



THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ECO-TECHNOLOGIES



European Commission

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IMPORTANT NOTE

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Sustainable Development and Eco-technologies in the EU

Back in 1987, sustainable development was defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. In practical terms, this translates among others into the use of new environmental technologies that can limit climate change and prevent the depletion of natural resources and the degradation of ecosystems.

In the last years, the EU has demonstrated a clear political commitment to put sustainable development in the centre of its political agenda. It framed in June 2001 its first “Sustainable Development Strategy”, subsequently revised in 2006. The European Parliament and the Council also adopted in December 2008 a comprehensive “climate and energy package”. More recently, the Europe 2020 Strategy has voiced the European ambition to turn toward a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.

The EU’s move towards a competitive low-carbon economy is to become an important driving force from a labour market perspective. It will have substantial consequences for the employment on offer and for the skills required. In the EU the eco-industry accounts already for 1.7% of the total paid employment or about 3.4 million full-time jobs. Current labour market policies should aim at easing the transition towards new “green jobs” as well as favouring the up skilling of workers in existing jobs on issues such as renewable energy, sustainable materials or low-carbon technologies.

Enhancing the capability and skills of the workforce and increasing new employment opportunities are the core business of the European Social Fund (ESF) since its creation in 1957. Thus, ESF can play an important role in facilitating the shift to a low-carbon economy from a labour market perspective, and this is already noticeable in the widespread mainstreaming of sustainable development within the ESF Operational Programmes.

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

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 (€ 4 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.

Sustainable Development and Eco-technologies as a Target for ESF

The regulations for both ESF programming periods mention sustainable development as an overall objective to be supported, alongside the reinforcement of social cohesion, the strengthening of productivity and competitiveness and the promotion of economic growth.

This requirement has resulted in widespread mainstreaming of sustainable development throughout the interventions co-financed by the ESF and the implementation of numerous specific activities dealing with awareness raising, education and training, employment and corporate social responsibility.

The ESF regulation for the 2007-2013 period has put a particular focus on the adaptability of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs in areas such as eco-friendly technologies and has introduced for the regions covered by the Convergence Objective the possibility to support the strengthening of institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations with a view to reforms, better regulation and good governance in particular in the environmental field.

Member States have programmed and implemented different kinds of mainstreaming strategies in both programming periods. Some Member States defined in their Operational Programmes specific environmental areas that were to be addressed through training and required that training should always contain a module on environment with direct relevance to sustainable development (as the region of La Rioja in Spain in 2000-2006), while others identified sustainable Development as a cross-cutting theme throughout all activities in their Operational Programmes.

Member States such as France and Italy in the past programming period envisaged mainstreaming of activities related to environment and some others in the current programming period have integrated environmental considerations into the implementation of programmes through the introduction of environmental criteria in project selection and the inclusion of an “environmental dimension” in OP evaluations. Among new Member States, this is the case of Hungary, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland and Slovenia.

Insight:

Promotion and mainstreaming of sustainable development in the United Kingdom

From 2000 to 2006 the UK implemented 18 ESF programmes of which 17 aimed to mainstream sustainable development. There were also 26 measures that considered sustainable development as a horizontal priority, and 32 measures with activities on sustainable development (with a budget of € 2.5 billion). UK's measures covered raising awareness of sustainable development, training and education, and boosting employment related to sustainable development. ESF-funded programmes approached sustainable development from a triple angle, taking into consideration its economic, social and environmental dimensions and trying to balance them.

The UK's sustainable development mainstreaming strategy for the 2007-2013 programming period has used a dual approach. Individual project providers are required to develop sustainable development policies and implementation plans so that sustainable development can be taken into account in terms of their own delivery arrangements (horizontal mainstreaming), and all regions are encouraged to support environmental activities (vertical mainstreaming).

Insight:

Achievements to date on sustainable development in Spain

Spain has developed a mainstreaming strategy for raising awareness on sustainable development through training and educational modules foreseen in most of its ESF co-funded measures in the previous and in the current programming period. In addition to the 1.3 million people reported in the previous programming period, over 400,000 have already participated in sustainable development related activities in 2007 and 2008.

ESF Support to Sustainable Development and Eco-technologies at a Glance: 2000-2006

- + A total of 164 (out of 212) Operational Programmes from 21 Member States (out of 25) included various interventions targeting sustainable development.
- + 579 measures (out of 1567) mention sustainable development or environment related activities: 179 of these consider sustainable development to be a cross-cutting theme (i.e. they contain activities which do not focus on the environment or sustainable development, but can have beneficial environmental effects), while 400 measures offer the possibility to finance one or more activities with direct relevance for sustainable development.
- + In the 21 Member States, the measures containing provisions for activities related to sustainable development amounted to € 37 billion (the ESF contribution represented 51% of this amount). Given that most measures did not only address sustainable development interventions but also many other topics, this amount should be considered as the maximum amount of potential funding available and not the real amount finally allocated to finance sustainable development activities.
- + 68 measures from 10 Member States featured activities dealing more specifically with sustainable development, and account together for a € 7.7 billion investment. Most activities took place in Spain (4 measures, € 4 billion) and in the UK (29 measures, € 2.5 billion).
- + 25 measures from 11 Member States provided for eco-technology related interventions worth € 1.9 billion. The small share of eco-technology-related measures can be explained by the fact that most measures focused on awareness raising and training interventions rather than directly supporting the deployment of eco-technologies.
- + Around 1.4 million participants in 7 Member States received training or educational support on sustainable development or environment related subjects. Around 1.3 million of these participants were located in Spain. Spain is indeed the only Member State which has put in place a specific monitoring for this issue. For other Member States, national and regional monitoring systems did not pick up on those participations.

ESF Support to Sustainable Development and Eco-technologies at a Glance: 2007-2013

Sustainable development is also a cross-cutting theme in the current programming period. Compared to the previous period, sustainable development and eco-technologies have become more significant areas of ESF intervention, in both absolute and relative terms.

- + 96 Operational Programmes (out of 117) from 23 Member States (out of 27) are mainstreaming sustainable development.
- + About 80% of all 633 priority axes offer the opportunity to include sustainable development or eco-technologies as eligible areas of intervention.
- + About one out of six priority axes (104) in 10 Member States have programmed some specific activities in the area of eco-technologies or sustainable development.
- + The total budget available (SD and non-SD interventions) for these 104 priority axes is € 23 billion. Since priority axes are big management units under which a wider variety of activities can be addressed, this figure should be considered as the maximum amount of potential funding available and not the real amount allocated to finance sustainable development activities.
- + Several projects have already been carried out in Germany, France, Spain and the UK. Other Member States which did not explicitly announce sustainable development activities in their programming documents, such as Austria, Denmark, Luxembourg, Latvia and Poland, have in the meantime started a number of initiatives relevant to sustainable development or eco-technologies.

Raising Awareness of Sustainable Development and Environment

ESF supported awareness raising and information activities in several Member States, including the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy or Spain. Initiatives ranged from setting up an observatory on 'eco-practices' in France, raising awareness of how people affect wetlands and water in different ways and specific environments in the Czech Republic, to promoting conservation of valuable local areas in Germany.

Several other projects have been funded to raise environmental awareness in companies. ESF has contributed to the establishment of consultancy services and training modules for SMEs on energy consumption/ saving and on climate protection in Germany and Denmark.

Insight:

Dissemination of eco-efficiency in Finland

A project called "Factor X" has been running in Finland since 1990 to develop and spread the concept of eco-efficiency and environmental protection. Eco-efficiency means first to increase the use of eco-friendly products by companies to reduce the pressure on the environment while also creating new business opportunities. Several tools were developed to enable firms to monitor and measure ecological activities and ecological impacts. The ESF assistance was used to co-fund training for a wide range of companies, consultants, public administrations and educational institutions. Trainings and workshops were implemented in other Member States as well. Several dissemination and awareness raising initiatives were implemented, such as a promotional campaign on eco-efficiency on the TV, radio, and in the printed press. ESF funded this project between 2000 and 2002 with € 532,000. "Factor X" was implemented by the Helsinki University of Technology, the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, the Finnish Environment Institute and Riihimäki Fair.

Enhancing Education and Training in Environment-related Topics

The Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland and Poland developed tertiary education curricula or educational programmes for secondary schools on sustainable development. In the Czech Republic, ESF supported environmental education in schools. Funded projects focused on students and teachers in primary and secondary schools with the aim of developing new forms of education for sustainable development. This initiative produced a multimedia training module about the environment for elementary schools; multimedia yearbooks on environmental education for elementary and secondary schools; and educational programmes for primary and secondary schools developing knowledge and skills in science and environmental education.

ESF has also provided financial assistance for the development of tertiary and post tertiary educational programmes such as in Denmark and Finland where two Master programmes have been funded. In Estonia and Poland ESF is currently supporting doctoral and post doctoral programmes. For example, Poland is implementing a post-graduate course aimed at employees of companies dealing with environmental engineering and the management of environmental protection in enterprises.

Insight:

Development of environmental education in Estonia

Under the 2007-2013 ESF programme in Estonia an amount of €3.2 million has been reserved for the action 'Development of environmental education', which is implemented by the Environmental Investment Centre in 2010. The objectives are to promote education that supports sustainable development, to increase the overall level of environmental awareness among the population and advance values of nature preservation. It is envisaged that the specialists from the Ministry of Environment and its subordinate bodies will actively involve students in extra-curricular activities and will also offer environmental training for adults: teachers, specialists from local authorities and land-owners from areas belonging to natural reserves.

Supporting Employment in Areas related to Sustainable Development

Some interventions in Austria, the Netherlands, France and Germany show how ESF support may boost employment. Apart from supporting companies to adapt and develop their business model in the environmental sector, several Member States used the ESF assistance to stimulate job and business creation and entrepreneurship in the green economy.

A project in Spain deployed in the current programming period is in particular focusing on the creation of enterprises in the environmental sector.

Insight:

Spain - The 'Green Jobs' Programme

"Empleaverde" is an ESF supported initiative managed by the Biodiversity Foundation (Fundacion Biodiversidad) in Spain. It aims at growing employment and protecting the environment by creating 'green jobs'. The programme is implemented through annual calls for proposals, establishing strategic alliances with public or private non-profit organizations to implement projects of training in the environmental field for self-employed and workers in SMEs. With a budget of €44 million, the programme will train 50,000 people and support the creation of 1,000 companies in the environmental sector. The aim is to encourage eco-innovation, a new culture of corporate sustainability and the modernisation of enterprises.

Projects can last one to two years. The total budget for each project ranges between €150,000 and €615,000 with an ESF co-financing rate of 80% or 50% depending on the region in which the project is implemented. A few examples of activities supported by this programme regarding new technologies and climate change include: training courses on agriculture and climate change, on reduction of greenhouse gases, and supporting research and development projects in the energy and environment sectors.

ESF is also supporting activities to integrate people from the most disadvantaged groups in specific sectors related to the environment. The creation of green job opportunities has been and is the focus of many activities in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Slovenia.

Two initiatives in Slovenia in 2009 aimed at supporting unemployed people or persons from vulnerable groups to enter the labour market in sectors related to the environment. Both initiatives have implemented trainings for less employable persons to work in the waste recycling sector or to become gardeners, farm workers or herbalists. Participants to these courses have been trained and then employed or have become self-employed.

Promoting Eco-technologies

The development of eco-technologies is seen as one of the key enablers of sustainable development. Several ESF co-funded projects aim at stimulating the use of eco-technologies through different types of activities, such as consultancy services for SMEs in Hamburg on climate protection and energy efficient activities or a training project in Bremen, which qualifies people in the field of building refurbishment to reduce energy consumption and increase energy efficiency. Also in Bremen there have been developed the “InnoVision 2010 programme” which relates to environmental technologies and the wind energy sector (off-shore wind mills).

Disseminating Corporate Social Responsibility

Some Member States have used ESF to support activities reflecting corporate social responsibility (CSR) in their sustainable development strategies. Luxembourg for instance used ESF to produce a good practice guide on management schemes of companies implementing CSR activities. A Danish initiative aimed at maintaining and improving the competitiveness of companies on an inclusive labour market, and it did so by providing small and medium businesses tools to implement and use CSR to gain real global competitive edge.

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.

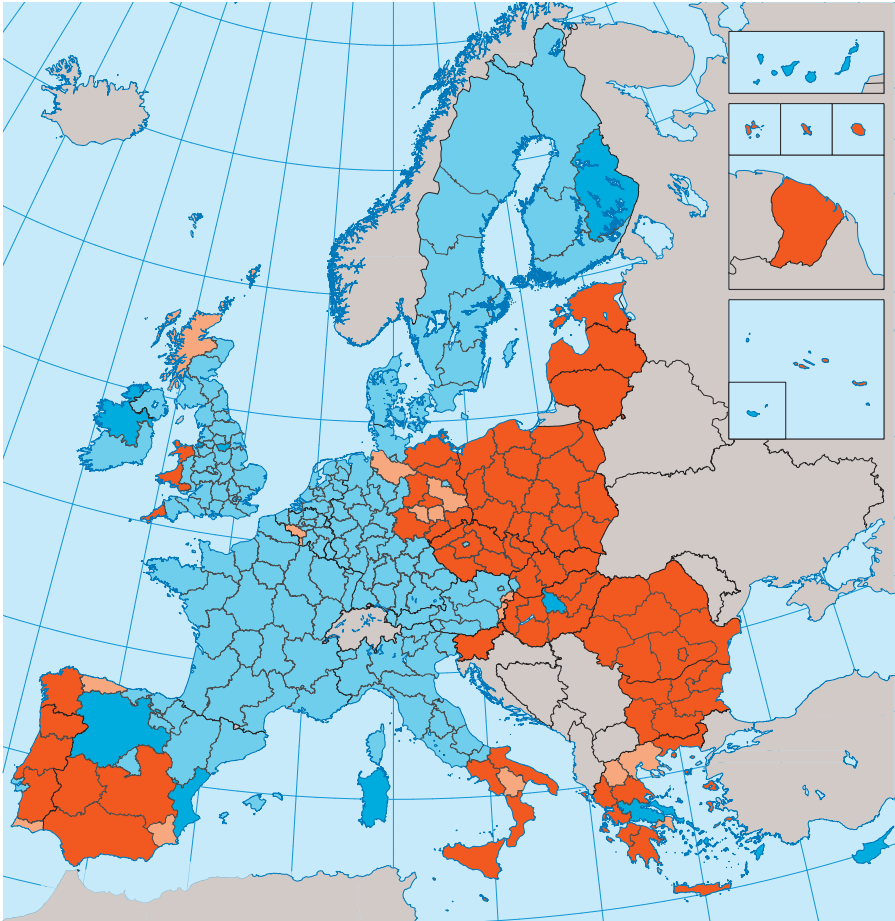
The map shows that ESF supports activities across all 27 Member States under two Objectives. Additional priorities in the so-called Convergence regions are:

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

Operational Programmes 2007-2013: total budget, i.e. including national co-financing, (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 continuous 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

ESF and social inclusion

ESF and equality mainstreaming

ESF and social partners

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