



The European Social Fund in Burgenland, Austria, 2007-2013

By upgrading its workforce, fostering more employment and supporting equal opportunities, the Burgenland region's ESF programme aims to increase income and employment levels to match the rest of Austria, while maintaining the quality of life the region offers and strengthening its competitiveness.

The European Social Fund in brief

The European Social Fund, created in 1957, is the European Union's main financial instrument for investing in people. It supports employment and helps people enhance their education and skills. This improves their job prospects.

Member States and regions devise their own ESF Operational Programmes, in order to respond to the real needs 'on the ground'. Over the period 2007-2013, the ESF will spend over 10 billion euros per year across all Member States. This represents more than 10% of the European Union's total budget.

These are the five priorities of ESF funding at EU level:

- Helping workers and enterprises adapt to changing circumstances in the economy
- Enhancing access to employment and participation in the workforce
- Improving training and skills, both for individuals, and through better education and training systems
- Promoting partnerships between actors such as employers, trade unions and non-governmental organisations, for reform in the fields of employment and inclusion in the labour market
- Reinforcing the social inclusion of disadvantaged people and combating discrimination in the labour market

In some Member States and regions, the ESF can also support actions to improve the capacity and effectiveness of public administrations and public services.

The socio-economic and employment situation in Burgenland

Situated on the eastern frontier of Austria, bordering Hungary to the east, Slovakia to the north and Slovenia to the south, the region of Burgenland is a mainly rural province with no major cities. This peripheral location and the lack of a large urban centre partly explain Burgenland's relative economic weakness, which has led to outward migration over the years. Today, it has the smallest population of the Austrian regions. Although the economy has been catching up over the past ten years, Burgenland still has the weakest economy of all Austrian provinces.

Within Burgenland there are some structural differences; for example, while average incomes in the north are 90% of the Austrian average, in the centre and south they drop to 85%, the lowest in the country. With an employment rate of 72.5% in the 3rd quarter of 2009, Burgenland was slightly above the Austrian rate. A growing service sector has been a positive development in recent years leading to higher female employment, but this largely comprises part-time work – 41.9% (3rd quarter of 2009) of working women are in part-time employment. The unemployment rate in Burgenland is 4.9%, slightly lower than in the rest of Austria (3rd quarter of 2009). The share of 25-64-year-olds in vocational training was 9.8% in 2008, lower than in the whole of Austria at 12.2%.

Despite the positive trends in employment, Burgenland still lacks sufficient and suitable employment opportunities. This results in a high level of commuting to surrounding region's labour markets; a large proportion of the workforce is employed outside the province. Another challenge is the high proportion of seasonal jobs.

Burgenland's ESF priorities

Burgenland's strategy for Structural Funding for 2007-2013 is shaped by the overall aims of safeguarding the quality of life, closing regional disparities, and increasing income and employment levels through strengthening the competitiveness of its economy. Within this wider framework, Burgenland's ESF Operational Programme focuses on upgrading the qualifications of the workforce and fostering employment, with particular emphasis on equal opportunities. The priorities are as follows:

Priority 1: Adaptability of workers and enterprises

By supporting training and improved qualifications, this priority will help workers and enterprises cope with economic change and enhance their international competitiveness. Particular targets are job-related qualifications of those in employment as well as human resources development within companies. Specific goals are:

- Stabilising and improving the careers of certain groups in employment, such as older workers, people working under short-time arrangements, the less well qualified and young people.
- Strengthening competitiveness through training and qualifications for entrepreneurs, management and key technical staff.
- Improving human resource planning in companies to help them anticipate and prepare for economic change. Also, to improve consultation with workers to foster flexibility.

Priority 2: Integration into the labour market and social inclusion

Here the aim is to increase employment in Burgenland through training and qualifications for the unemployed, improved access to the labour market for inactive people,

and the sustainable integration into employment of socially excluded groups at the margins of the labour market. Specific goals are:

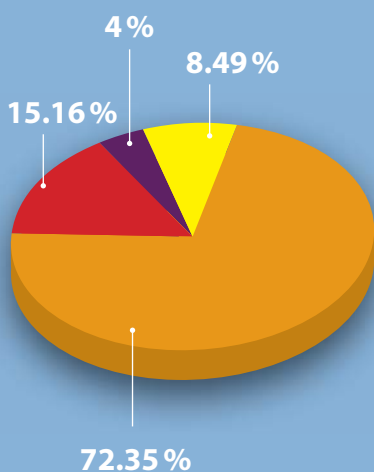
- To provide the unemployed with the qualifications that match the needs of the labour market, thus reducing imbalances in the level of qualifications.
- To support the integration of disadvantaged groups, in particular older people, unqualified young people and women re-entering work after maternity leave. Including job-orientation and tailored activities, and support measures for people with disabilities.
- To reduce gender segregation in the labour market; for example, through counselling and individual coaching for women.

Priority 3: Improving support structures, access to knowledge and knowledge transfer, and labour market-related partnerships

Here the aim is to improve the stock of human capital by encouraging access to lifelong learning and enhancing the capacity of schools and adult education centres. A further aim is to develop national, regional and local employment related partnerships. Specific goals are:

- To improve the opportunities for obtaining qualifications and lifelong learning.
- To improve knowledge transfer between research institutes and enterprises.
- To support existing co-operative efforts and partnerships in the field of employment and to develop innovative activities.

Financial plan for the European Social Fund in Burgenland 2007-2013 (euro)



Priority axis	 Community funding	 National counterpart	Total funding
Adaptability of workers and enterprises	7 906 275	2 635 425	■ 10 541 700
Integration into the labour market and social inclusion	37 723 125	12 574 375	■ 50 297 500
Improving the stock of human capital	4 425 000	1 475 000	■ 5 900 000
Technical assistance	2 085 600	695 200	■ 2 780 800
Total	52 140 000	17 380 000	69 520 000

Some earlier ESF projects in Burgenland 2000-2006

- The 'Nursing assistant programme' takes target groups of adults over 30 years old, many of them women in rural areas who cannot find employment opportunities locally. Participants undergo an intensive training programme of 800 hours of theory and 800 hours of practical training in areas such as care for the elderly, hygiene, mobility and observation of patients, as well as 'bedside manners'. Importantly, training is offered at regional centres, thereby helping the unemployed and single women to participate. The courses were very successful – almost all students found employment and there is continuing demand for their skills today, in home care, nursing homes and hospitals.
- By using supervised assignments in companies, the Trendwork project has helped the integration of the long-term unemployed into work, in particular into companies to which they would normally have no access. Taking on around 50 unemployed at a time, the non-profit association Trendwork has provided individual coaching and training in job applications. Then, a search is made for a suitable job and an internship arranged – paid by the association – so that companies can assess an individual's skills with no commitment and, if successful, offer permanent employment. Over 50% of participants got permanent jobs – totalling more than 400 people since 1999.
- The Territorial Employment Pact Burgenland was founded in 2001 as a broad partnership including regional government, the Federal Office of Social Affairs, the social partners in the region including partners for gender-mainstreaming, and a regional funding agency (WiBAG). The focus of the Pact is to support the creation of sustainable jobs in the region. It acts as a forum to develop ideas and implement projects among the partners. Importantly, the Pact structure fosters flexible institutional arrangements that would not otherwise exist – it breaks down barriers. The Pact has been widely successful and will continue in the future.

ESF contacts



In Burgenland

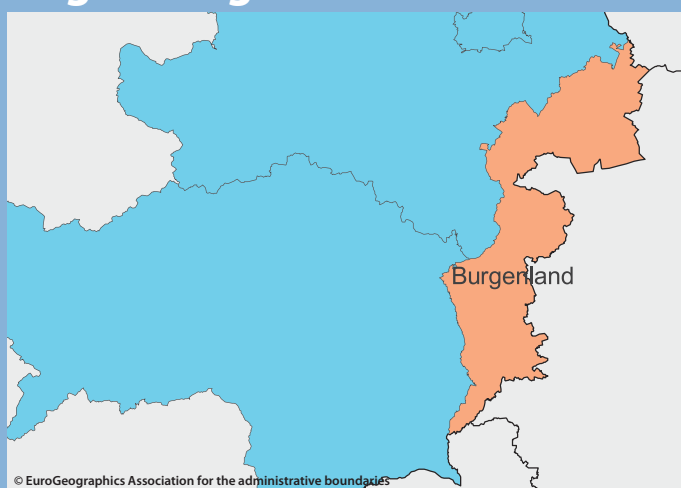
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Eligible regions 2007-2013



The level of ESF funding differs from one region to another depending on their relative wealth.

- Burgenland is a phasing-out region with GDP per head of more than 75% of the EU-25 average but less than 75% of the EU-15 average.
- All the remaining Austrian regions are eligible under the regional competitiveness and employment objective with GDP per head of more than 75% of the EU-25 average. They are covered under a separate ESF programme.