Briefing

How the EU budget is spent

February 2017

European Social Fund

In a nutshell

The European Social Fund (ESF) is one of the European Structural and Investment Funds. It promotes quality employment, social inclusion, education and training, and enhances the institutional capacity of public authorities. All EU Member States are eligible for ESF support through corresponding operational programmes. The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) complements the ESF actions addressing youth unemployment. The ESF was created in 1957 and has a long history of actions and achievements. It has also not avoided criticism. In the current MFF the implementation of the Fund has been rather slow, but it is expected to reach full cruising speed in 2017.

EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) heading and policy area

Heading 1 – Smart and Inclusive Growth

Subheading 1b – Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion

2014-20 financial envelope (in current prices and as % of total MFF)

Commitments: €86 405.02 million (7.95 %)

2016 budget (in current prices and as % of total EU budget)[1]

Commitments: €12 033.02 million (7.96 %)
Payments: €11 114.35 million (7.94 %)

2017 budget (in current prices and as % of total EU budget)[2]

Commitments: €12 899.73 million (8.39 %)
Payments: €9 309.74 million (7.11 %)

Methods of implementation

Shared management (European Commission and Member States)

In this briefing:

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EU role in the policy area: legal basis

The European Social Fund (ESF) is the oldest EU fund still in place, having been introduced in 1957. The ESF was established by the Treaty of Rome in order to 'improve employment opportunities for workers in the common market and to contribute thereby to raising the standard of living'.[3]

Figure 1 – The European Structural and Investment Funds

Today, the ESF belongs to the group of five European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds (Figure 1), which aim at supporting economic, social and territorial cohesion of the European Union (Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, TFEU).

According to the TFEU, 'the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion and a high level of education, training and protection of human health' (Article 9). Title XI TFEU is dedicated to the establishment of the European Social Fund. Easier employment of workers, increasing their geographical and occupational mobility within the Union and facilitating their adaptation to industrial changes and to changes in production systems are among its objectives (Article 162). Most of these have been valid since 1957.

Table 1 - Legal framework of the European Social Fund

	Content of the CPR	Content of the ESF Regulation
Definitions	●	
General principles	●	●
Strategic approach, thematic concentration and scope of intervention	●	●
Programming	●	● (YEI)
Financial instruments	●	●
Ex ante Conditionalities	●	
Performance review	●	
Linked to sound economic governance	●	
Community-led local development and territorial development (incl. urban)	●	●
Monitoring, evaluation and indicators	●	●
Rules of support (incl. co-financing, revenue generation, eligibility and simplified costs)	●	●
Technical assistance	●	● (YEI)
Management and control	●	
Financial management	●	
Missions, geographical coverage and resources		● (YEI)
Information and communication		● (YEI)
Implementing, transitional and final provisions	●	●

Data source: European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020: official texts and commentaries, European Commission, 2015.

The legal framework of the European Social Fund consists of:

- Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 laying down common provisions on the European Structural and Investment Funds (the Common Provisions Regulation, CPR), and
- Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 on the European Social Fund (the ESF Regulation).

The CPR sets out common principles, rules and standards for the operation of all five ESI Funds. The ESF together with the Cohesion Fund (CF)[4] and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)[5] are all subject to the same provisions on financing, programming, monitoring, evaluation and technical assistance.[6]

The common legal framework laid down in the CPR is aimed at enhancing synergies, complementarity and ensuring consistent implementation of all ESI Funds in the Member States. It helps the eligible countries to ensure that investments in employment, social inclusion, education and training financed by the ESF are coordinated with similar investments co-financed under other ESI Funds.

The ESF Regulation, in turn, specifies some aspects of the management of the fund, especially as far as the scope and type of co-financed investments are concerned. Furthermore, the ESF Regulation lays down rules for programming and implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). Table 1 presents elements of the legal framework of the ESF (and of the YEI) included in each of the two legal acts. Strategic indications and guidelines for the implementation of the ESF are provided in national Partnership Agreements and national or regional operational programmes.

Objectives and investment priorities

The ESF helps with getting people into jobs. It addresses employment and social challenges. According to Article 3 of the ESF Regulation, the ESF focuses on four thematic objectives listed in the CPR:

- promoting sustainable and quality employment, and supporting labour mobility;
- promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination;
- investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning;
- enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders, and fostering efficient public administration.

The ESF Regulation stipulates in Article 4 that at least 20 % of the total ESF resources in each Member State must be allocated to the thematic objective 'Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination'. Allocations for other thematic objectives are not quantified. The four thematic objectives are further translated into 19 investment priorities (Box 1).

Box 1 - ESF investment priorities (Article 3 ESF Regulation)

Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility:

– Access to employment for job-seekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility;

– Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee;

– Self-employment, entrepreneurship and business creation including innovative micro, small and medium-sized enterprises;

– Equality between men and women in all areas, including in access to employment, career progression, reconciliation of work and private life and promotion of equal pay for equal work;

– Adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change;

– Active and healthy ageing;

– Modernisation of labour market institutions, such as public and private employment services, and improving the matching of labour market needs, including through actions that enhance transnational labour mobility as well as through mobility schemes and better cooperation between institutions and relevant stakeholders.

Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination:

– Active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability;

– Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma;

– Combating all forms of discrimination and promoting equal opportunities;

– Enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, including health care and social services of general interest;

– Promoting social entrepreneurship and vocational integration in social enterprises and the social and solidarity economy in order to facilitate access to employment;

– Community-led local development strategies.

Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning:

– Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for reintegrating into education and training;

– Improving the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged groups;

– Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways, including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences;

– Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual-learning systems and apprenticeship schemes.

Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration:

– Investment in institutional capacity and in the efficiency of public administrations and public services at the national, regional and local levels with a view to reforms, better regulation and good governance (applicable only in Member States eligible for support from the Cohesion Fund, or in Member States that have one or more NUTS level 2 regions referred to in Article 90(2)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013).

– Capacity building for all stakeholders delivering education, lifelong learning, training and employment and social policies, including through sectorial and territorial pacts to mobilise for reform at the national, regional and local levels.

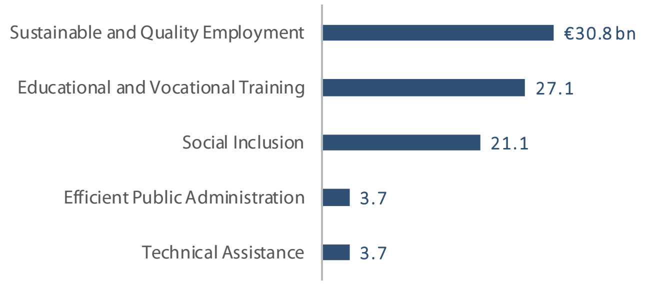
Member States shall concentrate on up to five of the investment priorities to each operational programme at least 80 % of the ESF allocation in more developed regions,[7] 70 % in transition regions[8] and 60 % in less developed regions[9] (Article 4 ESF). The definition of the three categories of regions is common for all the funds supporting the 'Investment for growth and jobs' goal (Article 90 CPR).

The ESF financial allocation

For 2014-2020, the ESF allocation is €86 405.02 million.[10] It corresponds to 19 % of the budget reserved for all ESI Funds and 7.95 % of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020.[11] With the YEI top-up allocation (€3 211.22 million), the total amounts to €89 616.24 million, which corresponds to 8.24 % of MFF.

As illustrated in Figure 2, Member States have decided to spend most of the ESF allocation on the thematic objective 'Sustainable and quality employment', followed by 'Educational and vocation training' and 'Social inclusion'.

Figure 2 – ESF contribution to thematic objectives, 2014-2020 (€ billion)



Data source: European Commission, ESIF Open Data Portal, 2017.

The CPR encourages an integrated approach, in order to achieve the objectives set out in the partnership agreements and operational programmes. Hence, with some restrictions, an operation 'may receive support from one or more ESI Funds or from one or more programmes and from other Union instruments,' (Article 65(11) CPR). This possibility, known as a multi-funding approach, allows the ESF contribution to be combined with other ESI Funds (mainly ERDF) in one operational programme under a limit of 10 % of Union support for a given priority in an operational programme (Article 98 CPR).[12]

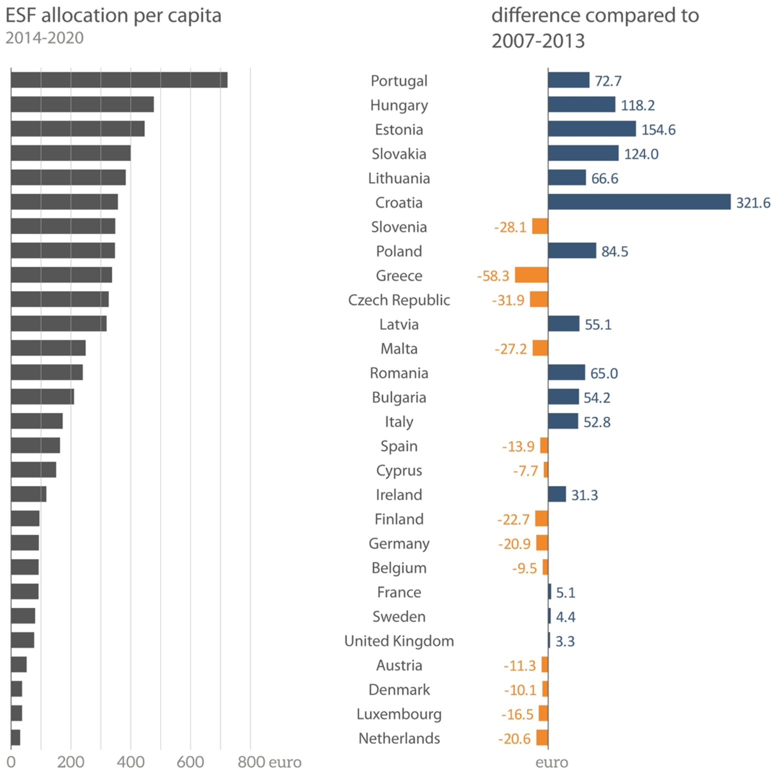
Multi-funding is widely used by all Member States. The European Commission provides an overview of the distribution of individual ESI Funds among thematic objectives on the Open Data Portal (EU Budget by Theme).

In the 2007-2013[13] programming period, the five biggest beneficiaries of EU funding under the ESF (in absolute terms) were: Poland (€10.0 billion), Germany (€9.4 billion), Spain (€7.9 billion), Italy (€7.0 billion) and Portugal (€6.9 billion). In the 2014-2020[14] programming period, the first five biggest beneficiaries are the same but their order according to the total amount of ESF funds received is different: Poland (€13.2 billion), Italy (€10.5 billion), Spain (€7.6 billion), Portugal (€7.5 billion), Germany (€7.5 billion).

Member States couple these amounts coming from the EU budget with national resources. Co-financing rates for the EU contribution vary between 50 % and 85 % (in exceptional cases 95 %), depending on the relative wealth[15] of the region concerned (Article 120 CPR).

Using another classification, the ESF allocation (the EU amount) per capita, the picture is completely different (Figure 3), with Portugal on top in both programming periods. The same graph also shows the difference between the allocations per capita for the past two programming periods for all EU countries. The biggest increase for Croatia is due to its accession to the EU being only in 2013.

Figure 3 - Comparison of the ESF allocation per capita in 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 (€)



Source: EPRS, based on data from cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu and http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat.

Funded measures

Concrete projects funded by the ESF may take very different forms. For example, the ESF helps former detainees get new skills in order to find a job more easily or to become self-employed (e.g. in the Netherlands, Spain, Germany), the Fund improves the employability of blind people in Slovenia and helps Roma youngsters in Spain to find work. The ESF also supports the social economy: cooperatives, non-profit organisations, charities and social enterprises (like in Poland). All these projects open pathways to work to different types of people.

In the area of education and training, the extent of ESF use goes from helping young mothers in the United Kingdom to engage in education, employment or training, to practical training for young construction workers in Luxembourg and training for staff in residences for dependant elderly people in France.

As the ESF helps in overcoming different kind of barriers, recently, the Fund has invested in various projects for refugees and asylum-seekers, for instance: 'Integration Halland' in Sweden, a Refugee employment pilot scheme in Germany and the 'Perspektive' project in Austria. These complement traditional ESF support to disadvantaged groups, such as Roma people ('Equal chances for a fulfilling life' project in Romania, help for marginalised Roma pupils to make the grade in Slovakia) and people with disabilities (training café in the Czech Republic to help mentally disabled people back into mainstream society and working life).

The legal framework (Title IV 38 CPR, Article 15 of the ESF Regulation) also allows support in the form of financial instruments. The projects 'loan on trust' in France and a similar project in Italy offer micro-loans in order to nurture the development of small businesses and help people go self-employed.

In the area of strengthening the efficiency of public administration, the ESF contributed to the creation of an on-line one-stop shop for companies in Slovenia, and to the introduction of a one-stop-shop service-delivery system in Lithuania which forms part of a wider reform of Lithuanian public services.

Many individual stories of people who benefited from ESF support are documented on the dedicated website of the Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG of the European Commission.

Assessment of the ESF

The start of the ESF implementation process in the 2014-2020 MFF was delayed by the late completion of negotiations of the agreement on the financial package. This had a domino effect on all subsequent steps. For instance, only by the end of 2016 were the majority of managing authorities for different operational programmes appointed. This delay explains why it is expected that ESF implementation will reach full cruising speed only in 2017.

Figures for the 2007-2013 ESF

According to the latest Commission reports, the total allocation for the 2007-2013 ESF was €115.6 billion, of which €76.8 billion came from the EU budget, €35.1 billion from national public contributions and €3.7 billion from private funds. More than 90 % of the budget was allocated to the three main ESF priorities: Investments in human capital and adaptability (46 %), Investments in access to employment (34 %) and Social inclusion (14 %).[16]

In the 2007-2013 programming period, the ESF was active in all 28 Member States, through a total of 117 operational programmes. These programmes responded to different objectives: 59 under the regional competitiveness and employment objective, 42 under the convergence objective, and 16 multi-objective programmes.[17]

By the end of 2014, at least 9.4 million European residents had found a job and 8.7 million gained a qualification or certificate with support from the ESF. Other positive results, such as increased skills levels, were reported by 13.7 million participants of the ESF-supported actions. The fund helped up to 30 million unemployed beneficiaries. There was an even spread in ESF participation between the inactive (36 %), the employed (33 %) and the unemployed (30 %). Female participation represented 51.4 % of the total of 98.7 million participations.[18]

Young people are one of the most important target groups across all ESF priorities. In the 2007-2013 ESF, they represented a total of 30.1 million participations (30.5 %). Despite this emphasis on youth in many operational programmes, relatively few Member States defined specific indicators focused on outputs and results for young people, which prevents the assessment of the 2007-2013 results of ESF interventions for young people specifically. This problem was corrected in the current programming period by introducing more nuanced output and results indicators.[19]

By December 2014, 79.3 % of the total allocated budget for 2007-2013 had been spent. While in some countries, the implementation rate is over 90 % (Austria, Latvia, Portugal), in others it remained low (Croatia – 42.5 %, Romania – 44.1 %, Slovakia – 64.9 %). It was noted that implementation of the 2007-2013 ESF generally took off in 2009.[20] Together with the ex-post evaluation report, the European Commission has published fact sheets on ESF implementation in individual Member States.[21]

Some researchers are critical about fulfilment of the main objective of the ESF which is to help districts suffering from unemployment. A study[22] on implementation of the ESF in the Czech Republic and Slovakia concluded that, in practice, the territories with the highest rate of unemployment do not benefit from the highest allocations, but that the support is higher for regions hosting national authorities.

First results of ESF implementation in 2014-2015

In December 2016, the first summary report[23] of the programmes' annual implementation reports was published by the European Commission. The report concerns the implementation of all the ESI Funds in 2014-2015. The ESF is the biggest but not the only EU fund investing in employment, social inclusion and education. This objective also benefits from the support of other ESI Funds (ERDF, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund – EMFF, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development – EAFRD) and from the YEI.

The summary report claims that by the end of 2015 ESF and YEI actions together had delivered 2.7 million participants including 1.6 million unemployed and 700 000 inactive people. Amongst those participants, 235 000 were in employment following an ESF or YEI operation, and 181 000 had gained a qualification upon leaving an ESF or YEI operation. Thanks to ESF or YEI support, 100 000 participants were in education or training. And 275 000 disadvantaged participants in ESF or YEI-funded operations were engaged in job searching, education or training, had gained a qualification or were in employment, including self-employment.

The summary report stresses the noticeable progress for the ESF in education and vocational training: by end-2015, 539 000 participants, of which at least 47 % had only a primary or lower secondary educational level, were registered and 83 000 participants had already gained a qualification thanks to ESF support.

By the end of 2015, the level of implementation of the total ESIF investments planned for 2014-2020, measured by the number of projects already selected for thematic objectives covered by the ESF, varied from 9.3 % to almost 14 % (Table 2).

Selected conclusions of the European Commission's evaluation

As the ESF contributes to a wide range of projects run by a huge variety of beneficiaries, including public administrations, workers' and employers' organisations, NGOs, charities and companies, it is of key importance to have coherent data for any assessment. Better reporting in terms of quality as well as quantity was an issue during the 2007-2013 programming period.

The ESF ex-post evaluation synthesis for 2007-2013 demands greater use of counterfactual approaches[24] in future programming periods, and claims that evaluations could be further harmonised across operational programmes and Member States in order to allow cross-country and thematic analysis. It is worth mentioning that the text recommends to start exploring data and evaluation needs for the 2014-2020 ex-post evaluation as early as possible.

Table 2 - Total cost of selected projects by thematic objective (€ million) and rate of project selection by end-2015

Thematic objective	Total planned investment	Total eligible cost of selected projects at end-2015	2015 Rate of project selection
Sustainable and quality employment	46 390.9	6 456.9	13.9 %
Social inclusion	53 551.9	4 966.8	9.3 %
Educational and vocational training	42 315.6	5 749.8	13.6 %
Efficient public administration	6 080.2	680.7	11.2 %

Data source: 2016 Summary Report of the programme annual implementation reports covering implementation in 2014-2015. COM(2016) 812 final of 20 December 2016.

The evaluation report stresses that the ESF's flexibility – which was enhanced in 2007-2013 – allowed to respond properly to the economic and financial crisis. The crisis drastically changed the socio-economic context in which the ESF programmes were implemented, compared to the period in which they had been programmed (between 2005 and 2007). The global recession led to a substantial increase in unemployment and social exclusion. At the same time, many Member States reduced public expenditure, which raised problems in terms of co-financing for the ESF. In other words, 'ESF implementation over the 2007-2013 programming period has been extremely challenging'.[25]

As regards the data issue, the performance orientation of the programme, programme indicators and evaluation planning have already been implemented for 2014-2020, together with other important aspects of the functioning of the ESF suggested by the recent ex-post evaluation[26] report (e.g. improved alignment between ESF and EU and national policy targets, intervention logic).

Under the current MFF, the managing authorities have the obligation to provide data concerning financial operations continuously through an electronic data exchange system. Thus, an Open Data Portal allows the level of implementation of the ESI Funds to be followed closely according to different criteria (per theme, per country or per fund) and offers an up-to-date EU overview of the ESIF.

A detailed list of reports on the implementation of the ESI Funds expected during the 2014-2020 programming period can be found in a Commission document published in December 2016.[27] In 2017, the Commission should publish its seventh cohesion report. This year, the Commission must also prepare a strategic report summarising the progress reports of the Member States and, by the end of 2017, submit it to the European Parliament and other institutions for debate (Article 53 CPR). Both documents will contain important data on the ESF.

Other EU programmes in the same field

One of the investment priorities of the ESF is to integrate young people into the labour market. It addresses the high unemployment rates of this category of citizens since the economic crisis.

The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) is the main EU financial instrument for fighting against youth unemployment and implementing Youth Guarantee schemes. The YEI is complementary to the ESF and national measures with similar aims. It was launched by the European Council in February 2013, initially for two years, to address the increasing rates of youth unemployment in many EU countries.

The funds for the YEI are composed of two parts: half the financing comes from a dedicated budget line under subheading 1 b) of the MFF. The other half comes from the ESF (Article 92(5) CPR). Member States are also required to provide funds as national co-financing to the ESF part. For the 2014-2020 financial period, the total YEI budget started with an initial budgetary allocation of €3.2 billion and the same amount was added from the ESF.

The characteristics of the YEI are set in the ESF Regulation (Chapter IV, Annex II). It supports 'sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee'.[28]

The regions that can apply for funding are:

- those where the youth unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 24 exceeded 25 % in 2012, and
- those where youth unemployment was more than 20 % in 2012, as long as the national youth unemployment rate was over 30 % the same year.

In May 2015, the ESF Regulation was amended in order to raise the initial pre-financing amount paid to operational programmes supported by the YEI from 1 % to 30 % of the envelope which was allocated to it for 2015. The aim of this 'frontloading' was to commit all the budget available in 2014 and 2015 rather than over the seven-year period of the MFF, and to provide Member States with enough money to allow for the quick roll-out of measures on the ground.[29]

To date, over 1.3 million young people have benefited from the YEI, exceeding initial estimates. Three years on from the launch of the Youth Guarantee, there are 1.4 million fewer young unemployed in the EU.[30] According to the first evaluations of the YEI, the initiative may continue.

Therefore, in the framework of the mid-term review of the MFF,[31] the Commission proposed to agree on a new allocation of €1 billion for 2017-2020 (with €1 billion of matching funding to be provided from the ESF), to reach a total amount of €8 billion.

The Member States must conduct at least two evaluations to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the YEI (Article 19 ESF Regulation). The first evaluation had to be completed by 31 December 2015, the second evaluation is due by 31 December 2018.

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) supports mostly infrastructure and development initiatives in EU regions, but it also aims to create and safeguard sustainable jobs. Many operational programmes combine ESF support with an ERDF contribution in the framework of the multi-funding approach mentioned in CPR, recital 91. The Open Data Portal shows, for example, that under the 'Social inclusion' thematic objective, the ESF covers 47.5 % of the budget and the ERDF share represents up to 26.7 %.

The Cohesion Fund (CF) supports the least-well-off EU regions to raise living standards. Also the CF can be combined with the ESF, but in more specific cases, such as integrated territorial investments (Article 36 CPR).

The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) supports workers threatened with unemployment by developments in the world economy. It contributes to projects with objectives such as help with looking for a job, careers advice, education, training and re-training, mentoring and coaching. The EGF can also help to create businesses.

The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) helps countries that are preparing to join the EU. It covers various domains and can also support projects in the area of employment and social inclusion policy, such as those aimed at enhancing education and skills or improving gender equality.

The Employment and Social Innovation Fund[32] (EaSI) supports projects in the field of social protection and social inclusion (Progress axis), and mobility of workers (Eures axis), but it also provides a window for helping social enterprises or vulnerable groups who want to set up or develop their business or micro-enterprise (Microfinance Facility/social entrepreneurship axis). This specific support corresponds to the ESF investment priority 'Self-employment, entrepreneurship and business creation including innovative micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises'. The main information portal about loans to help EU small and medium-sized enterprises is found on the Access to finance website.

The European Parliament's role

In its capacity of co-legislator, the European Parliament advocated a stronger role for the ESF, during the negotiation of the cohesion policy for 2014-2020. The negotiations were led by the EP Committee for Employment and Social Affairs, while the Committee for Regional Development was an associated committee. On their request, several ESF related items were added to the list of thematic objectives. Also following Parliament's suggestion, the limit for joint ERDF/ESF support (multi-funding approach) was raised from 5 % to 10 % (Article 98(2) CPR).

The total ESF share in the ESI Funds as well as the question whether the allocation for the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) and the YEI should be counted as part of the ESF or not were at the heart of the debate. As a result, the final calculation of the ESF share excludes support for the FEAD, but includes the Youth Employment Initiative.[33]

On 16 February, the Parliament adopted a resolution about the ESI Funds, which reacts to the Commission's summary document[34] on the negotiation of Partnership Agreements for 2014-2020, as required by Article 16(3) CPR.

In 2017, the European Parliament will participate in the debate on the mid-term review of cohesion policy, including the performance of the ESF. The European Parliament will also be informed by the Commission about implementation of the YEI, through the Commission's summary of the annual implementation reports and of the final report prepared by the Member States. The Commission will attend the European Parliament's annual debate on those reports.

Main references

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Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 on the European Social Fund (the ESF Regulation).

Ex-post evaluation of the 2007-2013 ESF Programmes. SWD(2016) 452 final of 12 December 2016.

ESF Ex-post Evaluation Synthesis 2007-2013. EU synthesis report (2016). Directorate-General for Employment Social Affairs and Inclusion, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016.

M. Sapała, The European Investment and Structural Funds, briefing, EPRS, European Parliament, July 2015.

Endnotes

1 The payment appropriations also cover the financing of actions carried out under the previous ESF (2007-2013).

2 Figures for the 2017 budget have been approved, and await final publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

3 Treaty establishing the European Economic Community. Rome, 1957, Article 123.

4 M. Sapała. The Cohesion Fund, briefing, EPRS, European Parliament, September 2016.

5 M. Sapała. The European Regional Development Fund, briefing, EPRS, European Parliament, October 2016.

6 The rules common to the three funds are specified in Part III of the CPR, which does not apply to the EMFF and EARDF.

7 More developed regions: GDP/head ≥ 90 % of EU-27 average.

8 Transition regions: GDP/head between 75 % and 90 % of EU-27 average.

9 Less developed regions: GDP/head < 75 % of EU-27 average.

10 https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/dataset/ESIF-EU-Budget-by-Fund/a4sd-6su3.

11 With national contributions of €38 523.56 million, €124 928 million can be invested in programmes under the ESF, across the entire European Union.

12 The multi-fund approach was much more limited in 2007-2013. See Article 34 of Regulation 1083/2006.

13 ESF budget by country: 2007-2013, http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=574&langId=en (consulted 23/1/2017).

14 ESF budget by country: 2014-2020, http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=443&langId=en (consulted 23/1/2017).

15 See footnotes 7-9.

16 ESF Ex-post Evaluation Synthesis 2007-2013. EU synthesis report – Executive summary. DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, December 2016. Accessible from the website of DG EMPL. NB: The implementation of the ESF programmes for the programming period 2007-2013 was not completed at the time of the evaluation, so the data presented are not final.

17 European cohesion policy for 2007-13 aimed at three objectives: Convergence, Regional Competitiveness and Employment and Territorial Cooperation. See General provisions on ERDF - ESF - Cohesion Fund (2007-2013).

18 See footnote 16.

19 For common output and result indicators for ESF investments see Annex I of the ESF Regulation.

20 ESF Ex-post Evaluation Synthesis 2007-2013. EU synthesis report – Final version. DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, October 2016. Accessible from the website of DG EMPL.

21 Político criticised the figures presented by the Commission, arguing that they are exaggerated as in some cases, the ESF would support more inhabitants than formally possible. The European Commission replied that the data at their disposal do not allow to distinguish multiple participations of individuals.

22 Janíček, P., Vaigel, R.: 'European Social Fund investments in the Czech Republic and Slovakia', *International Journal of Public Administration, Management and Economic Development*, Vol. 1, No 1, Zlín, 2006, pp. 19-28.

23 European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020. 2016 Summary Report of the programme annual implementation reports covering implementation in 2014-2015. COM(2016) 812 final of 20 December 2016. See section 3.3, p. 12.

24 Design and Commissioning of Counterfactual Impact Evaluations – Practical Guidance for ESF Managing Authorities. European Commission, 2013.

25 Final synthesis report: Main ESF achievements, 2007-2013, ESF Expert Evaluation Network, p. 6.

26 *Ex-post* evaluation of the 2007-2013 ESF Programmes. SWD(2016) 452 final of 12 December 2016. Accessible from the website of DG EMPL (consulted 27/1/2017).

27 2016 Synthesis of Evaluation Results and Plans under the ESIF Programmes 2014-2020. SWD(2016) 447 final of 20 December 2016.

28 The ESF Regulation, Article 3(1)(a)(ii).

29 Accelerated pre-financing for the Youth Employment Initiative: Questions and Answers. Fact sheet of the European Commission, 2 May 2015. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-5020_en.htm (consulted 24/1/2017).

30 The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on. COM(2016) 646 final of 4 October 2016, p. 2.

31 A. D'Alfonso. 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF): Mid-term revision, briefing, EPRS, European Parliament, December 2016.

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