

European Social Fund Plus (2021-2027)

The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) is an important element of the 'cohesion, resilience and values' heading of the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework (MFF). ESF+ mainly contributes to the policy cluster investing in people, citizens and values. The European Parliament is expected to vote at second reading during the June I plenary session on the agreed text resulting from interinstitutional negotiations on the ESF+ regulation.

Background

The first provisions for the establishment of the European Social Fund (ESF) were made under the [Treaty of Rome](#) to improve employment opportunities for workers in the common market, thereby contributing to raising standards of living and of health, and helping increase labour mobility and economic, social and territorial cohesion. Its tasks and operational rules have since been [periodically revised](#), responding to the evolving economic and employment situation in the Member States, as well as to the EU political priorities. As one of the five component programmes of the [European structural and investment funds](#), its common principles, rules and standards for implementation are established in the Common Provisions Regulation. The ESF co-finances national or regional operational programmes proposed by the Member States and approved by European Commission decisions.

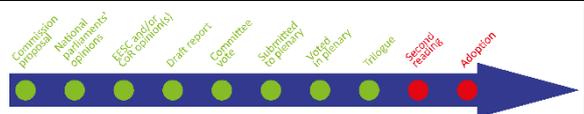
European Commission proposal

In May 2018, the Commission [proposed](#) to merge several existing funds (Youth Employment Initiative, Fund for the European Aid for the Most Deprived, Employment and Social Innovation programme and the Health programme) with ESF, to strengthen synergies and to enable more integrated and targeted support in response to social and labour market challenges. It proposed to allocate €89.7 billion (in 2018 prices) from the EU budget to the ESF+, close to 7 % less than between 2007-2014. It should primarily contribute to implementing the 20 principles of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) and the social and employment priorities of the [European Semester](#). It should focus its investments in three main areas (employment, education and social inclusion) under 11 thematic objectives. The Commission also adopted a [proposal](#) for a common provisions regulation that should guide the ESF+ strand under shared management. In the context of the coronavirus crisis, the Commission announced a [separate Health programme](#) within the new MFF. In the May 2020 [revised MFF proposal](#) ESF+ would have a total budget of €86.3 billion (in 2018 prices).

European Parliament position

Parliament adopted its [first-reading position](#) on 4 April 2019. It called for an increase in the ESF+ budget, more resources for youth employability and to ensure equal opportunities for children at risk of poverty or social exclusion and for an increase of Member States' ESF+ resources to specific objectives in the field of social inclusion, and at least 3 % to the specific objective of social inclusion of the most deprived. The [final agreement](#) on the MFF allocated a budget of €88 billion (in 2018 prices) for the ESF+, which is [almost 8 % lower](#) than in the previous programming period. The [provisional agreement](#) on ESF+ was endorsed in the EMPL meeting of 4 March 2021. The agreed text addresses previous disagreements between the EU institutions about child poverty and social inclusion, as well as direct support for social innovation. The Council adopted its [first-reading position](#) on 28 May 2021. Parliament now needs to formally adopt the text at second reading, with the vote scheduled during the June I plenary session, on the basis of a recommendation from Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

Recommendation for second reading: [2018/0206\(COD\)](#);
Committee responsible: EMPL; Rapporteur: David Casa (EPP, Malta).



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Author: Nora Milotay, Members' Research Service
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ep@ep.europa.eu (contact) <http://www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu> (intranet) <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank> (internet) <http://epthinktank.eu> (blog)

