



European  
Commission

## The European Social Fund at work

### Transparent and effective public services



For businesses and the general public, less bureaucracy and a quicker response time from public services means people can focus on getting things done, rather than waiting for permits and paperwork. The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report directly relates quality of public services to a country's level of productivity, in turn linked to prosperity.

The economic climate demands that public money goes further and achieves more. At the same time, the challenge of responding to global competition is ever more pressing. Public services that help rather than hinder business and job creation are needed across the EU. The European Social Fund (ESF) is a concrete European contribution to national policy reforms in the area of public administration.

## Better institutions

Helping public institutions to do their work effectively is not just a technical matter of training civil servants. It also relates to how public authorities interact with business and the public, along with how they deliver services. 'Good governance' is the goal as it builds up trust and helps society function effectively.

One area that is benefiting from ESF actions is the judiciary. In Bulgaria, improvements to the transparency and the administrative capacity of the legal systems are taking up 13% of the country's total ESF allocation. Around 146 judicial bodies have introduced a case-management system and 89 training modules for the judiciary have been introduced.

### Streamlining Italy's public prosecution services

Heavy caseloads in Italy's courts underline the need for an efficient workflow. The interregional project 'Diffusion of Best Practices in Judicial Offices' is using effective systems developed at the public prosecutor's office in the Autonomous Province of Bolzano as a good working model.

The public prosecutor's office has managed to save time and money by simplifying the internal organisational processes of judicial offices. It is hoped that their methods can be used by other offices struggling under caseloads.

The 182 offices involved represent 11% of possible participants. "The pilot project, financed under the European Social Fund, has contributed to an increase in the quality, efficiency and transparency of judicial services", says Dr. Thomas Mathà, Director of the Department of European Affairs in Bolzano.

Hungary is placing its emphasis on increasing the performance of its public administration. It is using ESF support to improve how managers carry out their work and is putting in place incentives to motivate its civil servants.

## Modernising public administrations

Up-to-date public administrations are vital to a country's competitiveness. In recognition of that, Lithuania is using more of its ESF support than any other EU country to modernise its systems.

By the end of 2011, over 22 150 public servants had been on re-training courses, and quality management systems were introduced in ten municipal and eight state administrations.

### Making e-government accessible to the disabled

For disabled people who may have difficulties going to public buildings, e-government is a very positive development. But when websites are designed without accessibility in mind, not everybody feels the benefit.

The ESF is being used to support Polish public institutions to make sure their internet services are accessible to all, by creating sites that meet certain technical requirements. The project includes around 180 different services and seeks to raise awareness among employees at some 400 public institutions, including 300 regional job centres. To achieve this, it is offering e-learning courses and seminars to the staff concerned.

## Improving the business environment

A business-friendly approach to public service provision can help a country's economy to flourish. Poland is using ESF support to make life easier for its entrepreneurs and wider business community by simplifying 92 of its legal acts. It is putting in place a way to measure the cost of administration and improving how it assesses the impact of the processes. As a result, there has been an almost 16% reduction in red tape.

The work being done does not stop at a national level. Regionally, and locally, competence standards have been set up. Around 16 000 civil servants have been trained in new, business-friendly approaches: 4 000 of these in speeding up business registration. These measures have reduced the time needed to start up a business and the price involved. Over and above these activities, 272 offices have benefited from projects aimed at raising the standard of management.

### Registering a company in just three days – the Slovenian example

Speeding up procedures and cutting red tape helps businesses to make the decisions they need to make quickly. An online portal, using ESF support, is doing just that by allowing entrepreneurs to register a company in three days.

Registering, name reservation, VAT declaration and the creation of a temporary bank account are among the online services available. Used by 300 companies, the portal connects 15 national institutions and over 700 civil servants.

The portal was up and running at the start of 2008. Users report they are highly satisfied and the numbers of registrations are on the up, showing the portal is meeting a real need.

## Involvement of partners and civil society

The twin goals of 'better regulation' and 'good governance' can only be achieved through better partnerships between public service administrations and the society they serve.

Portugal has been using ESF support to strengthen the voice of social partners. The project worked on expanding the Confederation of Portuguese Industry and strengthening its members' ability to make their voices heard effectively. As a result, the Confederation plays a greater role both at home and internationally.

Public consultations also provide people outside administrations with a voice. The way they should be set up needs to be thought through taking into account the local context. Internet-based tools can help to encourage more people to get involved, appealing to businesses as well as the general public and interest groups. The ESF is used to support projects working in this area.



## What lies ahead?

Well-run public services help business flourish and people find work, which is why the ESF will continue to focus on projects that help administrations offer prompt, effective services.

With the economic crisis still casting a long shadow, ESF support will be strategically targeted. EU countries will need to set out clearly what challenges they face and show what reforms they are planning. They will also have to show how they are planning to modernise their management systems in the public sector. These reforms will be based on the simplification of administrations and their regulations.



Human resources will also be under the spotlight: training and skills development will play a central part in public service reforms. And to make sure the changes are working, there will also be a focus on monitoring and evaluation.

### More information on the ESF:

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

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