

Draft Single European Market Group (SEMG) Work plan

1. Introduction

The West Midlands European Strategy (WMES) was published in Spring 2008 and focuses on the region's engagement with Europe, what our priorities should be and how we intend to make a success of them.

Over the past two decades most of the day-to-day European activity undertaken within the West Midlands has focussed on the use of EU Structural Funds, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). Many parts of the region have benefited greatly from resources made available under ERDF while all parts of the West Midlands have been eligible for ESF resources. The retention of these Funds for 2007-2013, albeit on a reduced scale, means that continued attention will need to be given to the most effective use of these monies in the forthcoming period.

However, the strategy looks beyond Structural Funds and makes the case for a more comprehensive approach to European working. It has been drafted at a key moment in the EU's development, as Europe strives to fulfil the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs and to adapt to the challenges posed by climate change and wider impact of globalisation. During 2008-2009 the EU will conduct a root-and-branch review of its budget to suggest how it can be best aligned with the Union's policy priorities. These are among the matters that form the background and context to this strategy.

The West Midlands European Strategy focuses on the following four priorities:

- maximising the opportunities of the Single Market
- becoming a more successful player within the innovation, research and development arena
- responding to the challenges of climate change and environmental protection
- engaging with the social cohesion dimension

2. Maximising Opportunities of the Single European Market

This work plan deals with the first priority – responding to the opportunities and challenges presented to West Midlands' businesses through the further development and refinement of Single European Market. The Strategy seeks to highlight the linkages between developments at the European level with regional priorities in the West Midlands.

The work plan is our first effort to react to our very broad brief of using E.U. and other programmes

- to boost exports to other E.U. member states. In particular to focus on boosting the region's trade in relation to the business clusters identified in the West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy
- to promote the West Midlands as a region for inward investment attracting new companies from mainland Europe, especially small and medium enterprises in high growth sectors
- to enhance the skills of the workforce and their knowledge of the Single Market
- to work with E.U. business partners for joint cooperation in third country markets beyond Europe

2.1 European Context

Expansion

The Single European Market itself has grown substantially with the accession in 2004 of the Baltic states, Poland Hungary the Czech republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and the island states of Malta and Cyprus; and in 2007 of Romania and Bulgaria. Croatia, the FYR of Macedonia and Turkey are official candidate states and all are taking steps to align their business practices with the E.U. and creating opportunities for other E.U. states in the process.

Policies: the flow of policy and legislation coming from the EU institutions designed to improve the working of the Single Market all give rise to new opportunities and challenges. Significant amongst these will be:

- The Single Market Review with new initiatives and proposals anticipated for furthering the development of the internal market with relationship to:
 - Barriers to cross Border Trade
 - Consumer contractual rights
 - Small Business Act (see below)
 - Intellectual property rights
 - Framework for E communications
 - State Aid control
- The Lisbon Strategy Review
- A new Small Business Act for Europe
 - Reducing administrative burdens
 - Increasing participation in funding programmes

- Access to public procurement
- European private company statute
- Modernising Labour Law
- Flexicurity
- Novel Foods

Programmes: the latest EU financial period runs from 2007-2013. The region should take advantage of relevant European programmes to promote its business aims. In particular a major effort will be made to succeed within the following programmes:

- **ERDF** particularly under Priority 2 Stimulating Enterprise Development and to a lesser degree priority 4 developing inter-regional activity.
- **ESF** in conjunction with the group working on priority 4 of the European Strategy
- **The E.U. “Invest” Programmes** e.g. Asia Invest; AI Invest, Central Asia Invest, Pro€Invest, supporting relationships between intermediary organisations in order to encourage cooperation between member companies
- **Switch Asia** in conjunction with the group working on Priority 3 of the European Strategy to help Asian SMEs access the right knowledge, training and technologies to minimise the polluting effects of their production cycle
- **Interreg IV:** specifically the IVB trans-national strand (North West Europe) and IVC inter-regional strand (EU-wide)
- **Innovation programmes** in conjunction with the group working on Priority 2 of the European Strategy

2.2 West Midlands’s context

Policies: the West Midlands European Strategy is based on the established policy framework at regional level which deals with stimulating trade and investment. These include:

- **West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy (RES)**– Particularly 1.2 of the RES delivery framework refers to competing in the global economy and has actions under 1.2.1 such as implementing an international business framework, improving companies export readiness, supporting visits to overseas markets to exploit identified opportunities. Under 1.2.2 suggests increasing participation in overseas networks and supporting companies to form partner relationships both outward and inward to create opportunities to meet overseas buyers.

- **West Midlands International Business Action Plan (IBAP)-** has four key themes
 - Seizing market opportunities by boosting exports and by promoting the region as an inward investment destination
 - Harnessing knowledge of the region's science and technology base
 - Improving Birmingham's competitiveness
 - Powerful voice for the West Midlands

The plan makes specific reference to the priorities within the European Strategy most particularly to maximising the opportunities of the Single Market

To oversee the IBAP a Business led International Business Forum is being established. The Single European Market Group in addition to reporting through the Strategic European Officers group to the European Strategy Board will have linkages with and will report to the International Business Forum

Programmes:

Much of the investment to achieve the goals established for the Single Market priority will be made by the private sector. The role the SEMG can play is limited. It centres on ensuring that appropriate information on opportunities and programmes is available to those in the private sector making decisions and wishing to influence the conditions through which opportunities become available. The SEMG will give a forum in which various players can exchange information be it on influencing the development of the single market, specific trading and investment opportunities or on various programmes whether E.U funded or not that could be of assistance in achieving the priorities goals.

In addition West Midlands' partners have recognised that there is currently a discrepancy within the region between the funding opportunities offered by the large number of EU trans-national funding programmes and the low level of our achievements. EU Connects, the major new initiative funded by the partners was established in order to help close the gap. EU Connects has published baseline research on the West Midlands performance in certain EU trans-national programmes during the 2000-06 period. The research focused on the Interreg, Lifelong Learning and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programmes and provides a very useful baseline on the current experience of organisations under these funds. There are clearly opportunities to increase engagement in these funds and to deliver meaningful projects within the Single Market priority context which contribute to regional and European goals.

3. Membership

The workplan will provide the focus for the work of the Single European Market Group. The SEMG currently has the following membership

Name	Organisation	Contact details
Graham Ashmore	UK Trade and Investment	grahamashmore@blackcountrychamber.co.uk
John Otter	UK Trade and Investment	johnotter@advantagewm.co.uk
Eric Brown	Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce	ericb@hwchamber.co.uk
Alan Roden	Advantage West Midlands	alanroden@advantagewm.co.uk
Steve Shorthouse	Coventry University Enterprises	s.shorthouse@cad.coventry.ac.uk
Paul Meikle/ Cathy Davies	European Enterprise Network (Midlands)	p.meikle@birminghamchamber.org.uk c.davies@birminghamchamber.org.uk
Julia Speht/ Jo Sartori	E.U. Connects	j.speht@wmra.gov.uk euconnectsmarketing@wmlga.gov.uk
Glynis Whiting/ Jan Urlings	West Midlands in Europe	Glynis.whiting@westmidlandsineurope.org jurlings@westmidlandsineurope.org

Further Members

It is intended to invite further members shortly once the initial scoping and an outline plan has been established. It is particularly intended to invite representation from the business community and include local government representation.

Secretariat – There is no funding provided for a secretariat of the group at present. As much as possible will be achieved by pooling effort of members of the group with John Otter bearing the brunt of this task but in due course the lack of resources to deliver programmes will be a break on the groups achievements

West Midlands in Europe – Glynis Whiting and Jan Urlings will be a key source of information on the latest policy and funding developments in Brussels.

EU Connects - will provide advice and support to organisations in the West Midlands seeking to apply for EU trans-national funding.

4. Workplan

Based on the actions identified the in the European strategy, the SEMG has outlined the following draft workplan.

Action	Expected activity	Lead Partner(s)	Funding Sources / Resources	Timescale
1. Ensuring all aspects of the "Engaging with the Single market" priority are taken into consideration	Mapping of present activities and programmes firstly amongst the organisations represented in SEMG and then more comprehensively	WMiE with CUE		By end November 08
2. To obtain benefits from synergies in present programmes	Quick review of known programmes to suggest where synergies might lie	E.U. Connects		By end December
	Look for specific synergies in Soft Landing and Bridge to Growth programme	AWM / CUE		
	Look for specific synergies in International trade, outward investment and Inward activities	AWM / UKTI / CUE		
	Review synergies between UKTI and EEN programmes	UKTI / EEN		
3 To influence directives and legislation pertinent to the expansion and development of the single market	Ensure Confederation of West Midlands Chambers of Commerce and other business representative organisations are fully briefed on issues concerning single market development and upon which they may wish to lobby	WMiE/ EEN		Ongoing

4. To study and adopt best practice in export development, outward investment and inward investment attraction	To develop a programme using possibly ERDF Priority 4 funding and possibly later Interreg funding to study practice within a number of participating regions	SEMG task group		Initial work to commence in November
5. To make the SEMG more business influenced and representative of those working to achieve Priority 1 goals	At least a further 3 representatives from the private sector to join the group, together with a representative from local government concerned with inward investment attraction	SEMG chair to discuss with Chairman of CWMCC		December
6. Increasing the benefits from trade, Outward investment and inward investment	Plan at least 3 pro-active programmes/ activities to take advantages of opportunities in the single market	SEMG Task Group		Delivery March-December 2009
7. Communications	Devise and develop a consistent communications plan which engages partners in the work of the SEMG and which disseminates information, good practice and key messages concerning the Single Market	Draft to be developed by EEN in consultation with EU Connects and WMiE?		January 2009