



2024/2077(INI)

30.01.2025

OPINION

of the Committee on Regional Development

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on the European Social Fund Plus post-2027
(2024/2077(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Kathleen Funchion

PA_NonLeg

AMENDMENT

The Committee on Regional Development calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions:

Amendment 1

Motion for a resolution

Citation 1 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

- ***having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy¹ (Common Provisions Regulation),***

¹ OJ L 231, 30/06/2021, p. 159, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1060/oj>.

Amendment 2

Motion for a resolution

Citation 2 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

- ***having regard to Regulation (EU) 2024/3236 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 December 2024 amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1057 and (EU) 2021/1058 as regards Regional Emergency Support to Reconstruction (RESTORE)¹,***

¹ OJ L, 2024/3236, 23.12.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/3236/oj>.

Amendment 3

Motion for a resolution Citation 14 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

- *having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2021 on reversing demographic trends in EU regions using cohesion policy instruments¹,*

¹ OJ C 15, 12.1.2022, p. 125.

Amendment 4

Motion for a resolution Citation 14 b (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

- *having regard to its resolution of 25 March 2021 on cohesion policy and regional environment strategies in the fight against climate change¹,*

¹ OJ C 494, 08/12/2021, p. 26.

Amendment 5

Motion for a resolution Citation 19 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

- *having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular Articles 46(d), 149, 153(2)(a), 164, 174, 175 and 349 thereof,*

Amendment 6

Motion for a resolution

Recital A

Motion for a resolution

A. whereas the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) supports, complements and adds value to the policies of the Member States ***in order to ensure*** equal opportunities, ***equal*** access to the labour market, fair and high-quality working conditions, social protection and inclusion;

Amendment

A. whereas the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), ***a key pillar of cohesion policy***, supports, complements and adds value to the policies of the Member States ***aimed at achieving high employment levels, ensuring*** equal opportunities ***and*** access to the labour market, ***as well as*** fair and high-quality working conditions, social ***cohesion***, protection and inclusion, ***and helps in developing a skilled and resilient workforce across all regions that is prepared for the green and digital transition***;

Amendment 7

Motion for a resolution

Recital A a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Aa. whereas housing and energy prices are rising, showing the need for social and affordable housing and accelerated renovation projects to fight energy poverty;

Amendment 8

Motion for a resolution

Recital B

Motion for a resolution

B. whereas the ESF+ is the ***only*** EU fund ***primarily*** focused on social policies, ***and is therefore unique in itself and is strongly effective in achieving*** social inclusion, together with the cohesion

Amendment

B. whereas the ESF+ is the ***main*** EU fund focused on social policies ***that reinforces national policies in employment, education, social inclusion, convergence, fairness and the***

policy;

harmonious and sustainable development of all the EU regions; whereas, together with the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and other cohesion instruments, the ESF+ contributes to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights;

Amendment 9

Motion for a resolution Recital B a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Ba. whereas local communities are the direct beneficiaries of the ESF+; whereas it is therefore important that regional and local authorities are directly involved in shaping this instrument;

Amendment 10

Motion for a resolution Recital B b (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Bb. whereas the situation and specific needs of each region in the EU are different; whereas flexibility in adjusting the goals of the fund is therefore indispensable;

Amendment 11

Motion for a resolution Recital B c (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Bc. whereas particular attention must be paid to rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural

or demographic handicaps, such as the outermost regions, the northern sparsely populated regions, islands, mountainous areas and cross-border regions;

Amendment 12

Motion for a resolution Recital B d (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Bd. *whereas the implementation of funds under the cohesion policy framework should comply with the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the rule of law, and the European code of conduct on partnership;*

Amendment 13

Motion for a resolution Recital C

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

C. whereas different vulnerable groups have different needs, *such as women in poverty, labour migrants, children, people with disabilities and elderly people*; whereas the digital and green transition *is much needed but also* brings challenges for *all people and all* workers, *and* whereas to succeed in this endeavour, the EU must ensure a just transition that does not lose sight of workers and vulnerable people;

C. whereas different vulnerable *and marginalised social and geographic* groups have different needs; whereas the digital and green transition brings challenges *to our societies, especially* for workers; whereas, to succeed in this endeavour, the EU must ensure a just transition *for all* that does not lose sight of workers and vulnerable people *and which re-empowers as many people as possible*;

Amendment 14

Motion for a resolution Recital C a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Ca. ***whereas 22 % of the EU population are at risk of poverty or social exclusion and whereas demographic changes such as ageing populations, migration and the depopulation of certain areas all have impacts that need to be taken into account in terms of labour markets and national policies;***

Amendment 15

Motion for a resolution Recital D

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

D. whereas the availability and affordability of decent housing is decreasing because of ***over-liberalisation of the market***; whereas the EU ***will have*** its first ever Commissioner for tackling the housing crises, and the first ever European affordable housing plan, expected in 2025;

D. whereas the availability and affordability of decent housing ***and associated services*** is decreasing because of ***various factors including public policies that cause or exacerbate a lack of supply***; whereas the EU ***has appointed*** its first ever Commissioner for tackling the housing crises, and ***will launch*** the first ever European affordable housing plan, expected in 2025;

Amendment 16

Motion for a resolution Recital D a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Da. ***whereas addressing the housing crises requires measures that take into account the needs of Europe's most affected people;***

Amendment 17

Motion for a resolution
Recital E a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Ea. whereas every year, resources from the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund are invested in projects linked to the provision of housing infrastructure and services, and whereas investments linked to affordable and sustainable housing are expected to be one of the upcoming strategic priorities of the EU Cohesion Fund under the next multiannual financial framework;

Amendment 18

Motion for a resolution
Recital E b (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Eb. whereas the EU Social Climate Fund (SCF) for the period 2026-2032 aims to provide targeted support to vulnerable households, micro-enterprises and transport users impacted by rising costs associated with the transition to a low-carbon economy;

Amendment 19

Motion for a resolution
Recital E c (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Ec. whereas the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the European economy is expected to serve as a fundamental driver of enhanced productivity and economic growth;

Amendment 20

Motion for a resolution
Recital E d (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Ed. whereas the principle of partnership is a key feature of the implementation of the ESF+, building on the multi-level governance approach and ensuring the complete involvement of regional, local, urban and other public authorities, civil society, economic and social partners and, where appropriate, research organisations and universities;

Amendment 21

Motion for a resolution
Recital E f (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Ef. whereas synergies in project implementation should be promoted at the national, regional and local levels;

Amendment 22

Motion for a resolution
Recital E g (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Eg. whereas the war in Ukraine has given rise to a humanitarian and economic crisis in the region, directly affecting the stability and social security of the Member States bordering Ukraine; whereas the ESF+ should provide additional support to these countries by funding initiatives to help retrain people who have lost their jobs because of the conflict, as well as measures to ease the pressure on local public services such as healthcare and education, all aimed at helping to maintain social and economic

stability in the region;

Amendment 23

Motion for a resolution

Recital E h (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Eh. whereas, as outlined in the Draghi report, the EU is facing an economic slowdown driven by declining productivity growth, underscoring the urgent need for a fundamentally new approach to skills development that guarantees all workers the right to education and retraining, thereby enabling them to transition into new roles as their companies integrate advanced technologies or to secure quality employment in emerging sectors;

Amendment 24

Motion for a resolution

Recital E i (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Ei. whereas the ESF+ serves as a key financial instrument supporting projects in the areas of employment, education, social inclusion and poverty reduction, and is closely aligned with the recommendations and priorities outlined within the framework of the European Semester; whereas concerns persist regarding the European Semester's adherence to the partnership principle, which mandates the active participation of local and regional authorities in the formulation and implementation of policies;

Amendment 25

Motion for a resolution Recital E j (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

Ej. whereas the ESF+ plays a key role in supporting the post-pandemic recovery by promoting social inclusion, employment and fair working conditions;

Amendment 26

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 1

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

1. Insists that the ESF+ must continue to be ***the*** key ***and primary*** instrument for supporting the Member States, people and ***regions in*** strengthening the social ***dimension*** of the Union;

1. Insists that the ESF+ must continue to be ***a*** key instrument for supporting the Member States, ***all regions, including the outermost and northernmost regions, and local authorities in investing in*** people and strengthening the social ***cohesion*** of the Union ***while reducing territorial disparities***;

Amendment 27

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 1 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

1a. Recalls the unique position of Northern Ireland and calls for an open attitude towards the inclusion of Northern Irish residents and their ability to access the ESF+, especially for projects of a cross-border nature;

Amendment 28

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 1 b (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

1b. Reiterates that EU funding programmes such as the ESF+ should stand first and foremost as positive examples of EU solidarity in their own right and should not be based on macro-economic conditionality;

Amendment 29

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 2

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

2. Insists that the objectives of the ESF+ should be to achieve high employment levels with adequate wages, decent working conditions, healthy working environments and social security coverage, in order to develop a skilled, competitive and resilient workforce, ready for the twin transition and the **future world of work**, and to build fair social protections and inclusive and cohesive societies, with the aims of eradicating poverty and delivering on the principles and the headline targets set out in the EPSR;

2. Insists that the objectives of the ESF+ should be to achieve high employment levels with adequate wages, decent working conditions, **good work-life balance**, healthy working environments and social security coverage, in order to develop a skilled, competitive and resilient workforce, ready for the twin transition and the **underlying industrial transformation**, and to build fair social protections and inclusive and cohesive societies, with the aims of eradicating poverty and delivering on the principles and the headline targets set out in the EPSR; **stresses the crucial role that investments in high-quality public services play in building social resilience and coping with economic, health and social crises;**

Amendment 30

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 3

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

3. Calls for a strong, reinforced, stand-

3. Calls for a strong, reinforced, stand-

alone ESF+ with significantly increased **public** support **for existing instruments aimed at** providing for the poorest in our societies; insists, therefore, on **doubling** the funding for the ESF+ post-2027;

alone ESF+ with significantly increased support **in the next multiannual financial framework post-2027, as a key fund within cohesion policy for investing in social policies while improving economic, social and territorial cohesion**, providing for the poorest **and vulnerable groups** in our societies **and complementing national employment and social policies, as well as enhancing the EU's competitiveness**; insists, therefore, on **increasing** the funding for the ESF+ post-2027, **alongside a commensurate increase in regional funds; calls, furthermore, for enhanced access to EU funding for cities, regions and urban authorities**;

Amendment 31

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 3 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

3a. Stresses the importance of ensuring that the European Semester fully adheres to the partnership principle by strengthening national consultation mechanisms that actively involve local and regional governments prior to the validation of country-specific recommendations; underlines that such measures are essential to guarantee a transparent and equitable decision-making process that adequately reflects the diverse social needs and priorities across all regions, thereby upholding the principles of subsidiarity and multi-level governance and ensuring that policies and recommendations address the real needs of European regions;

Amendment 32

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 4

Motion for a resolution

4. Expresses strong concerns over attempts to split or merge the existing ESF+ with other funds, ***since that would create serious risks for the implementation of its objectives and those of the EPSR and its action plan, and the reaching of the ESPR's headline targets; warns that unifying or simplifying funds may not improve their effectiveness;***

Amendment

4. Expresses strong concerns over attempts to split or merge the existing ESF+ with other funds; ***expresses its commitment to further advancing, developing and modernising the ESF+ to make it fit for the future, more resilient and even more effective through further simplification, both for managing authorities and beneficiaries, and to reducing bureaucracy in the design, implementation and audit processes related to the partnership principles and multilevel governance;***

Amendment 33

**Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 4 a (new)**

Motion for a resolution

4a. Highlights the concern that a potential transformation of cohesion policy, including the ESF+, following the model of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), raises significant worries among regional and local authorities; emphasises that local and regional authorities have not been sufficiently involved in, and in some cases have been entirely excluded from, the process of implementing the RRF; stresses that the RRF fails to respect the principles of multi-level governance and partnership, which are fundamental to the ESF+ and cohesion policy, thereby calling into question the very principle of economic, social and territorial cohesion enshrined in the Treaties;

Amendment

Amendment 34

**Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 4 b (new)**

4b. *Expresses its opposition to the adoption of a performance-based approach in the preparation of the next ESF+, emphasising that investments with a social dimension cannot be fully or adequately assessed solely through performance indicators, quantified objectives or short-term evaluation frameworks; stresses that, as underscored in European Court of Auditors Special Report 26/2023, the indicators designed within the framework of the RRF, while instrumental in monitoring the progress of implementation, are inadequate for evaluating the actual performance and long-term impact of the programme;*

Amendment 35

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 5

Motion for a resolution

5. Believes that a different ESF+ governance would lead to the loss of priority given to social aspects, including employment and social inclusion projects, and to the funding not reaching local levels and those most in need, while increasing the risk of reallocation of funds for other purposes;

Amendment

5. Believes that a different ESF+ governance would lead to the loss of priority given to social aspects, including employment and social inclusion projects, ***as well as access to services in rural areas,*** and to the funding not reaching local levels and those most in need, while increasing the risk of reallocation of funds for other purposes;

Amendment 36

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 6

Motion for a resolution

6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the participation

Amendment

6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the participation

of social partners, civil society organisations (CSOs) and representatives of the target groups in all design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of the ESF+, to allocate adequate funding for this purpose and to prevent the exclusion of smaller actors;

of **local and regional authorities**, social partners, civil society organisations (CSOs), and representatives of the target groups in all design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of the ESF+, to allocate adequate funding for this purpose and to prevent the exclusion of smaller actors; ***urges the Commission to ensure that regional and local authorities are duly involved in decision-making and the implementation of strategies and projects, in line with the principles of subsidiarity and multi-level governance, in order to create a tailored strategy that serves the purpose of cohesion and leaves no one behind;***

Amendment 37

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 7

Motion for a resolution

7. Notes that the current ESF+ programme was adopted before the emergence of crises that have caused high inflation and increased costs of living, and therefore require higher public and social investment such that the existing ESF+ cannot meet current needs; calls on the Commission to ensure that a comprehensive, stable and large-scale needs- and rights-based budget is guaranteed for the ESF+ in the next multiannual financial framework;

Amendment

7. Notes that the current ESF+ programme was adopted before the emergence of crises that have caused high inflation and increased costs of living, and therefore require higher public and social investment such that the existing ESF+ cannot meet current needs; calls on the Commission to ensure that a comprehensive, stable and large-scale needs- and rights-based budget, ***targeted to address the needs and ongoing social issues in the regions, including the outermost regions***, is guaranteed for the ESF+ in the next multiannual financial framework;

Amendment 38

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 8

Motion for a resolution

8. Underlines that the ESF+ post-2027 should invest in tackling enduring social challenges and stay close to the general and specific objectives set out in the current ESF+; emphasises the importance of the fund's principles of shared management, clear objectives and **thematic concentrations**, and that **most of the fund should be spent as close as possible to those using the fund**;

Amendment

8. Underlines that the ESF+ post-2027 should **continue to** invest in tackling enduring social **and demographic challenges, supporting the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and mitigating the socio-economic impact of the industrial transformation**, and stay close to the general and specific objectives set out in the current ESF+; emphasises the importance of **preserving** the fund's principles of shared management **and partnership with regional and local authorities**, clear objectives and **territorial dimension, and place-based approach**, and that **the allocation of funds should take into account the nomenclature of territorial units for statistics and final recipients**;

Amendment 39

**Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 9**

Motion for a resolution

9. Stresses that the ESF+ should not be **used** to respond to emergencies or crises; insists that a **social rescue** facility capable of reacting to social emergencies and **crisis situations** should supplement the ESF+; calls on the Commission to build on the success of the temporary EU instrument launched in 2020, entitled 'Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE)', in fighting temporary unemployment, and to put forward an EU unemployment reinsurance scheme without further delay;

Amendment

9. Stresses that the ESF+ should **focus on long-term strategic investments in European regions and should** not be **constantly revised** to respond to emergencies or crises; insists that a facility capable of reacting to **the social impact of** emergencies and **natural disasters** should supplement the ESF+ **and other funds in order to preserve the long-term objectives of cohesion policy; stresses the need for a reinforced financial framework that allows for the redistribution of funds to respond quickly to emerging social and climate crises in a way that does not compromise the basic objectives of the fund but that makes it possible to adapt in a more efficient way to the current needs of Member States and affected communities**; calls on the Commission to

build on the success of the temporary EU instrument launched in 2020, entitled ‘Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE)’, in fighting temporary unemployment, and to put forward an EU unemployment reinsurance scheme without further delay; **welcomes the Commission’s RESTORE proposal to aid the areas most affected by devastating natural disasters and asks for faster procedures in the event of natural disasters;**

Amendment 40

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 9 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

9a. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to enhance synergies between measures under the ESF+ and the SCF in order to ensure a cohesive and effective approach to addressing inequalities and promoting access to sustainable energy solutions;

Amendment 41

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 9 b (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

9b. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen synergies between the ESF+ and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), promoting the development and implementation of multi-funded programmes aimed at addressing critical challenges in rural areas, including combating rural depopulation, reducing youth unemployment, advancing digital inclusion, fostering rural

entrepreneurship and innovation and improving the accessibility of transport services and education; highlights, in this regard, the specific role of women, in particular in remote areas, as they play a major role in civil society and sustainable economic growth and at the same time face difficulties in accessing the labour market, as well as equal pay and public services such as healthcare, mental health services and childcare; emphasises the role of young women, in particular in rural areas, and their tendency to occupy precarious roles in rural societies;

Amendment 42

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 10

Motion for a resolution

10. Underlines that horizontal principles, such as gender equality, anti-discrimination, and freedom of movement, should be integral to the ESF+; stresses the importance of an intersectional approach throughout the entire development and implementation of the fund;

Amendment

10. Underlines that horizontal principles, such as gender equality, anti-discrimination, *the promotion of a fair society with equal opportunities for all*, and freedom of movement, should be integral to the ESF+; stresses the importance of an intersectional approach throughout the entire development and implementation of the fund;

Amendment 43

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 27 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

27a. Highlights the importance of upholding the partnership principle in all programming, implementation and monitoring of EU cohesion policy and of establishing strong cooperation between regional and local authorities, NGOs and stakeholders, including environmental NGOs; stresses that this process should also take into account the gender

perspective;

Amendment 44

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 11

Motion for a resolution

11. Insists that the ESF+ should target the most disadvantaged people in our societies, regardless of their sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, or racial or ethnic origin – ***in particular*** marginalised communities such as ***Roma people***, people with disabilities or chronic diseases, homeless people, children and elderly people; underlines that the ESF+ must be inclusive, with special attention given to all kinds of ***families, including single-parent families, families with more than two parents and rainbow*** families;

Amendment

11. Insists that the ESF+ should target the most disadvantaged people in our societies regardless of their sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief or racial or ethnic origin ***and be sensitive to the needs of households and different social groups, especially people at risk of social, energy, transport and economic poverty and victims of domestic and gender-based violence*** and marginalised communities such as ***young people, Roma and Traveller communities***, people with ***physical and intellectual*** disabilities or chronic diseases, homeless people, children and elderly people ***and LGBTIQ+ community***; underlines that the ESF+ must be inclusive, with special attention given to all kinds of ***vulnerable*** families;

Amendment 45

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 11 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

11a. Acknowledges the severe impact of the war in Ukraine on employment and social protection in the EU's eastern border regions, including economic instability, supply chain disruptions, business closures, job losses and reduced social cohesion; highlights the challenges posed by the influx of refugees fleeing the conflict for social services and public services such as healthcare and

education;

Amendment 46

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 12

Motion for a resolution

12. Calls on the Commission, in the ***light of current challenges***, to include ***in the specific objectives of the ESF+ the promotion of the just transition***, the socio-economic integration of migrants, including labour migrants, ***the social inclusion of women who are victims of gender-based violence and the integration of older people***;

Amendment

12. Calls on the Commission to include in the ESF+ ***support for*** the socio-economic integration of ***marginalised people and*** migrants, including labour migrants, ***through appropriate measures to encourage*** the integration of ***such groups into the labour market through professional upskilling and reskilling focussed on long-term adaptation to the needs of the local labour market and by supporting specific programmes and models to help communities with limited resources deal with the integration of a large number of new arrivals***;

Amendment 47

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 13

Motion for a resolution

13. Stresses that reaching the EPSR's targets on poverty becomes challenging, unless specific support is dedicated to alleviating the pressure on social protection systems and mitigating the social impact of crises; insists on dedicating support to ensure decent living conditions for all, with access to high-quality essential services; calls for the EU anti-poverty strategy, outlined in Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's political guidelines for the 2024-2029 term, to be implemented via the ESF+, with its binding poverty-reduction targets, national living wage indices and reference budgets used as benchmarks,

Amendment

13. Stresses that reaching the EPSR's targets on poverty becomes challenging, unless specific support is dedicated to alleviating the pressure on social protection systems and mitigating the social impact of crises; insists on dedicating support to ensure decent living conditions for all, ***no matter where they live***, with access to high-quality essential services; calls for the EU anti-poverty strategy, outlined in Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's political guidelines for the 2024-2029 term, to be implemented via the ESF+, with its binding poverty-reduction targets, national living wage indices and

applying a multidimensional approach;

reference budgets used as benchmarks, applying a multidimensional approach; ***underlines the important role an adequately financed ESF+ would play in implementing this strategy;***

Amendment 48

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 14

Motion for a resolution

14. Stresses that addressing child poverty requires appropriately funded, comprehensive and integrated measures, together with the implementation of the European Child Guarantee at national level, ***and*** insists that it ***constitute*** a central pillar of the EU anti-poverty strategy; repeats its previous demands for the ESF+ post-2027 to include a dedicated budget of at least EUR 20 billion for the European Child Guarantee; insists that all the Member States should allocate at least 5 % of their ESF+ resources to the European Child Guarantee ***and at least 10 %*** for those Member States ***with*** a higher ***portion*** of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion;

Amendment

14. Stresses that addressing child poverty requires appropriately funded, comprehensive and integrated measures, together with the implementation of the European Child Guarantee at national level, ***in order to address child poverty with appropriate and integrated funding;*** insists that it ***constitutes*** a central pillar of the EU anti-poverty strategy; repeats its previous demands for the ESF+ post-2027 to include a dedicated budget of at least EUR 20 billion for the European Child Guarantee; insists that all the Member States should allocate at least 5 % of their ESF+ resources to the European Child Guarantee, ***with a higher percentage of up to 10 %*** for those Member States ***that request it and have*** a higher ***number*** of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion; ***in addition, proposes that an ESF+ contribution to the EU school fruit, vegetable and milk scheme be considered to complement existing funding, which is currently not adequate to extend the scheme to all children and young people, with a view to reducing disparities between different socio-economic backgrounds and contributing to social inclusion, giving everyone the chance to benefit from a balanced diet;***

Amendment 49

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 15

Motion for a resolution

15. Urges the Commission to raise the earmarking for social inclusion beyond the current 25 % and the earmarking for food aid and basic material assistance for the most deprived persons to 5 %, in response to rising living and food costs;

Amendment 50

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 15 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

15. Urges the Commission to raise the earmarking for social inclusion beyond the current 25 % and the earmarking for food aid and basic material assistance for the most deprived persons to 5 %, in response to rising living and food costs;

Amendment

15. Urges the Commission to raise the earmarking for social inclusion beyond the current 25 % and the earmarking for food aid and basic material assistance for the most deprived persons to 5 %, in response to rising living and food costs, ***based on regional needs***;

Amendment 51

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 16

Motion for a resolution

16. Shares the ambition to prioritise the tackling of the housing crises, ***and*** insists that the ESF+ post-2027 should enhance timely and equal access to affordable, decent, sustainable and high-quality services promoting access to housing; believes that all the Member States must invest at least 5 % of their ESF+ resources

Amendment

16. Shares the ambition to prioritise the tackling of the housing crises ***in urban and rural areas and is committed to working towards mitigating them***; insists that the ESF+ post-2027 should enhance timely and equal access to affordable, decent, sustainable and high-quality services promoting access to housing, ***including in***

into tackling homelessness;

rural areas where the shortage of housing is an additional difficulty to the demographic challenge; believes that all the Member States must invest at least 5 % of their ESF+ resources *in initiatives aimed specifically at supporting the people most affected by housing insecurity;*

Amendment 52

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 16 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

16a. *Suggests there could be a role for the ESF+ in tackling the housing crises through the funding of apprenticeship schemes at local level, in order to help local authorities rebuild house building capacity;*

Amendment 53

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 17

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

17. Emphasises the need to ensure sufficient financing of the ESF+ post-2027 for high-quality **and public** education for all, skills development, upskilling, reskilling and lifelong learning, and for the addressing of skills shortages, ensuring that individuals can successfully navigate labour market transitions;

17. Emphasises the need to ensure sufficient financing of the ESF+ post-2027 for **access to** high-quality education for all, skills development, upskilling, reskilling, **training** and lifelong learning, **particularly in regions with skills mismatches**, and for the addressing of skills shortages **and long-term unemployment**, ensuring that individuals can successfully navigate labour market transitions; **identifies the particular need to improve connectivity and boost digital skills in rural areas, where there is an ageing population;**

Amendment 54

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 17 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

17a. Holds that the ESF+ should offer financial support and vocational training for workers affected by the green and digital transition, ensuring that no one is left behind in this process and that more vulnerable regions are able to benefit from resources for economic adjustment and reorientation;

Amendment 55

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 18

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

18. Calls for a strengthening of efforts to support the implementation of the Youth Guarantee with an increased earmarking for all Member States that dedicate at least 15 % of their ESF+ resources; repeats in this context its call on the Member States to ban unpaid traineeships;

18. Calls for a strengthening of efforts to support the implementation of the Youth Guarantee with an increased earmarking for all Member States that dedicate at least 15 % of their ESF+ resources ***to supporting the targeted actions and structural reforms needed to support quality youth employment, vocational education and training, in particular traineeships and apprenticeships, but also the transition from school to work, pathways for reintegration into education or training and second chance education;*** repeats in this context its call on the Member States to ban ***exploitative practices, including*** unpaid traineeships, ***and to ensure the social security rights and contributions of trainees; emphasises the need for monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the long-term impact and effectiveness of these measures;***

Amendment 56

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 19

Motion for a resolution

19. Underlines the importance of the ESF+ in focusing on different groups with different needs; stresses, therefore, the importance of allocating support to projects on the socio-economic position of migrants, including labour migrants, the social inclusion of people with disabilities, the ageing population in society, women and children, **and** female-headed households; insists that the ESF+ post-2027 incorporate other aspects of social inclusion, such as housing, health **and** family circumstances and the support of community-based services;

Amendment

19. Underlines the importance of the ESF+ in focusing on different groups **and regions** with different needs; **underlines that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution and that ways to address those needs may vary from region to region**; stresses, therefore, the importance of allocating support to projects on the socio-economic position of migrants, including labour migrants, the social inclusion of people with disabilities, the ageing population in society, women and children, female-headed **and single-parent** households **and large families**; insists that the ESF+ post-2027 incorporate other aspects of social inclusion, such as housing, health, **mental health, and** family circumstances and the support of community-based services;

Amendment 57

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 19 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

19a. Emphasises the importance of addressing the needs of the EU’s ageing population; calls for the ESF+ to allocate dedicated funding to support quality elder care services;

Amendment 58

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 19 b (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

19b. Emphasises that ‘middle-income trap’ regions need greater investment in education and training; urges the

Commission to define these regions and to allocate higher amounts to them under the ESF+ in the next programming period;

Amendment 59

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 19 c (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

19c. Calls on the Commission to strengthen ESF+ initiatives aimed at fostering access to education and lifelong learning opportunities, with the objective of ensuring that the advantages of AI adoption are equitably distributed and that potential adverse effects on social cohesion and inclusion are effectively mitigated;

Amendment 60

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 20

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

20. Stresses that the Employment and Social Innovation strand of the ESF+ provides support regarding the precarious situation of mobile workers and secures funding for trade union-related counselling; ***calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure permanent funding for national and transnational trade union counselling services for such workers;***

20. Stresses that the Employment and Social Innovation strand of the ESF+ provides support regarding the precarious situation of mobile workers and secures funding for trade union-related counselling;

Amendment 61

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 21

Motion for a resolution

21. Calls for the ESF+ to boost the implementation of the European care strategy by investing in quality early childhood education and care through community-based, person-centred, high-quality, affordable and accessible care systems;

Amendment

21. Calls for the ESF+ to boost the implementation of the European care strategy by **increasing support for families** and investing in quality early childhood education and care through community-based, person-centred, high-quality, affordable and accessible care systems, **thus contributing to improving work-life balance and participation in the labour market; insists, furthermore, that synergies between the ESF+ and the ERDF should avoid financing institutionalisation services and promote community-based approaches;**

Amendment 62

**Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 22**

Motion for a resolution

22. Stresses that the implementation of the EPSR **and the reforms needed to comply with the country-specific recommendations in the European Semester are also dependant** on the strong support of the ESF+ for certain policy measures, especially those related to strengthening social welfare systems, ensuring inclusive and high-quality public education, reducing child poverty and eradicating homelessness;

Amendment

22. Stresses that the implementation of the EPSR **is dependent** on the strong support of the ESF+ for certain policy measures, especially those related to strengthening social welfare systems, **targeted support for regions with high youth unemployment**, ensuring inclusive and high-quality public education, **promoting traditional professions**, reducing child poverty and eradicating homelessness, **with special consideration for rural areas and islands;**

Amendment 63

**Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 23**

Motion for a resolution

23. Calls on the Commission to allocate

Amendment

23. Calls on the Commission to allocate

consistent financial resources to capacity-building, with the aims of empowering social partners to play a relevant role in areas of their competence, of strengthening their capacity to engage in social dialogue both at EU and national level and of enhancing social partners' actions – and include technical assistance for these three purposes – with an adequate minimum percentage investment obligation from the Member States; further insists that social partners and CSOs should be guaranteed access to funding for social policy objectives in all the Member States on an equal basis;

consistent financial resources to capacity-building, ***including for managing authorities and intermediary bodies***, with the aims of empowering social partners to play a relevant role in areas of their competence, of strengthening their capacity to engage in social dialogue both at EU and national level and of enhancing social partners' actions – and ***to*** include technical assistance for these three purposes – with an adequate minimum percentage investment obligation from the Member States; further insists that social partners and CSOs should be guaranteed access to funding for social policy objectives in all the Member States on an equal basis; ***underlines, at the same time, the need to develop institutional capacity through strong and professional administration, and to foster innovation in public sector management;***

Amendment 64

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 24

Motion for a resolution

24. Underlines that it is of the utmost importance that small social enterprises and CSOs have access to all aspects of the ESF+; calls for an increased co-financing rate of at least 90 % for measures targeting the most deprived implemented by CSOs, and at least 70 % for those implemented by social enterprises;

Amendment

24. Underlines that it is of the utmost importance that small social enterprises and CSOs have ***meaningful*** access to all aspects of the ESF+; calls for an increased co-financing rate of at least 90 % for measures targeting the most deprived implemented by CSOs, and at least 70 % for those implemented by social enterprises;

Amendment 65

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 24 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

24a. Encourages the financing of specific measures for the outermost regions and regions with severe and permanent economic and demographic difficulties, aiming, in particular, at ensuring equal access to social projects and essential services, fostering economic diversification and job creation, and helping these regions by ensuring the right to stay and by responding to challenges such as rural desertification, ageing, depopulation, loneliness and isolation, and skills shortages, as well as insufficient healthcare and education opportunities;

Amendment 66

**Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 24 b (new)**

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

24b. Stresses the need for the ESF+ to support projects that create sustainable local employment opportunities in these regions, especially those that are in a talent development trap or at risk of falling into such a trap, particularly through investments in green jobs, renewable energy, the primary sectors and sustainable tourism, by boosting skills in the blue economy and fostering economic resilience; calls for increased support for community-based initiatives that enhance quality of life and foster social inclusion in these regions;

Amendment 67

**Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 25**

Motion for a resolution

25. Calls on the Member States to ensure that regional and local authorities and organisations ***have a say in*** projects financed from national budgets;

Amendment

25. Calls on the Member States to ensure that regional and local authorities and organisations ***are involved at all appropriate stages of*** projects financed from national budgets ***and to respect the partnership principle as well as the principle of subsidiarity, in order to ensure joint ownership of ESF+ projects and the development of place-based solutions best adapted to their specific territories;***

Amendment 68

**Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 26**

Motion for a resolution

26. Insists that the rules governing the use of the ESF+ must ensure and enhance compliance with the rule of law, the EU acquis, the highest EU social standards, social rights and democratic principles, and ***be aligned with*** the EPSR, the *UN's sustainable development goals and fundamental human and workers' rights;*

Amendment

26. Insists that the rules governing the use of the ESF+ must ensure and enhance compliance with the rule of law, the EU acquis, the ***partnership principle, convergence towards the*** highest EU social standards, social rights and democratic principles, and ***the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, while aiming at implementing the objectives of the EPSR and the European Green Deal, and promoting the UN Sustainable Development Goals;***

Amendment 69

**Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 27**

Motion for a resolution

27. Calls for strong and more effective social conditionalities in rules on public procurement and concessions, ***with effective sanctions;*** encourages the

Amendment

27. Calls for strong, ***simplified*** and more effective social ***and environmental*** conditionalities in rules on public procurement and concessions ***governing***

Commission to create a comprehensive database, supplementing the Eurostat data, to allow for timely and reliable monitoring of the developments in employment, living conditions and industrial relations;

the ESF+; encourages the Commission to create a comprehensive database, supplementing the Eurostat data, to allow for timely and reliable monitoring of the developments in employment, living conditions and industrial relations;

Amendment 70

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 28

Motion for a resolution

28. Calls *for the reduction of* the administrative burden, notably by simplifying the application processes for accessing funds and the reporting procedures for organisations, in particular for those of a smaller size; *warns* that simplification *must not compromise* the fundamental principles of shared management, transparency and accountability, ensuring the proper administration of *public* funds;

Amendment

28. Calls *for progress in the digital transformation and for the reduction of* the administrative burden, notably by simplifying the application processes, *including, among other things, by examining how, at the initial stage, personal data requests can be minimised and by removing unjustified gold plating* for accessing funds and the reporting procedures for *regional or local authorities and for beneficiaries, including organisations and enterprises*, in particular for those of a smaller size, *and working towards the removal of regulatory barriers; underlines* that simplification *should enhance* the fundamental principles of shared management, *multilevel governance*, transparency and accountability, ensuring the proper administration of *European* funds; *calls for the creation of a specific, simplified platform of information on accessing funds at EU level for citizens, small and medium-sized enterprises, councils and local and regional authorities*;

Amendment 71

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 29

Motion for a resolution

29. ***Warns that not all people are prepared for digitalisation***, and that ***certain groups of people, especially the most vulnerable***, could miss out on funding opportunities as a result;

Amendment

29. ***Underscores that the digital divide is growing alongside the territorial divide***, and that ***digital access challenges persist for many Europeans, such as people in vulnerable situations, elderly people or other disadvantaged groups***, who could miss out on funding opportunities as a result, ***and that some regions lag behind in terms of digital connectivity***; ***underlines the need, therefore, to put in place targeted measures to empower people in order to guarantee equal access to new technologies and to bridge the digital divide***;

Amendment 72

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 29 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment 73

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 30

Motion for a resolution

30. ***Sees*** that more work needs to be done ***for organisations and people to know about*** all the opportunities that the ESF+ can bring; insists that the

Amendment

29a. ***Calls for the Common Provisions Regulation, the programmes and the budget negotiations to be finalised at least one year before the start of the new funding period so that Member States can develop their national funding strategies in good time to ensure a successful transition to the next funding period as well as the continuation of the many ESF+-funded projects***;

Amendment

30. ***Stresses*** that more work needs to be done ***to enable local and regional authorities and other stakeholders to reap the benefits of*** all the opportunities that the

Commission and the Member States raise awareness of, inform and advise organisations about the opportunities presented by the ESF+;

ESF+ can bring; insists that the Commission and the Member States raise awareness of, inform and advise organisations about the opportunities presented by the ESF+, *as well as other funding possibilities and funds under the cohesion policy framework*;

Amendment 74

Motion for a resolution Paragraph 31

Motion for a resolution

31. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council *and* the Commission.

Amendment

31. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, *the European Economic and Social Committee, and the European Committee of the Regions*.

**ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS
FROM WHOM THE RAPPOREUR HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

The rapporteur for the opinion declares under her exclusive responsibility that she did not receive input from any entity or person to be mentioned in this Annex pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION BY COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	28.1.2025
Result of final vote	+: 35 -: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Pascal Arimont, Fredis Beleris, Adrian-Drağoş Benea, Daniel Buda, Andi Cristea, Klára Dobrev, Christian Doleschal, Kathleen Funchion, Raquel García Hermida-Van Der Walle, Gabriella Gerzsenyi, Sérgio Gonçalves, Krzysztof Hetman, Ľubica Karvašová, Elsi Katainen, Isabelle Le Callennec, Nora Mebarek, Ciaran Mullooly, Elena Nevado del Campo, Andrey Novakov, Valentina Palmisano, Vladimir Prebilič, Sabrina Repp, Marcos Ros Sempere, Antonella Sberna, Mārtiņš Staķis, Şerban Dimitrie Sturdza, Rody Tolassy, Raffaele Topo, Francesco Ventola, Marta Wcisło
Substitutes present for the final vote	Maravillas Abadía Jover, Sofie Eriksson, Cristina Guarda, Elena Kountoura, Julien Leonardelli, Denis Nesci

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

35	+
ECR	Denis Nesci, Antonella Sberna, Șerban Dimitrie Sturdza, Francesco Ventola
PPE	Maravillas Abadía Jover, Pascal Arimont, Fredis Beleris, Daniel Buda, Christian Doleschal, Gabriella Gerzsenyi, Krzysztof Hetman, Isabelle Le Callennec, Elena Nevado del Campo, Andrey Novakov, Marta Wcisło
PfE	Julien Leonardelli, Rody Tolassy
Renew	Raquel García Hermida-Van Der Walle, Lúbia Karvašová, Elsi Katainen, Ciaran Mullooly
S&D	Adrian-Drașoș Benea, Klára Dobrev, Sofie Eriksson, Sérgio Gonçalves, Nora Mebarek, Sabrina Repp, Marcos Ros Sempere, Raffaele Topo
The Left	Kathleen Funchion, Elena Kountoura, Valentina Palmisano
Verts/ALE	Cristina Guarda, Vladimir Prebilič, Mārtiņš Staķis

0	-

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention