

15 Equality between men and women and non-discrimination

15.1 Promotion of equality between men and women through programme implementation

1. The United Kingdom has a well-established legal structure that prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, sexuality, religion or disability. The UK is also a signatory to European conventions on Human rights.
2. The delivery bodies for the Rural Development Programme for England 2013-2013 (RDPE) (Natural England, the Forestry Commission, and the Regional Development Agencies) are all public bodies. The Equality Act 2006 places a statutory duty (the Gender Equality Duty) on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity for women and men.
3. The delivery of the Programme will operate within this established legal framework. Delivery bodies will be responsible for ensuring the proactive promotion of equality at all stages of programme implementation (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). This will include, for example, the preparation of literature and publicity material, guidance for delivery staff, and the criteria for targeting of support under the programme. All applications for support under the Programme will be equally judged on their merits by the respective delivery bodies.
4. Taking account of advice provided by the ex ante evaluators during the preparation of this programme, each of the measures to be implemented has been reviewed to consider whether any specific equality issues are raised. Clearly some measures raise more significant equality issues than others – for example there is a particular need in Measures 111 and 331 to ensure equality of opportunity in the targeting and delivery of training, whilst for agri-environment measures the main issue is to ensure support is properly and widely promoted. The delivery arrangements devised, and the legal obligations on deliverers and the guidance supplied to them, will ensure that measure-specific equality issues are taken fully into account.
5. The Monitoring Committee, as formed under Article 77 of the Rural Development Regulation (Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005) in conjunction with the Managing Authority, (as formed under Article 74 of the same regulation) is responsible for the promotion of equality between men and women at implementation, monitoring and evaluation stage as required under Article 8 of the same Regulation. Under Article 78, the Monitoring Committee must be consulted on the criteria used for approval of financed Schemes under the Programme, and this will allow oversight of the selection criteria to ensure that equal opportunities are promoted.

6. The UK is committed to implementing the reforms under the Lisbon Agenda, and has laid out in the UK National Reform Programme (October 2005) the priorities for and sets out the Government's strategy for delivering long term sustainable growth, high employment and a fair and inclusive society.

15.2 Prevention of discrimination in programme implementation

7. In addition to obligations outlined above the RDPE delivery bodies will put processes in place that will prevent discrimination on grounds of gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation.

8. The Monitoring Committee and the Managing Authority are responsible for ensuring that discrimination is prevented at the implementation stage, and also by ensuring that elimination of discrimination is factored into the monitoring and evaluation phases of the Programme.