

# Distinctly Birmingham

## Europe Association Steering Group

### *Joint priorities and action plan*

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#### Background

There was broad support for the priorities which were put to the Europe Workshop at the 20 September launch of the European & International Strategy. However, there was consistent feedback about the need to better engage with SMEs and the need to focus on Birmingham's key growth sectors. In view of this, and other, feedback the priorities have been refined.

It should be noted that we have specifically focussed on priorities:

- Where there are gaps in local collaboration;
- Where there are demonstrable future opportunities to improve jobs and growth; and
- In areas which will lead to greater momentum, reputation building, and grant capture.

So, for instance, we are not proposing a priority in relation to EU structural and investment funds as local collaboration on this is established and is being progressed through the GBSLEP partnership.

This paper sets out a series of actions which will be overseen by the Europe Association Steering Group which were discussed on 17 January. This will be a live document which will be further developed and added to over time.

#### European priorities and example actions

##### **Priority 1**

##### **Deepening exchange, exposure and partnerships**

Supporting partners in Birmingham to better understand and exploit European opportunities for exchanges of people, knowledge and ideas – with a particular focus on sectors, such as smaller cultural organisations and the third sector, that have not been as engaged with transnational EU programmes due to lack of capacity or knowledge.

##### *Actions:*

- Birmingham City Council, in partnership with other relevant organisations, will develop a series of **awareness raising** seminars on **transnational EU funding opportunities** (particularly relatively simple funding programmes such as Erasmus +) targeted at the cultural sector, the third sector and schools to support them in the delivery in their priorities.

- To support organisations new to EU working by **piloting a ‘buddying up’ initiative** to link them with organisations and individuals in Birmingham experienced in EU project working.
- Birmingham City Council will signpost organisations in Birmingham to help them **find European partners for exchange of knowledge, people and ideas** particularly with Birmingham’s partner cities of Frankfurt, Leipzig, Lyon and Milan.

## **Priority 2**

### **Maximising large-scale, pan-European initiatives to support the development of Birmingham’s key growth sectors<sup>1</sup>**

Develop a better understanding and improved joint working to maximise our take up of large scale pan-European initiatives such as those from the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and European Public-Private Partnerships as well as other non-structural funds in support of Birmingham’s key growth sectors.

#### *Actions:*

- Further maximise the benefits of the **Climate KIC** across Greater Birmingham in support of Birmingham’s **Green Commission Roadmap**: The next Europe Association Steering meeting in May will focus on the Climate KIC and future opportunities to get involved.
- Work with regional partners to favourably position the West Midlands in the InnoLife consortium in its application to become the **Healthy and Active Ageing KIC**: This is being undertaken by a regional consortium led by Birmingham Science City and University of Warwick, we will invite these representatives to keep the Europe Association updated to help identify further complementarity and linkages.
- Be a platform for helping to bring together partners, when appropriate, to explore the feasibility of **further KIC opportunities** to support Birmingham’s priorities (e.g Raw Materials, Advance Manufacturing etc).

## **Priority 3**

### **Supporting the city’s competitiveness and innovation agenda through European working**

Support growth and innovation in the city’s key growth sectors, with a particular focus on SMEs. In doing so, positioning Birmingham as a centre for innovation in Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> Birmingham’s key growth sectors: Advanced manufacturing; Business, professional and financial services; Environmental enterprise; Food and drink; IT, electronics and communication; and Life sciences

*Actions:*

- **Promote COSME opportunities to SMEs** from Birmingham's key growth sectors with the European Enterprise Network and the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce: The Chamber and Birmingham City Council will explore how the EEN can further support European opportunities in relation to SMEs, EU funding and trade, perhaps by setting up a sub-group on this matter.
- **Broker links with SMEs** and (prospective) **entrepreneurs**, particularly in less institutionalised settings, to encourage greater involvement with **universities** and other partners in programmes such as **Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+**: The Chamber and Birmingham City Council will explore how the EEN can further support European opportunities in relation to SMEs, EU funding and trade, perhaps by setting up a sub-group on this matter.
- Birmingham City Council to identify European opportunities to support the delivery of Birmingham's **Smart Commission Roadmap and Green Commission Roadmap** for the City and its partners.

**Priority 4**

**Develop greater joined-up working among local partners, as well as closer working with our ambassadors in Europe to further enhance Birmingham's reputation and influence**

Provide co-ordinated key messages to, and maximise the knowledge, influence and profile of our: MEPs, Committee of the Regions representatives, Greater Birmingham and West Midlands Brussels office, our European networks such as EUROCITIES, as well as the city's cultural ambassadors. Encourage greater information sharing among local partners to better identify opportunities for joined up working in EU work.

*Actions:*

- **Better communicate** the breadth of current European activity to **encourage more joining up** by launching and encouraging others to contribute to and use the new Distinctly Birmingham website.
- Birmingham City Council, with partners, to develop a publication providing **practical case study examples** on the benefits of **EU engagement** to Birmingham businesses and organisations.
- Improve regular **dialogue with our MEPs** to provide examples and evidence in relation to EU legislation and policy going through the European Parliament.
- **Maximise our cultural assets** in promoting Birmingham in Europe: Identify where our cultural organisations are touring in Europe and possibilities to use these opportunities to undertake **inward investment promotion and profiling**.
- Ensure the Greater Birmingham and West Midlands Brussels office reflects the **unique economic and cultural offer of the city**: The office will work with **Birmingham Made Me** on a **permanent display** to showcase the city's

manufacturing expertise.

- Promote to partners in Birmingham the role that the Greater Birmingham and West Midlands Brussels office can play in being a **Brussels-based dissemination partner** in EU funded transnational projects.

Last updated 24.02.14