

## **ANNEX B**

# **STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME**



The Strategic Environmental overview of the Programme was prepared by the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society. The findings of the Assessment resulted in a fine tuning of the proposals (e.g. elimination of code 39 – renewable energy: wind).

As a result of recommendations made in this Assessment some changes have been made to previous drafts of the OP. Therefore references made in this Assessment may no longer be consistent with the final OP.

## **Strategic Environmental Aspects of the Operational Programme**

### **Introduction**

The actual environmental impact of the projects that result from approved expenditure will vary according to the detail of each and cannot be accurately predicted. However, knowledge of potential impacts based on experience and case studies, can be applied in examining possible scenarios. These can range through the scale from high impact to no impact, depending, not only on the project, but also on how it is executed. The implementation aspects of the Programme take this into account. Therefore this assessment will only consider general points and, where appropriate, worst-case scenarios or, at the very least, will point out areas of potential conflict with the environment.

As the ultimate effect will be real, and not theoretical, this assessment is arranged by Priority Themes, looking into the actual ways in which expenditure is planned.

### **Research & technological development, innovation & entrepreneurship**

#### **Code 06**      *Assistance to SMEs for environmental improvements*

The long term effects of these activities is clearly planned to be beneficial for the environment. Care however needs to be taken to ensure that the activity of these SMEs is environmentally friendly and sustainable in a number of ways. These include minimising energy needs, minimising polluting waste products, and maximising recycling. The location of these SMEs must also be considered in relation to avoiding destruction of natural communities and biodiversity as well as avoiding environmental nuisance to nearby residential or recreational areas.

#### **Code 08**      *Other investment in firms*

#### **Code 09**      *Other measures to stimulate research & innovation & entrepreneurship in SMEs*

Similar considerations apply here as to those firms covered by Code 06 above. In the limited land available in Gibraltar, careful planning of the location of new SMEs is important. These considerations are accepted by the Government of Gibraltar, and form part of the policies included in the new Gibraltar Development Plan.

## **Strategic Environmental Aspects of the Operational Programme**

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### **Information Society**

- Code 11      *Information & Communication Technologies*
- Code 12      *Information & Communications Technologies*
- Code 13      *Services and applications for the citizen*
- Code 14      *Services and applications for SMEs*
- Code 15      *Other measures for improving access by SMEs*

The main potential environmental conflicts in this theme relate once again to any new premises that may be required, an aspect already covered above. In addition, SMEs are consumers of energy, and the running of them will require energy consumption, both directly and indirectly (e.g. illumination of office buildings, heating, cooling, use of computers). Implementation of the Programme should require that these are minimised by the funded SMEs

### **Energy**

- Code 39      *Renewable energy: wind*
- Code 40      *Renewable energy: solar*

Both these initiatives have potential environmental benefits, although both, particularly wind, can be controversial and have their detractors among environmental experts. The small size of Gibraltar is especially relevant as wind and solar generation can be demanding in terms of surface area, and there is therefore the potential of conflict with natural habitats and biodiversity. Wind power, in particular is known to be potentially in conflict with nature conservation in relation to its impact on bats and birds. Gibraltar is on the major western flyway for birds in the African-Western Palearctic migratory system. Consideration must be given to these facts when executing the programme. The possibility of including other sources (in particular hydroelectric (tidal/current) (Code 42)) should not be discounted.

### **Environmental protection & risk prevention**

- Code 52      *Promotion of clean urban transport*

The 2000-2006 Programme provided an opportunity to greatly improve public transport in Gibraltar, a fact that has been widely acknowledged locally. Further progress can be made in this field, and this strategic aim is one that is unlikely to have adverse environmental effects.

## **Strategic Environmental Aspects of the Operational Programme**

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### **Improving access to employment & sustainability**

Code 68      *Support for self-employment and business start-up*

There are similar consideration here to those noted above under Codes 06, 07 and 08. These relate to the potential environmental impact, not of the principle of assisting businesses, but of the businesses themselves as they develop. No overall assessment can be made of these at this stage, but an overview should be taken once it is clear what proposals are forthcoming.

### **Technical Assistance**

Code 85      *Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection*

Code 86      *Evaluation & studies, information & communication*

No negative environmental impact is envisaged. The Government of Gibraltar, under its Environment Charter and Green Business Initiative are promoting energy efficiency in office practices. As part of the Government, the EU Programmes Secretariat, which administers the OP, will adhere to these principles. It is indeed in an ideal position to lead by example and so influence the practices of project applicants and programme partners.

### **Projects outside “Lisbon earmarking”**

These are not yet clearly specified so that their potential environmental impact cannot be determined. However, like those within the earmarking list, they will still need to be consistent both with European instruments such as the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agenda, and with internal Gibraltar Government policy.

### **Conclusion**

Strategically, the Operational Programme is not expected to have a negative environmental impact. The scale of negative environmental impacts that could result from the Programme is limited, and totally avoidable provided there is adequate scrutiny of proposals and monitoring of projects. Care must however be taken that apparently beneficial projects do not ultimately have negative effects. It must be noted, however, that there is a high environmental component in the Programme, which could generate real environmental gains for Gibraltar.