



Invest 
Northern
Ireland
Building Locally
Competing Globally

Executive Summary Draft Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on Invest Northern Ireland's Corporate Plan 2008 - 2011

January 2008

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Executive Summary

This draft report has been made available as part of the Formal Consultation stage of the EQIA relating to Invest NI's Draft Corporate Plan 2008 - 2011. We would welcome any comments that you may have in terms of this EQIA, including our preliminary recommendations with regard to measures to mitigate adverse impact and alternative policies.

Further copies of this EQIA report are available on Invest NI's website at www.investni.com/equality

If you require this brochure in an alternative format (including Braille, disk, audio cassette or in minority languages to meet the needs of those whose first language is not English) then please contact:

Invest NI's Equality Team

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Deadline for comments will be: **29 April 2008**

Following consultation the Final Report will be made available.

Background

Invest NI is a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) and is the main agency for delivering the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment's (DETI) economic development Public Service Agreements (PSAs). Specifically, these are:

PSA 1 - PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH

improve NI's manufacturing and private services productivity; and

PSA 3 - INCREASING EMPLOYMENT

increase employment levels and reduce economic inactivity by addressing the barriers to employment and providing careers advice at all levels.

Both PSAs are cross departmental and are held, jointly with the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL).

Invest NI's Draft Corporate Plan 2008 - 2011 is set in the context of a new political dispensation for Northern Ireland and a new draft Programme for Government (PfG). In implementing this, our third Draft Corporate Plan, Invest NI will help to steer an economy in transition.

While the Northern Ireland economy has performed well in recent years, relative to the UK average, this performance masks a number of underlying structural weaknesses. Northern Ireland Gross Value Added (GVA) per head relative to the UK average narrowed during the early to mid 1990s but, since 2000, the gap has remained at roughly 20 per cent. Excluding the high-income regions in the Greater South East of England (GSE) reduces the gap to 10 per cent. Relative to the UK as a whole,

Northern Ireland has a larger share of employees in the public sector, construction, manufacturing and agriculture and is under-represented in certain high-productivity sectors, such as business and financial services. As a result, Northern Ireland sits near the bottom of the twelve UK regions.

Manufacturing productivity has shown convergence with the UK and the sector has clearly benefited from government intervention in recent years. This trend is forecast to continue, albeit at a reduced rate. Removing the GSE also improves Northern Ireland's relative manufacturing productivity, although the change is marginal due to the small proportion of manufacturing industry in that region.

Accordingly, the aim of Invest NI's Draft Corporate Plan 2008 - 2011 is to

“increase business productivity, the means by which wealth can be created for the benefit of the whole community”.

With an average annual programme budget allocation of around £160million, Invest NI will continue to allocate resources to ensure we achieve our delivery targets and ensure maximum impact.

This equality impact assessment has taken into account a wide range of data and research findings including both in-house and external sources. Thus research suggests that while the labour market continues to be segregated in many ways and including those associated with Section 75 grounds, many of these economic inequalities lie outside the scope of Invest NI's work.

Nevertheless we are confident that the Draft Corporate Plan will help to further equality of opportunity across the Northern Ireland labour market. Indeed, the Draft Corporate Plan 2008 - 2011 explicitly acknowledges our duties to promote equality of opportunity and good relations, and details various steps that have been taken to advance these duties.

Through its Draft Corporate Plan Invest NI remains committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations and sees the plan as advancing and consolidating many of the initiatives already put in place. Previous EQIAs of the Accelerating Entrepreneurship Strategy (2005) and Business Development Solutions (2007) have demonstrated the steps already taken, and the positive action measures put in place to promote equality of opportunity. These actions are reinforced by headline figures taken from our Performance Information Report 2002/3 -2006/7 indicating that:

“During the past five years (April 2002 - March 2007) 50 per cent of assistance offered by Invest NI was to clients located in areas of economic disadvantage. These areas contain 30 per cent of the population of Northern Ireland. Of the 69 first-time inward investment projects offered assistance during the five years, 74 per cent had locations in disadvantaged areas, representing 78 per cent of assistance offered to all new Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects. In addition, 39 per cent of new high growth-potential businesses offered assistance were located within these areas.”

Outcomes

Through its new Corporate Plan, Invest NI remains fully committed to making a contribution to stimulate economic growth in all parts of Northern Ireland, and including areas of relative deprivation, so as to help narrow the gap on key indicators such as economic inactivity. This work will continue with due acknowledgment that there are many deep-rooted social and economic issues that continue to conspire to create and sustain inequalities. To remedy these inequalities will require the co-ordinated efforts from all parts of government with support from the private sector.

Having considered available data and research and any adverse impact which may arise, it is proposed that Invest NI will build on our existing EQIAs in taking the following actions in respect of its Draft Corporate Plan 2008 - 2011:

- 1.** Invest NI will work increasingly closely with DETI and DEL and the private sector in a responsive manner to contribute towards addressing existing and emerging inequalities in the Northern Ireland labour market within our remit.
- 2.** Working in conjunction with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Invest NI has established an appropriate methodology for monitoring its clients and support services with regard to appropriate Section 75 grounds. The new Client Monitoring Strategy will be operational by April 2008.
- 3.** Invest NI will remain responsive to emerging equality of opportunity issues associated with the labour market and in particular among its private sector clients. By way of example, projects are already addressing the needs of migrant workers and their families, older workers,

female entrepreneurs, and raising awareness of childcare voucher schemes among SME clients.

- 4.** In line with Equality Commission newly published 'Guide to Promoting Good Relations', during 2008 Invest NI will develop a Good Relations Strategy and will consider positive action measures to support this strategy. For example, how best to raise awareness of Invest NI's programmes and services where relevant among minority communities.
- 5.** Ongoing training of all staff in relation to equality of opportunity and Section 75 responsibilities will remain a corporate priority. Where external agents or consultants work alongside Invest NI then their contractual responsibilities to meet our obligations under Section 75 will also be made clear.
- 6.** The selection criteria that will continue to apply to any support, scheme or programme operated by Invest NI will continue to encourage equality of opportunity. Where additional criteria are introduced, for example to target an industrial sector or geographical area, then these will be clearly defined and set out, and any potential adverse impacts associated with these criteria will be considered.
- 7.** Each programme will make explicit, in all documentation, that materials can be made available in alternative formats where necessary and on request for those who are not able to access written English.
- 8.** Building on our 2007 Disability Action Plan and subsequent consultation period, we will continue to take forward the Plan through informed interventions.

Next Steps

These measures, when implemented, should further equality of opportunity generally, in compliance with Invest NI's obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

As previously stated in our Equality Scheme, the amended policies will be regularly monitored to ensure that no adverse impact occurs.

Invest NI wishes to consult as widely as possible on the findings included in this EQIA, together with the preliminary recommendations offered above. The following actions are proposed:

- This report will be issued to all consultees listed in our Equality Scheme and to any members of the public on request.
- Prominent advertisement will be placed in local and regional newspapers inviting the public to comment on this matter in accordance with normal practice.
- A copy of the EQIA will be posted on Invest NI's website and on the intranet.
- Individual consultation meetings will be arranged with staff on request and with representatives of particular interest groups if requested.
- Publicity material will be made available at all Invest NI's operational locations.
- The report will be made available on request in alternative formats.

The arrangements for consultation are being co-ordinated by the Equality Unit to whom all enquiries should be made.

The closing date for responses is **29 April 2008**.

Following the formal consultation period and consideration of the findings from the consultation, Invest NI will reach a decision in terms of the EQIA process and will ensure that such decisions are implemented through the new Corporate Plan.

The outcomes of this EQIA will be published in the press and will also be posted on Invest NI's website (www.investni.com/equality). It will be made available in different formats on request where appropriate.

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