



# THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND AND SOCIAL INCLUSION



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## **IMPORTANT NOTE**

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# Social Inclusion as a Key Priority for Europe

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The EU sees social inclusion as a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. Social inclusion also ensures that vulnerable groups and persons have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives and that they can access their fundamental rights.

On the other side, social exclusion implies the lack or denial of certain resources, rights, goods or services, as well as the incapacity to take part into the normal relations and activities at hand to most people within the society, no matter if these belong to the economic, social, cultural or political domain. Exclusion affects both people's quality of life, and the society's equity and cohesion as a whole.

Central to combating the roots and effects of social exclusion is the fight against poverty. The European Commission emphasised the necessity to combat poverty and social exclusion in the renewed social agenda and in the Europe 2020 Strategy, which was launched in 2010. One of the headline targets of the strategy is to reduce by 25% the number of Europeans living below national poverty lines and to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and exclusion by 2020.

True to its mission to decrease differences in prosperity and living standards across EU Member States and regions, the European Social Fund has widely supported activities aimed at reinforcing social cohesion, reducing poverty and promoting an inclusive labour market in the EU.

# The European Social Fund in a Nutshell

The European Social Fund is devoted to promoting employment in the EU. It helps Member States make Europe's workforce and companies better equipped to face new and global challenges. It co-finances interventions supported by national public and private funds. The ESF strategy and budget is negotiated and decided between the EU Member States represented in the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament and the European Commission. On this basis, seven-year Operational Programmes (OPs) are planned by Member States and approved by the European Commission.

Operational Programmes 2000-2006: total expenditure claimed (in € million) per Member State (situation on 2 September 2008)

Member State	Expenditure	Member State	Expenditure
Austria	1,326	Latvia	115
Belgium	2,416	Lithuania	166
Cyprus	22	Luxembourg	47
Czech Republic	297	Malta	9
Denmark	779	Poland	1,776
Estonia	71	Portugal	7,145
Finland	2,365	Slovakia	241
France	12,204	Slovenia	60
Germany	20,930	Spain	17,388
Greece	4,783	Sweden	2,661
Hungary	288	The Netherlands	2,458
Ireland	1,778	United Kingdom	13,285
Italy	12,909		

The above interventions and expenditure do not cover the EQUAL Community Initiative which was also funded by the ESF in 2000-2006.

## ESF Facts and Figures

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Information in this brochure covers the periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 up to 2009. In 2000, the ESF was open to the then 15 EU Member States. Additional programmes started in 2004 to accommodate the priorities of 10 new Member States. A few figures to illustrate the size of the ESF interventions:

### ESF 2000-2006

- + Over 200 OPs together spent a total of € 105 billion (until September 2008): just over half (€ 54 billion) was paid for by the ESF, while the difference was invested by the public (€ 45 billion) and private (€ 6 billion) sectors in the Member States.
- + More than 75 million people benefited directly from ESF activities. This corresponds to 24% of the total population between 16 and 64 years in the EU.
- + The ESF is committed to equal opportunities. Overall, the involvement in ESF was balanced: 52% of the participants were women and 48% men.
- + ESF helps prepare young people to find suitable work: 37% of all participants were between 16 and 25 years old.
- + ESF supports initiatives to keep people in the labour market, in particular when workers are getting older: seven percent of ESF participants were over 55 years old.
- + Overall, 54% of ESF participants were unemployed, 38% were employed and 8% were inactive, i.e. not readily available to get and stay in a job.
- + Evaluations and monitoring data show that between 40 to 80% (approximately half on average) of the unemployed participants found employment within 12 months of completing an intervention.

### ESF 2007-2013

- + Preliminary data available on the current programmes show that 18 million people have already benefited from ESF supported interventions in 2007, 2008 and 2009.
- + 17% of these participants belong to vulnerable groups, such as migrants, minorities, people with disabilities, Roma, former convicts, etc.

## Social Inclusion as a Target for ESF Support

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Social inclusion processes aim at enhancing the integration of all people in society through promoting full economic, social and cultural participation. In doing so, they should create more responsive and efficient structures and systems and directly support people particularly at risk of marginalisation. The regulations for both ESF programming periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 mention social inclusion as an overall key objective to be supported, and all Member States carried out a wide range of initiatives promoting social inclusion and social cohesion.

The numerous ESF interventions with a social inclusion component can be classified in two categories. The first assisted people directly by opening up comprehensive pathways to integration. The main activities carried out under this umbrella included guidance and counselling, providing training and education, and offering employment supports. A second category of interventions targeted systems and structures, with the primary aim of creating more effective responses to people at risk of exclusion by removing societal barriers, by improving services or by changing attitudes and raising awareness. A wide range of new supports and services were developed with the support of ESF to address the needs of vulnerable groups. ESF also co-funded the development of training and education programmes, including for trainers and professionals in fields relevant to the fight against social exclusion.

Last but not least, the ESF assistance was used to combat negative attitudes towards people from minority groups and the stigma associated with disability and other personal characteristics, which have been identified as major barriers to the full participation of vulnerable groups in society. Awareness-raising campaigns implemented in various Member States helped create a more positive image of minorities, and emphasised the positive and productive contribution they can make to society and within the workforce.

## Responding to the Specific Needs of Vulnerable Groups

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ESF provided financial assistance to Member States with regard to the inclusion in the labour market of a wide variety of vulnerable groups. These vary both geographically and in relation to the complex sources of their vulnerability. What they have in common is that people belonging to them experience a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion than the general population. Ethnic minorities, migrants, disabled people, the homeless, those struggling with substance abuse, isolated elderly people and children often face difficulties that can lead to further social exclusion, such as low levels of education and unemployment or underemployment.

Among the groups most frequently targeted with the ESF support have been migrants and minorities (with a focus on Roma), people with disabilities and older workers. Significantly, most measures targeting specific vulnerable groups customised their intervention to match and fulfil the particular needs and personal characteristics of individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds and discriminated target groups.

### Insight:

#### **Adapting the learning environment for young people with disabilities in Estonia**

The Day Care Centre Käo in Tallinn is a social institution that has been providing support services and rehabilitation activities for children and adolescents with disabilities since 2000. The same building hosting the association also hosts the nursing education department of Tallinn Boarding School providing basic education training. Teachers from the school would train children and adolescents in the Day Care Centre in self-care operations and basic skills. However, once the children had completed their basic education they had no possibility to access vocational training programmes suitable for them. Therefore ESF was used to create curricula and train specialists to adjust the learning environment for the pre-training of people with disabilities. The Day Care Centre Käo, in cooperation with The Continuing Education Centre of the University of Jyväskylä in Finland, set up new curricula and methodologies for “special learners” programmes. Two pilot curricula were created in 2008, one for adolescents who need to learn life skills and another for those in need of nursing education. 30 teachers were trained in 2007 and 2008.

## ESF Support to Social Inclusion at a Glance: 2000-2006

- + All 25 Member States addressed the topic of social inclusion through ESF.
- + A total of 330 measures with a social inclusion component have been identified in 149 Operational Programmes.
- + The total claimed expenditure for these measures amounted to € 24 billion, of which € 12 billion was paid by Community funding.
- + From a typological perspective, 151 measures were dedicated to the assistance of people (pathways to integration in the labour market including training, guiding, and counselling), and 49 measures targeted systems and structures. 130 measures reached both people and systems.
- + Overall 89% of all identified measures addressing pathways to integration implemented training activities, 81% of them supported employment and job creation, and 63% carried out guidance and counselling activities.
- + The identified measures with a social inclusion component accounted for approximately 18 million participations, which corresponds to nearly a quarter of all ESF participations. On average women represented 53 % of all participations.
- + 62% of participants were unemployed; among them 42% were long-term unemployed; 5% were inactive or in training, and 3% were employed or self-employed. The labour market status was not specified for 30% of participants.
- + The participation of specific vulnerable groups (list) in social inclusion related measures is apparently under-reported. The average participation rate was 11%. However, there was a wide variation among Member States, ranging from 2% in Hungary and France to 88% in Sweden.

## ESF Support to Social Inclusion at a Glance: 2007-2013

- + All 27 Member States are using the ESF assistance to facilitate social inclusion.
- + 125 out of 633 priority axes address social inclusion exclusively or together with other types of activity.
- + When preparing for the current 2007-2013 ESF period, Member States indicated they would use € 12 billion of ESF funding (not counting national or private sources) for social inclusion activities. The total budget devoted to priority axes with a social inclusion component in ESF Operational Programmes is €32.5 billion.
- + Most of the Operational Programmes target social inclusion in dedicated priority axes (in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom).
- + Data available for 2007-2009 show that 5.2 million participations have been recorded in priority axes with a social inclusion component. On average, 53% of these are represented by women.
- + As regards the status in the labour market of participants, 70% were unemployed, out of which 35% was long-term unemployed.
- + One in three participants belonged to a vulnerable group: people with disabilities represented 9%, 12% were migrants, 4% belonged to minority groups and 9% were reported as belonging to other vulnerable groups.
- + 7% of the recorded participants were older people (55-64 years), 31% were between 15 and 24 years, and 62% were aged 25-54 years.
- + Regarding the educational level of participants, people with primary or lower secondary education represented the majority of the participants in priority axes with a social inclusion component (59%).

## ESF Assistance to People: Pathways to Integration...

Between 2000 and 2006, a total of €15.4 billion was invested into the assistance to people through 151 measures with a social inclusion component. They accounted for a recorded participation of 12.7 million persons and dealt mainly with applying comprehensive approaches to integrating economically inactive people into the labour market. Member States used the ESF support to carry out outreach, guidance and counselling activities as a first stage of this approach. Interventions during this initial stage of the pathway concentrated on building self esteem and confidence and on developing personal and social skills to support an active participation in the professional integration process.

Another strand of measures focused on the second phase of the pathway, namely on the provision of training or further education to upgrade skills and qualifications. The vocational education and training activities implemented were diverse in terms of level, content and duration. However, a consistent characteristic was that learning opportunities were tailored to the needs of participants. Basic training was offered to those with no or low qualifications or redundant skills in order to improve their employability. Specific vocational training was provided to those who would benefit from more up to date occupational competences. Yet most ESF-supported initiatives took a multi-angle tactic, as the following example illustrates.

### Insight:

#### **Supporting people from groups threatened with social exclusion in Poland**

In Poland, ESF co-funded several projects that combined the direct delivery of training to disadvantaged people with offering support measures, such as providing care for the children and dependants of project participants. After the assessment of vocational potential, needs and aspirations, training was provided to persons from groups threatened by social exclusion in order to overcome the challenges they faced in accessing the labour market, to deal with the problems they encountered in their day to day lives and to increase their independence. System-focused activities included training for staff of social services providers, including NGOs and their volunteers. By 2006, 7,500 people working with high risk groups had participated.

## ... Up to Getting a Job

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Reducing the distance from the labour market of long term unemployed or economically inactive people is a critical outcome of social inclusion activities, but the ultimate goal is their placement into a job. ESF supported a large number of projects that promoted effective job finding, placement and job retention.

A particularly useful approach to job placement which was implemented during the 2000-2006 period was supported employment, a model where job seekers enter a partnership with job coaches. Participants were placed directly into jobs after a period of occupational assessment and exploration often carried out through work experience placements in open employment settings with the cooperation of local employers. Job coaches accompanied the new workers to the workplace and initially fulfilled their responsibilities while implementing the training programme. Gradually the job coach faded from his or her role making sure that the natural supports required by the worker are available from co-workers and supervisors.

### Insight:

#### **Job support for people with disabilities in Spain**

The Regional Service for Employment and Training within the Autonomous Community of Murcia used the ESF assistance to offer supported employment to people with disabilities based on a model of intensive and personalised support for each individual. Non-profit specialised organisations were contracted to work with people with mental or physical disabilities. Their role was to prepare these persons for employment and help them find a job. Once any particular beneficiary was in a job, the support person learnt and performed the work tasks required while guiding and supporting him or her during the initial adaptation period. Private companies employing people with disabilities were entitled to financial support provided that they complied with certain criteria.

The programme was launched in 2000 and ended in 2006. Over 4,000 people with disabilities participated, 700 of whom found employment.

## Improvements of Structures Dealing with Social Inclusion

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About € 1 billion of ESF co-funding was allocated to measures with a social inclusion component concentrated solely on assistance to systems and structures. This included activities aimed at building or enhancing institutional and administrative capacity. Taking into account an additional 130 measures that combined assistance to persons with assistance to systems and structures (worth € 7.5 billion), a total of 179 measures addressed assistance to structures and systems between 2000 and 2006. Of these, 125 measures developed supports and services, 53 measures developed training and educational programmes, 60 measures trained trainers and professionals and 83 measures included promotional campaigns.

A wide range of new supports and services were developed with the support of ESF to address the needs of vulnerable groups. Child care facilities were established to enable unemployed women, often from at risk groups, to participate in vocational education and training or in job search activities. Austria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Slovakia and Slovenia established centres and services tailored to the social and cultural needs of the Roma, while Greece increased the availability of social services in general.

### Insight:

#### **A network of support centres for vulnerable groups in Greece**

This ESF co-funded measure targeted people who had difficulties in contacting the right social services for them and the necessary labour market supports they required. Target groups included people with disabilities, abused women, ex-offenders and refugees among others. The Greek Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity established a network of 150 social support offices around the country to advise people and to refer them on to where they could get help in accessing the labour market in addition to the specific social services they needed. Over 18,000 applications for assistance were received, of which approximately 10% came from ethnic minorities, 9% from resident aliens and 6% from single parent families. The services were co-funded by ESF and the Greek Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity for two years after which the municipalities committed to maintain operation and funding of the offices.

## Overview of Recent Social Inclusion Action

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Member States have continued to address the key issue of social inclusion in the 2007-2013 programming period with specific actions supporting integration into education or employment through individual pathways or individual guidance, training and employment activities.

In Spain social inclusion is addressed at national level in the Operational Programme “Fight against Discrimination” and in all other regional Operational Programmes. Under these OPs actions are targeted at various vulnerable groups. For example the OP of Extremadura foresees specific activities for young people and for women from vulnerable groups. Finland’s measures to prevent social exclusion focus on young people and immigrants among other vulnerable groups. In Ireland the target of social inclusion activities are people with disabilities, early school leavers and members of the travelling community, migrants, women and other groups experiencing discrimination.

In the Netherlands, following various projects implemented in the 2000-2006 programming period, specific activities are planned for prisoners and ex-prisoners including those with mental health problems and youths in juvenile custodial institutions. In Hungary, ESF is supporting the development of the social care system, and improvements in access to services through promoting good governance in the field of social services.

In several Member States activities to boost employment are connected to improving social economy and social entrepreneurship. This is the case of Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Romania and Sweden.

And equally important, several Operational Programmes not only promote social inclusion activities but focus their interventions on fighting against discrimination. Such campaigns are planned in the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Spain, and other Member States.

## European Social Fund 2007-2013: Investing in People

In the current programming period of 2007-2013, the ESF has a budget of € 76 billion to co-finance 117 Operational Programmes in all 27 Member States. National public and private funds amount to a further € 41 billion. The interventions supported are in the fields of:

- (i) adaptability of workers and enterprises;
- (ii) access to employment and inclusion in the labour market;
- (iii) social inclusion of disadvantaged people;
- (iv) reform in education and training systems;
- (v) good governance, partnership and the involvement of social partners.

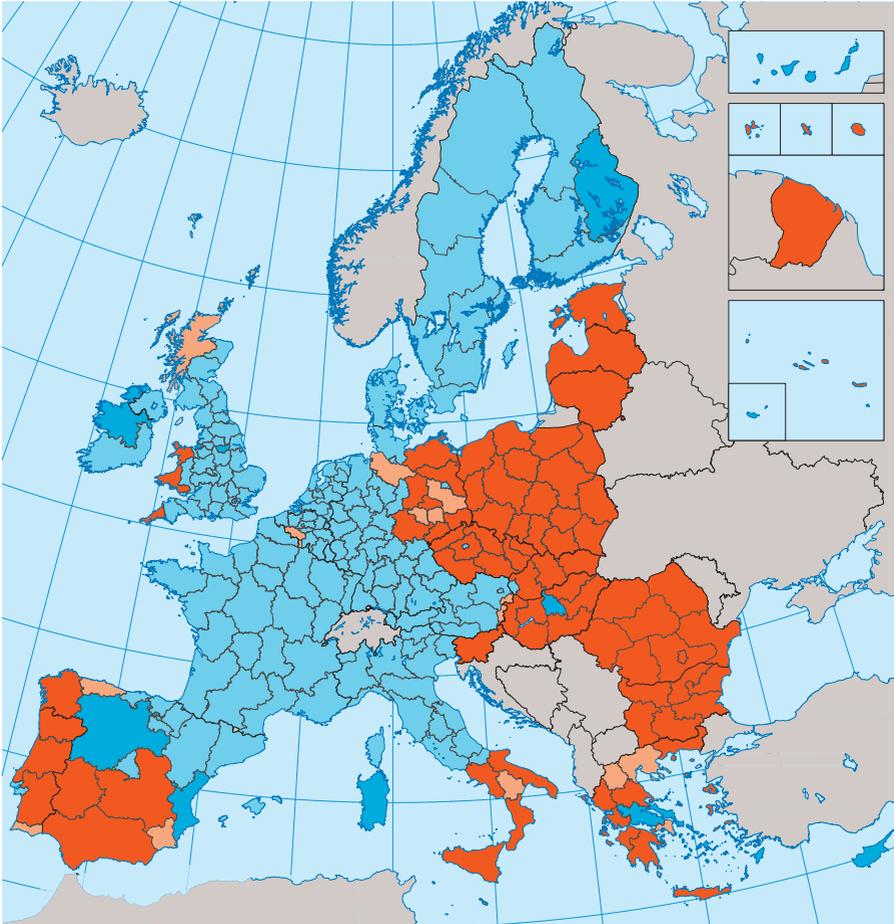
The map shows that ESF supports activities across all 27 Member States under two Objectives. Additional priorities in the so-called Convergence regions are:

- (i) lifelong learning and research and innovation;
- (ii) capacity building of public administrations and services.

Operational Programmes 2007-2013: total budget (in € million) per Member State

Member State	Budget	Member State	Budget
Austria	1,184	Latvia	657
Belgium	2,320	Lithuania	1,210
Bulgaria	1,395	Luxembourg	50
Cyprus	150	Malta	132
Czech Republic	4,436	Poland	11,420
Denmark	510	Portugal	9,210
Estonia	462	Romania	4,335
Finland	1,420	Slovakia	1,764
France	10,275	Slovenia	889
Germany	15,666	Spain	11,426
Greece	5,726	Sweden	1,383
Hungary	4,270	The Netherlands	1,705
Ireland	1,360	United Kingdom	8,598
Italy	15,321		

# ESF 2007-2013 Investing in your Future



The level of ESF funding differs from one region to another depending on their relative wealth. EU regions are divided into four categories, based on their regional GDP per head compared to the EU average (EU with 27 or 15 Member States).

- **Convergence regions:** with a GDP per head of less than 75% of the EU-27 average
- **Phasing-out regions:** with a GDP per head of more than 75% of the EU-27 average but less than 75% of the EU-15 average
- **Phasing-in regions:** with a GDP per head of less than 75% of the EU-15 average (in the period 2000-2006) but more than 75% of the EU-15 average (in the period 2007-2013)
- **Competitiveness and employment regions:** applies to all other EU regions

# What ESF does for you

**ESF:** active labour market policies and public employment services

**ESF:** adaptability of enterprises and continuing training of workers

**ESF:** developing human potential in research and innovation

**ESF** and labour mobility

**ESF:** education and lifelong learning

**ESF:** women, gender mainstreaming and reconciliation of work and private life

**ESF** and Roma

**ESF:** sustainable development and eco-technologies

**ESF:** migrants and minorities

**ESF:** urban areas and local employment

**ESF** and older workers

**ESF** and health

**ESF** and entrepreneurship

**ESF** and young people

**ESF** and disability

**ESF** and institutional capacity of public bodies

**ESF** and social inclusion

**ESF** and equality mainstreaming

**ESF** and its support to social partners

**ESF** and its support to NGOs

**ESF:** culture and tourism

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