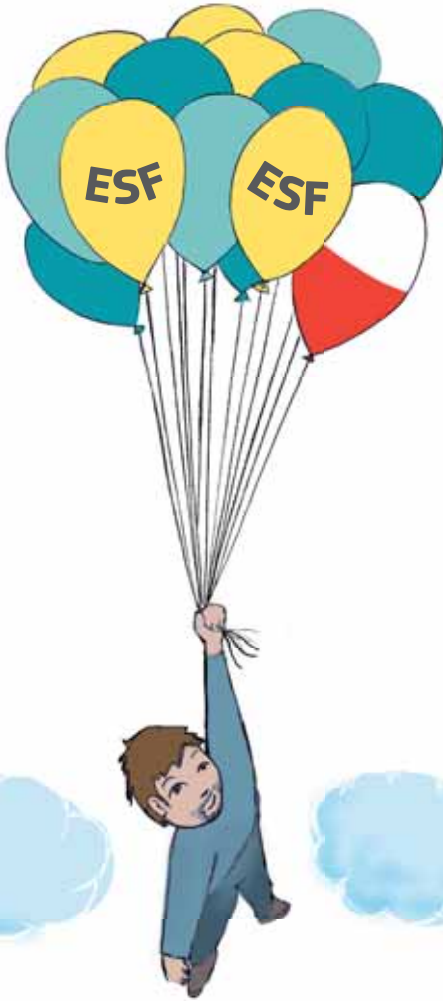




European
Commission



POLAND

AND THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

Poland is using ESF funds to boost the links between science, innovation and industry and to train the highly qualified workers companies need as the economy switches towards more technology-oriented sectors. Reforms to the education and training system are under way to support this effort. And the job prospects of disadvantaged groups are being improved through training and social enterprise.

*Social
Europe*

POLAND

INVESTING IN PEOPLE AND JOBS: THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR POLAND

Employment in Poland has held up well during the economic crisis, supported by ongoing economic growth. However, there are significant challenges for the future. The employment rate is one of the lowest in the EU, mostly due to the low number of older people in work, and the ageing population poses a serious threat to the sustainability of public finances in the future. Therefore, Poland needs to take measures to get more people into work, to keep people in employment for longer, and to provide incentives for older people to return to work. Indeed, Poland is targeting a 71% employment rate by 2020.

Poland has strong regional disparities in wealth and job creation, with outlying rural and urban areas often suffering from low levels of development and fewer opportunities for work. So, Poland is seeking to reduce these inequalities by strengthening regional social and employment services and creating new opportunities for people to upgrade their skills and improve their job prospects. And to boost job opportunities, it is encouraging a greater spirit of enterprise, supporting people

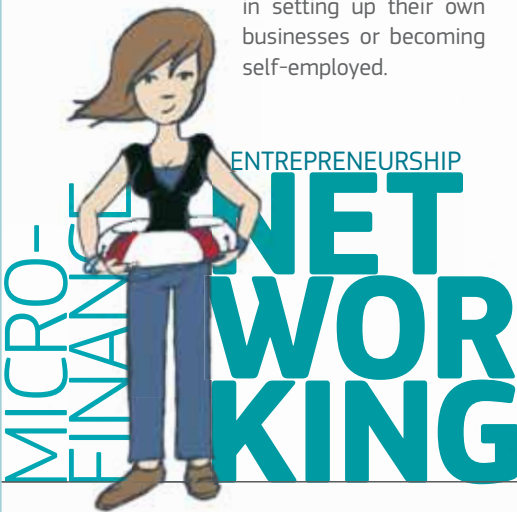
in setting up their own businesses or becoming self-employed.

“Raising the employment rate to 71% by 2020”

The Polish economy is switching away from agriculture and traditional manufacturing and towards the service sectors and more knowledge-intensive industries. And the type of jobs being created is also changing. Education and training are therefore increasingly important to ensure that people gain the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in this changing economic environment – and this, at any age or time of life. In response, Poland is investing further in the reform of the education system and the development of better vocational-training opportunities such that all citizens can benefit from the more productive and skilled jobs that are being created.

ESF spending in Poland

Poland is receiving over EUR 10 billion in ESF funding for the period 2007-2013. With national co-funding, the total ESF spending on education, training and jobs in Poland comes to over EUR 11.7 billion. As well as addressing employment, social exclusion and workforce skills, the ESF programme is also supporting good governance, health-care and rural development.



POLAND'S ESF PRIORITIES

Building knowledge and skills

People are the key strength of the Polish economy and a major factor in increasing the country's innovation potential. ESF funding is therefore helping to modernise both general and vocational education, including adult education, in order to give people the skills they require to adapt to changing demands and to build a culture of lifelong learning. In this effort, ESF actions are targeting groups who need extra help to get training and jobs, such as the young who need a first chance and older workers who need new skills. One example is an energy company in the Province of Mazovia that used ESF support to offer industrial automation training courses to employees over 45 years old to bring their skills up to date. A similar training project was made available to final-year graduates in Tarnów who followed courses in robotics – much in demand in industry – so that they could fine-tune their skills to market needs and increase their prospects for their first job. Entrepreneurship is also being encouraged, as in a project in Lubelskie province which gave 77 determined women help with setting up their own businesses.

Jobs from innovation

The ESF is supporting Poland's determination to build better links between R&D, innovation and industry. Projects are supporting reforms in higher education to make it better adapted to the needs of graduates and workers – giving them the career pathways and advanced skills to help take innovative companies forward. Examples include post-graduate courses to improve teachers' skills

*“Equal access to jobs
and training”*

in Warsaw and to attract more IT professionals and managers into vocational teaching as a career. Increasing the number of graduates in science and technology is also targeted: for example, the 'Physics is interesting' project is giving science teaching a boost and running school competitions in physics for thousands of pupils – to encourage them to take up technical careers.

Everyone included

Poland is using ESF funding to reduce the obstacles faced by certain disadvantaged groups of people and help them integrate into working life. Actions are aimed particularly at counteracting social exclusion among the unemployed, young people, women, and the disabled and older people. As part of this effort, social enterprise is being encouraged, for example by the city of Rzeszów which funds self-help associations among groups such the homeless and ex-offenders. Other examples are the integration employment centres in Szczecin that have equipped over 400 disadvantaged job-seekers with the personal, social and technical skills they need for work; and a project in Toruń to help the social integration of 70 small children with communication difficulties – giving them the confidence to interact and integrate into everyday life. Through actions such as these, Poland intends to reduce the number of people living at risk of poverty by 1.5 million by 2020.

THE ESF IN POLAND: SOME EXAMPLES

Supporting mature enterprise

The District Employment Office of Gdańsk is using ESF funding to support older workers through its 'Mature Entrepreneur' project. The project, which is the first of its kind in Poland, invited unemployed and inactive older workers, including pensioners, to consider the idea of starting up their own business or becoming self-employed. Participants were given the opportunity to take part in a variety of courses covering topics such as computer training, psychology, first steps in business, legal issues, insurance, accountancy and finance, marketing and promotion, and business planning. They were also offered assistance in writing up professional business plans and the possibility to apply for a one-time investment subsidy. At the end of the course, 50 of the 60 participants took the opportunity to launch a new business.

A successful strategy for work

The ESF is supporting the 'Strategy for Success' project which is providing the unemployed and disadvantaged in the district of Rybnik with valuable support to help get them back into work. Run by the district employment office, the project offers an attractive package of vocational courses, traineeships, job placements and financial aid for new, small businesses. It is targeting over 5000 registered unemployed, focusing in particular on disadvantaged groups, including single parents, older job-seekers, the long-term unemployed, ex-offenders and people with disabilities – groups who often find it more difficult than others to find a job. In the largest-scale initiative – worth around EUR 1.25 million – over 1100 people – more than one in five of the unemployed population – were helped to get jobs and improve their job prospects, and 99 of them fulfilled their ambition of launching their own business.

Do you want to...?

- ...learn more about the ESF in Poland?
- ...understand better how the ESF works?
- ...see video clips on projects from across the EU?

Then visit the ESF website:
<http://ec.europa.eu/esf/poland>

