



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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European Commission Work Programme 2013: proposals within the remit of the Committee for Finance and Personnel

This Note provides a table that lists the proposals in the European Commission Work Programme 2013 which RaISe has identified as relevant to the Committee for Finance and Personnel's (CFP) remit. A description of each proposal is provided. In addition, RaISe has provided some commentary and in places, some suggested actions for CFP to consider.

Finally, any identified 'subsidiarity' issues are highlighted. Subsidiarity:

...ensures that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen and that constant checks are made to verify that action at Union level is justified in light of the possibilities available at national, regional or local level. Specifically, it is the principle whereby the Union does not take action (except in the areas that fall within its exclusive competence), unless it is more effective than action taken at national, regional or local level.¹

¹ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/subsidiarity_en.htm

European Commission Proposals 2013							
Title	Estimated Date of Adoption	Current Stage of Progress	Description	Perceived Relevance to Northern Ireland	Current Prioritisation	Indicative date of when CFP could be involved	Any identified Subsidiarity issues?
ANNUAL GROWTH SURVEY	Q4 2013	Commission commits to deliver in the course of 2013 ²	The European Commission will present an Annual Growth survey accompanied by a Communication, which will be the main input for discussions at the Spring European Council. The survey will include both a review (reporting on progress on the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy) and a forward-looking part (proposing strategic policy guidance horizontally across Member States).	As the survey is on Member State level, it can feed into the UK position as necessary.	Low The Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) is not involved in the Annual growth survey which is the responsibility of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment (DETI).	European Council guidance due in March 2013, Member States present updated National Programmes: Mid-April 2013, Commission will then present its Country specific recommendations ³ RaISe will keep a watching brief and provide updates to CFP if required.	NO
COMMON STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK (CSF) REGULATIONS	Dependent on the outcome of the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) negotiations during the next European Council meeting - scheduled for 7 and 8	Draft Regulations proposed by the European Commission 11 September 2012 ⁴	The Common Strategic Framework is the overall project in which a number of various funding programmes extend including: the European Regional Development Fund; the European Social Fund; the Cohesion Fund; the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development; and, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. The new CSF regulations governing how Structural Funds are spent over the 2014-20 aim to provide	Dependent on the outcome of the MFF negotiations. Move to Transition Regions laid out in proposed CSF would attract a greater allocation of funding. ⁵	Low/Medium Low prioritisation moving to medium when MFF is agreed (possibly in 2013) However, the EU budget is not a devolved matter that CFP can directly influence.	RaISe will keep a watching brief and provide updates to CFP if required.	NO

² Commission Work Plan: annex1 forthcoming initiatives http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/pdf/cwp2013_annex_en.pdf

³ Communication from the Commission, Annual Growth Survey 2013: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/ags2013_en.pdf

⁴ Amended proposal for a Common Strategic Framework <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0496:FIN:EN:PDF>

⁵ DFP briefing to CFP, 16 January 2013

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	February 2013		a better link to the Europe 2020 strategy than currently exists so that EU funding supports smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The Communication will set out how this works in practice, including macroeconomic conditionality.				
COMMON STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK (CSF) FUNDS AND THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU) ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE	RaISe has been unable to identify a timetable for adoption.		The European Commission Communication will analyse how the CSF Funds will contribute to EU economic governance, their role in fostering growth and the importance of a sound macroeconomic framework for the efficient use of the funds. It will examine the links of the CSF Funds with the economic governance procedures and explain how macroeconomic conditionality will be implemented.	<p>Dependent on the outcome of the MFF negotiations.</p> <p>These will determine whether macroeconomic conditionality applies to the UK (including NI). In other words, whether EU funding is contingent on certain macro- economic thresholds.</p> <p>However, due to the lack of a roadmap and timescales, it is difficult to assess impact at this stage.</p>	Low/Medium Low prioritisation moving to medium when MFF is agreed (possibly in 2013)	RaISe will keep a watching brief and provide updates to CFP if required	NO
COUNTRY – SPECIFIC NEGOTIATION	2013	The European Commission’s negotiating	Negotiating mandates shape the priorities in Member States for public investment during the next seven	A Partnership Agreement (PA) document must be	Low/Medium Low prioritisation moving to medium	Whitehall Department of Business Innovation	NO

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MANDATES FOR THE COMMON STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK (CSF) FUNDS FOR THE PERIOD 2014-2020		mandate to the UK was launched in London on 6 December 2012. ⁶	<p>years, in line with the Europe 2020 strategy⁷</p> <p>Funding priorities proposed in the December 2012 paper included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting R & D investment • Increasing labour market participation • Promoting an environmentally friendly economy 	<p>submitted by the member state within 3 months of the adoption of the CSF regulations.⁸</p> <p>This partnership agreement will set out how the UK will achieve Europe 2020 compliance. Responsibility for drawing up and submitting the PA lies with the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS).</p>	when MFF is agreed (possibly in 2013)	and Skills (BIS) has advised devolved administrations that it requires their input into the PA in February/March 2013 with the intention of finalising the document in December 2013.	
STATE AID MODERNISATION: GENERAL BLOCK EXEMPTION REGULATION	Q4 2013	Proposal for council Regulation amending 1998 regulation Published 5 December 2012. ⁹	<p>The Commission declares specific categories of State Aid thus exempting them from the requirement of prior notification and approval. "As a result, Member States are able to grant aid that meets the conditions laid down in these regulations without the formal notification procedure, and only have to submit information sheets on the implemented aid".¹⁰</p> <p>The proposed amendment seeks to broaden the scope of measures</p>	<p>Responsibilities of Member States for ensuring correct enforcement of state aid rules will increase if more initiatives are exempt from the notification obligation</p> <p>However, there is no available roadmap for this initiative making it difficult to assess</p>	Low State Aid policy is led by DETI and therefore primarily of relevance to the DETI committee.	RaISe will keep a watching brief and provide updates to CFP if required.	NO

⁶ DFP paper to the Committee for Finance and Personnel 16 January 2013, p.9

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Amended proposal for a Common Strategic Framework <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0496:FIN:EN:PDF>

⁹ Proposal for amendment of Block Exemptions Regulations http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/legislation/enabling_regulation_en.pdf

¹⁰ State Aid Control, Block Exemptions Regulations web pages: http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/legislation/block.html

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			<p>exempt from the notification requirement of the State Aid rules.</p> <p>This sets the most appropriate conditions for State Aid to be compatible with the internal market. This is designed to reduce the administrative burden for national authorities.</p>	impact.			
INITIATIVE ON E-INVOICING IN THE FIELD OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT	Q2 2013		<p>This initiative would eliminate the fragmentation of the Internal Market by promoting the use of B2G e-invoicing in the public sector and enhancing the interoperability of national (and sub-national) e-invoicing systems. It would help to reduce the operating costs of enterprises and the procurement costs of public authorities by fostering the automation of procedures related to invoicing.</p> <p>The roadmap for the initiative highlights the need for standardisation across Member States to reduce complexity and costs. It identifies some initial costs to Member States, some of which include: the appropriate IT software; and, the skills to carry out the procedures. The road map justifies EU action to co-ordinate the uptake on e-invoicing by Member States.</p>	<p>Public Procurement is a devolved matter. It is the view of the UK government that this initiative may offer efficiency savings for both public administrations and suppliers. This could be considered to be consistent with CFP's view from its Inquiry into Public Procurement (June 2011) that the public procurement process should be operated on a value-for-money basis.</p>	<p>Medium Public Procurement is the responsibility of DFP's Central Procurement Directorate (CPD)</p>	<p>DFP has indicated that E-invoicing is primarily an accounting issue and CPD has no input to make.</p> <p>CFP may wish to seek further information from CPD to justify its position; and/or seek confirmation that Account NI can support the requirements of the initiative.</p> <p><u>For information</u> the Account NI website states that contractor invoices are presently <i>scanned</i> onto the system.</p>	NO

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BANK ACCOUNT INITIATIVE	Q1 2013		<p>An initiative aiming at increasing the transparency and comparability of bank account fees, as well as to render bank account switching easier for consumers.</p> <p>The roadmap identifies three problems that confirm the need for action in this area including: complex, unclear and incomparable information making it difficult for the consumer; barriers to switching bank accounts and new market entrants; and, potential difficulties in trying to access bank accounts across jurisdictions. According to the roadmap, the potential benefits include: greater consumer confidence; lower prices; increased choice; greater mobility; and it creates a level playing field in payment accounts. Potential costs include: compliance costs for banks; administrative burden; and, costs to public authorities for initiating and implementing transposing legislation. The roadmap further highlights the need for EU action on the basis that there are gaps and disparities in the extent to which Member States have taken action in this area.</p>	<p>Although banking is not a devolved matter, it is possible that a non-devolved matter can have a devolved impact. This initiative will inevitably impact consumers in Northern Ireland; and in light of this, it may be an issue for consideration. There is no reference to this area in the Executive's European Priorities Document.</p>	<p>Low</p> <p>Banking is non-devolved. In addition this initiative appears to relate to consumer protection and therefore would be primarily of interest to the DETI and the relevant Assembly Committee.</p>	<p>RaISe will keep a watching brief and provide updates to CFP if required</p>	NO
SOCIAL INVESTMENT FOR GROWTH AND	Q1 2013		<p>To provide guidance on increasing efficiency, effectiveness, and adequacy of social protection</p>	<p>There is no roadmap or timescale for this initiative making it</p>	<p>Low</p> <p>ESF is primarily a Department of</p>	<p>RaISe will keep a watching brief and provide updates to</p>	NO

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COHESION – INCLUDING IMPLEMENTING THE ESF 2014-2020			systems; improving activating and enabling policies; social inclusion and adequate livelihoods. The Communication will contribute to implementing the Europe 2020 Strategy/ European Semester, support and design of social investment in the National Regional Plans and assist Member States in making the best use of EU funds, ESF in particular	difficult to assess impact at this stage. However, Northern Ireland benefits, and seeks to maximise future benefits, from EU Social Funds. It may be beneficial to further consider this initiative as it may an impact on the availability or implementation of these funding programmes	Employment and Learning responsibility	CFP if required	
COMMUNICATION ON GUIDELINES FOR STANDARDS-BASED PUBLIC PROCUREMENT OF ICT SYSTEMS	Q1 2013	Guide published March 2012 – this does not appear to have been taken further to date. Anticipated Communication may analyse previous guidelines and surveys. ¹¹	The objective of the Communication is to identify how and ensure that public authorities make best use of the full range of relevant standards when procuring hardware, software and IT services , for example by selecting standards which can be implemented by all interested suppliers, allowing for more competition and reduced risk of lock-in. Practical guidelines will be included in the Communication.	Difficult to assess given lack of information available. May impact on procurement under CPD's remit.	Low	CFP may wish to seek a written briefing from DFP's CPD on the relevance to Northern Ireland	NO

¹¹ See Guidelines for public procurement of ICT systems : http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/ssai/study-action23_en.html