



EU to provide close to EUR 4.5 billion to help England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland create more and better jobs

London, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Belfast, 30 October 2007 – The European Commission has adopted the European Social Fund (ESF) programmes for England and Wales and will soon adopt the programmes for Scotland and Northern Ireland. With this decision the Commission has made a significant step to help the four nations reap the full benefits of EU membership. The programmes, which will be co-financed by the EU and the national governments through the European Social Fund (ESF), are a genuine commitment to investing in people and skills. Receiving EU co-funding totalling some EUR 4.47 billion, the programmes will aim to boost the number of people in jobs and improve workers' qualifications. Across the United Kingdom, the ESF will be supporting workers and businesses in change, helping people improve their skills, promoting gender equality, supporting social inclusion, fighting discrimination and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.

Vladimír Špidla, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, welcomed the adoptions, saying: "2007 is a special year for the European Social Fund. Not only are we celebrating its 50th anniversary, but this year also sees the launch of another seven-year period of ESF financial support." He continued: "Recent EU efforts to boost jobs are showing results. The number of people at work is rising and unemployment is falling. But more needs to be done. The ESF strengthens Europe's capacity to create good jobs and equip workers with the right skills to fill them. But these objectives must be put into practice at the level of the Member States".

England's programme (some EUR 3 billion, including Gibraltar) will focus on:

- vulnerable groups, providing more training and greater access to work
- young people, to better ensure their entry and stay on the labour market
- low or intermediate-skilled people, helping them become more skilled and in so doing develop a higher skilled workforce
- small businesses, offering them more technical/management training

Wales' programmes (EUR 833 million for the West Wales and the Valleys Convergence OP and EUR 64 million for the East Wales OP) will focus on:

- people not in work, to help them become economically active
- low-skilled workers, to improve the skills levels of the workforce
- young people, to help them stay in education in order to better prepare them for their working life

Scotland's programmes (close to EUR 270 million for Lowlands and Uplands programme and over EUR 52 million for Highlands and Islands programme) propose to focus on:

- people caught in the vicious circle of poverty and unemployment, providing them with better training and lifelong learning

- young people, to better ensure their entry and stay on the labour market
- better provision of childcare for better access to employment
- lifelong learning

Northern Ireland's (over EUR 165 million) programme proposes to focus on:

- disadvantaged people, and in particular the long-term unemployed, to help them back into work
- workers and their skills, to ensure a skilled workforce and equip workers with the right skills for future employment opportunities
- better access to training for low qualified workers, as well as new recruits and workers who lack appropriate skills

The European Social Fund will spend over EUR 10 billion per year across all Member States. At the end of the new funding period 2007-2013, the EU will have contributed some EUR 75 billion to the 27 Member States. This represents more than 10% of the total budget of the European Union. Member States and regions draw up their own ESF Operational programmes so they can respond to the real needs "on the ground". In England (including Gibraltar), Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, the ESF-funded programmes will be receiving some EUR 4.47 billion in EU co-funding during the seven-year funding period.

Background on the European Social Fund

The European Social Fund, created in 1957, is the European Union's main financial instrument for investing in people. It focuses on five key areas:

- helping workers and companies adapt to a constantly changing economy;
- increasing access to employment and participation in the labour market
- improving training and skills - both for individuals, and through better education and training systems;
- reinforcing the social inclusion of disadvantaged people and combating discrimination in the labour market;
- promoting partnerships for reform in the fields of employment and inclusion, for example between employers, trade unions and non-governmental organisations

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

For more information, see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/esf>

Examples of ESF projects in the United Kingdom:

England

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/docs/uk5_en.pdf

Wales

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/docs/uk4_en.pdf

Northern Ireland

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/docs/uk4_2_en.pdf

Scotland

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/docs/uk1_en.pdf

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