 'lag' that inevitably exists before the full effects of results and outcomes become evident and for this to be factored into monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

At a Priority level, performance in relation to the outputs and result targets has been mixed.

Performance was strong in relation to:

- number of enterprises assisted (ERDF P1 and P4 Conv);
- new job creation (ERDF P2);
- new enterprise creation (ERDF P2 Convergence and RCE);
- increased export levels (ERDF P2);
- premises created or refurbished (ERDF P3 and P5 Convergence);
- number of visits to Wales (ERDF P4 Conv);
- number of young participants (ESF Convergence Priority 1);
- number of participants gaining qualifications (ESF Convergence Priorities 2 and 3 and RCE Priorities 1 and 2);
- number of employers assisted (ESF Convergence Priority 3 and RCE Priority 2).

However, there have also been a number of disappointing performances.

Performance was particularly weak in relation to:

- new job creation (ERDF P1, P3, P5 Convergence and ERDF P4 RCE);
- profit benefit (across the ERDF Priorities);
- number of participants entering further learning (ESF Convergence Priority 1);
- number of employers assisted (ESF Convergence Priority 2);

- the CCT targets in general.

In terms of financial expenditure, the Priorities have been well managed with most showing financial outturns that came very close to the ERDF or ESF budget allocations taking to account some virement and re-distribution of funds approved by the PMC.

While there was a good level of buy-in to the principles and objectives of the CCTs, performance in terms of targets and achieving the CCT objectives has been very poor. A key finding in this respect is that the CCT targets were too output orientated and were inadequate in terms of capturing some of the more subtle, but significant benefits of CCT activity. This is a key learning point that should inform the incorporation of CCTs and in particular appropriate CCT indicators in any future programmes.

There was also a general lack of evidence to suggest that the CCTs had been integrated into the delivery of project activity, though this was much more likely to occur in projects that had an inherent focus on either equality or environmental sustainability. Despite this, there have been very encouraging examples of good practice in relation to the CCTs. These include innovative practices to improve equal opportunities in the workplace, inclusive community consultation, accessibility improvements to the public realm and the development and application of renewable materials and energy sources.

A key learning point relating to the implementation of CCTs is the need to ensure that resources are dedicated to ensuring that appropriate capacity and expertise is in place at a project level to promote integration and meaningful delivery.

Turning to the assessment of outcomes and impacts, the nature of this ex post evaluation, with its focus on examining pre-existing evaluation evidence means that it has not been possible to undertake a robust, net impact analysis at either Priority or Programme level. There are several reasons for this,

including the fact that Programme level evaluation evidence did not give complete coverage and the adoption of divergent methodological approaches to examining gross to net effects and a general lack of robust CIE evidence at project level.

Thus, what follows is a set of high level conclusions relating to outcomes, impacts and key learning points. Given the UK's impending departure from the EU, these conclusions are structured around the key areas of people, businesses and infrastructure rather than the more detailed and technical architecture of the 2014-2020 Operational Programmes. It is important to note that both ESF and ERDF Priorities and projects contributed to a number of the outcomes for people and businesses.

It also needs to be borne clearly in mind that there are substantial considerations and variations in relation to the levels of direct attribution as well as deadweight and displacement which affect Programme results and impacts. For the reasons made clear in this report, it has not been possible to take account of these factors at either Priority or Programme level due to the different methodologies adopted.

People

In terms of impacts on people, there is evidence that the 2007-2013 Structural Funds Programmes contributed to:

- positive employment outcomes, both in terms of job creation and the safeguarding of existing jobs. The latter of these (jobs safeguarded) is considered as an unintended outcome since this was not a formal result indicator within the 2007-2013 OPs;
- improvements in generic and work related skills;
- improved employability and increased prospects of securing and sustaining work;
- positive soft outcomes including improved confidence, positive behavioural changes and greater positivity about work;
- positive (though, overall modest) achievements relating to people entering further forms of learning;

- progression within the workplace.

There is also evidence that the 2007-2013 Programmes led to a number of other positive outcomes for people, including:

- increased awareness of the importance of resource efficiency and recycling;
- engagement in various forms of volunteering;
- improved attendance and reduced unauthorised absenteeism in education and training.

Key learning points from the 2007-2013 EU Structural Funds Programmes in relation to future policies, programmes and interventions aimed at supporting people include:

- the need to ensure that interventions targeting young people adopt individualised and holistic approaches which combine emotional as well as skills development components. These interventions are most effective when delivered by experienced staff that have the ability to develop positive relationships with young people;
- the need to adopt a tailored set of outcome indicators which reflect the direct impact of interventions aimed at young people within the education system (e.g. around absenteeism, attendance and retention rates);
- that for interventions supporting people into work, supporting those that are furthest away from the labour market is likely to generate the greatest levels of additionality. Specifically, future programmes should have a clearly defined focus on high quality, client-led services that can be flexibly delivered and co-located with complementary services at the point of delivery;
- the need to ensure that any future programmes supporting people (e.g. with skills development and workplace progression) also take full account of positive outcomes for employers and businesses in particular;

- the need to ensure a focus on the lower skilled and those least likely to access training;
- the continued importance of a strong focus on excluded groups, particularly disabled and older workers;
- the need to provide a coherent approach to employer engagement;
- the importance of having a more coherent and consistent approach in terms of co-financing training activity with employers, in order to nurture future sustainability.

Businesses

In terms of impacts on businesses, there is evidence that the 2007-2013 Structural Funds Programmes contributed to:

- improvements in company turnover;
- improvements to both productivity and profitability for businesses;
- positive impacts on product and process innovation (including from ESF interventions);
- positive influence on people's decision to start a business;
- improvements to the financial resilience, governance and sustainability of social enterprises.

There is also evidence that the 2007-2013 Programmes led to a number of other outcomes for businesses, including:

- improved relationships between business and academia;
- an improved external profile of Wales (and Welsh institutions) in relation to research and R&D activity.

Key learning points from the 2007-2013 EU Structural Funds Programmes in relation to future policies, programmes and interventions aimed at supporting businesses include:

- the need to focus indicators and evaluation activity relating to business interventions more on outcomes and 'what difference is being made' rather than being overly preoccupied with outputs and 'how much is being done';

- the need to test the levels at which targets are set to ensure that these are SMART in nature;
- the need to take account of a number of factors (beyond just short-term job creation prospects) in identifying businesses that have growth potential;
- that targeting and prioritising business support activity makes sense. Optimising the mix of universally available information (e.g. via on-line platforms) and more intensive and expensive forms of support should be a key strategic priority;
- support for businesses is most effective when information, advice and guidance is effectively joined up with access to finance at the point of delivery;
- the need to ensure in-built CCT capacity and expertise and to present (and evaluate) this activity using language that businesses understand and can relate to.

Infrastructure

Turning to infrastructure, there is evidence that the 2007-2013 Structural Funds Programmes contributed to:

- an increase in the capacity of public transport systems along with increased passenger numbers and reduced dependence on car usage;
- company expansion (and job creation) through availability of newly developed business space;
- improvements relating to 'sense of place' and confidence levels in the perceived prospects of towns and areas where physical regeneration took place;
- positive impacts relating to town centre viability, though in reality the evidence in some instances related to the Structural Funds having slowed the effects of general decline rather than having reversed downward trends;

There is also evidence that the 2007-2013 Programmes led to a number of other outcomes, including:

- innovations in public transport (specifically demand responsive transport solutions);
- some negative unintended consequences. These included disruption (mainly to small businesses) whilst public realm/physical regeneration construction works took place. Some of the transport related schemes also arguably led to trade being taken away from some towns as transport improvements made it easier for people to travel to and shop in cities;
- positive outcomes for social enterprises including cultural changes, strengthened partnerships and collaborative working relationships.

Key learning points from the 2007-2013 EU Structural Funds Programmes in relation to future policies, programmes and interventions aimed at developing infrastructure include:

- the need to ensure that programme level indicators, particularly result and impact indicators appropriately reflect the breadth and scope of potential infrastructure investment activities;
- the need to strengthen the robustness of pre-developmental market testing activity to explore market failure, latent demand levels and to produce realistic assessments of the potential social, economic and environmental benefits of infrastructure projects;
- the need for all stakeholders and the evaluation processes adopted to reflect the lifespan over which economic benefits generated by infrastructure investments can reasonably be expected to occur;
- the need to retain some flexibility within the design of future programmes to enable infrastructure projects to respond to any major changes in the external environment;
- the need to invest in up-front and inclusive forms of public consultation in relation to infrastructure and public realm projects.

Finally, an over-arching conclusion is the need to continue to explore quasi-experimental forms of counterfactual evaluation (which applies equally to

people, business and infrastructure investments) to strengthen the robustness of the analysis of impact of future programmes regardless of whether they are EU funded.

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