

Boosting employment and social inclusion in EU cities

Lessons learned from cities experiences with the European Social Fund in 2014-2017

Technical report - Preliminary findings - February 2018

Key findings:

- ESF has brought tangible results in cities: better access to jobs, schools, training, housing and social care for vulnerable groups, leading to improved social cohesion.
- An increasing number of cities have expanded responsibilities to manage localised or regionalised ESF allocations for their metropolitan area. This local programming approach to ESF has been tested in several countries and proved successful.
- ESF can serve as a catalyst for social innovation at local level. When cities have the chance to use ESF to pilot social innovations, they mainstream the good practices in regular service provision to improve public services. ESF post 2020 could give cities more room to pilot social innovations in urban areas to achieve its full potential.
- The biggest obstacle for cities to access and use ESF funding is the complexity of rules and procedures generating a high administrative burden and the mismatch between the ESF programme priorities and their locally-identified needs. Local needs were better met when cities were directly involved in defining the programme priorities.
- Better support for cities post 2020 is needed to ensure ESF is used where it is most needed and generates more impact on people's lives.

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Introduction

Most people live in cities. It is in cities that many European social challenges, such as unemployment, poverty, inequality and social exclusion, arise first and are felt the hardest. It is therefore in cities that solutions to these challenges can be found with support from the EU.

The European Social Fund (ESF) is a major source of funding for cities in areas of labour market integration, skills provision and active inclusion. Some cities have benefitted from ESF for over 50 years while others for less than a decade. In both cases the ESF has proven an added value to cities, helping them improve the lives of people in urban areas and strengthen social cohesion in their cities and beyond.

EUROCITIES carried out a survey to examine the experiences of cities with ESF during the first half of the funding period 2014-2020. We analysed the ESF practices of 32 cities from 13 EU member states, thus giving a good geographical representation across the EU:

- Northern Europe (Sweden): Gothenburg, Karlstad, Malmo, Stockholm
- North-Western Europe (Belgium, Netherlands, UK): Antwerp, Ghent, Netwerkstad Twente, London, Preston, Manchester, Glasgow
- Western Europe (France): Angers, Lyon, Nantes
- Southern Europe (Italy and Spain): Bologna, Milan, Rome, Barcelona, Gijon, Terassa
- Central Europe (Germany and Austria): Chemnitz, Karlsruhe, Leipzig, Munich, Nuremberg, Stuttgart, Vienna
- Eastern Europe (Poland, Czech Republic, Croatia, Latvia): Bialystok, Warsaw, Brno, Zagreb, Riga

The survey collected evidence on the implementation of ESF in cities between 2014-2017 directly from city authorities. The responses fed into a comparative analysis to identify trends across cities and map good practices.

The programming period 2014-2020 introduced three innovations that benefitted cities involvement in ESF. Firstly, member states were encouraged to use EU structural funds for integrated actions for sustainable urban development. As a result, over a third of the new urban strategies included ESF funding. Secondly, article 7 in the ERDF regulation set a minimum threshold of the national ERDF allocation to be used for integrated actions in cities. This inspired some managing authorities (in some regions) to delegate increasing responsibilities to cities and metropolitan areas in managing ESF funding allocations. Thirdly, the European code of conduct on partnership called upon member states to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders, including cities, in programming and implementing the operational programmes. Despite these innovations, ESF is still not directly accessible by cities - their access depends on the member state's approach to allocating ESF and on the relationship between local and national level authorities. Where there is more trust, cities have more leverage for a stronger role in ESF.

This report presents the findings from cities' experiences with ESF in 2014-2017. It outlines:

- achievements and added value of city-led interventions
- trends in how cities are involved in the preparation of ESF programmes
- obstacles and challenges cities face in accessing and using ESF
- issues to be considered for further improving ESF in the future
- good practices of how cities use ESF and their success factors

Key findings

More cities are using and benefitting from ESF in 2014-2020 than in previous funding periods. An increasing number of cities received expanded responsibilities to manage local or regional ESF allocations for their metropolitan area as intermediate bodies. This local programming approach to ESF has been tested in several countries and proved successful. Cities that were given the opportunity to manage a global ESF grant developed local labour market strategies to benefit a large part of the population.

Most cities use ESF funding to deliver tailored support for the labour market activation of disadvantaged groups, such as long-term unemployed, migrants and refugees, young people or people with disabilities. Improving access to employment is by far the top priority of most city-led ESF projects. This is due to the predominant focus on labour market integration in the national ESF operational programmes. If given the chance, cities wished to make more and better use of ESF to combat poverty and support social inclusion, enhance lifelong learning and skills development, and raise the quality of the public services they provide. Only a minority of cities (15%) have used ESF to improve their institutional capacity to provide employment and social services, showing a clear gap for ESF to overcome in the future.

ESF has brought tangible results in cities - better access to jobs, schools, housing, health and social care for vulnerable groups. It has added tremendous value to the work of cities:

- filling gaps in mainstream employment and skills provision by focusing on the hard-to-reach groups with targeted and tailored support
- enabling cities to try out new methods and innovative approaches, which they can later mainstream in regular service provision to improve public services
- building cities' capacity to better support pathways into employment and inclusion, such as by adopting good practices from other EU cities
- driving cross-sectoral coordination in the city administration (linking employment and social services) and stimulating new partnerships with actors at local level (employers, businesses, NGOs) and in metropolitan and functional areas

Most cities (84%) were consulted in the preparation of ESF operational programmes (OP) for 2014-2020. While this is an improvement since the previous funding period, half of the cities were dissatisfied with the consultation process as it was too rushed, too limited in scope or did not take on board cities' concerns in the final OP. More needs to be done by national authorities to fully apply the partnership principle to meaningfully involve cities in OP development.

Cities still face many obstacles to accessing and using ESF in an effective way:

- too narrow thematic focus of ESF OPs that leaves key local challenges unaddressed, such as support for homeless and elderly, skills mismatch, social housing, early childhood care and long-term care services
- insufficient suitable calls to apply to while the existing calls are too narrow in scope, too prescriptive and offer little room for innovation
- target groups and indicators set in OP do not match the local reality
- rules are too complex, rigid and burdensome, hindering access, causing costly implementation and rewarding procedural compliance to the detriment of innovation and impact on the ground
- delays in the start of projects due to the slow start of the ESF programmes and the long time-to-grant procedures
- too difficult to combine ESF with other EU funding programmes

Cities would like a stronger role in ESF post 2020 to ensure ESF is used where it is most needed.

1 Overview of ESF use by cities

All 32 cities in our study have been involved in ESF programmes during 2014-2017. Nearly all (30) carried out ESF projects in which they were the lead partner and main beneficiary.

Role of cities in ESF

The role cities play in ESF depends on their member state's approach to allocating ESF and on the relationship between local and national level authorities. Where there is more trust, cities have more leverage to get a stronger role in ESF OPs. Our survey reveals that:

- **Six metropolitan cities are ESF intermediate bodies:** Angers, London, Lyon, Vienna, Milan and Bologna (for national OP Metropolitan Cities)

The programming period 2014-2020 has seen a delegation of responsibilities from the ESF managing authorities to metropolitan cities in some member states, showing trust in them to decide how to best spend ESF allocation according to the needs in their area. This means that some metropolitan cities were responsible for managing a local ESF funding envelope for their territory to deliver some of the priorities of the ESF operational programme. This was done through a formal agreement between the city and the state.

In such cases, metropolitan cities play a dual role of intermediate body and grant beneficiary. As the intermediate body, cities redistribute the major part of the ESF allocation to local stakeholders. They launch calls for proposals, select the projects, monitor their performance and evaluate them, as well as providing assistance when needed. In addition, cities use part of the ESF allocation to directly support the delivery of their local policies for employment and social inclusion. Some examples of these intermediate body cities are:

- Angers and partner city Cholet signed a convention with the French state to manage €4 million during 2015-2017 to develop and implement a metropolitan plan for employment and inclusion. Another convention will be signed for 2018-2020. The same situation applies to Lyon that received €850,000 EUR for 2015-2016 and over €24 million for 2017-2020 to develop its own metropolitan strategy for employment and inclusion.
- Vienna is responsible for managing €53 million in ESF allocation, which it redistributes through targeted calls for proposals while using part of it to deliver its own local programme 'Chancen Scheck' to help residents obtain a vocational qualification.
- The Greater London Authority acts as an intermediate body for the London region.
- **One metropolitan city procures and manages ESF projects as a 'co-financing organisation'** Greater Manchester is a ESF 'co-financing organisation' for the entire period of 2014-2020. It manages an ESF allocation of €186 million that it mostly redistributes to local providers while securing about €38 million to support the delivery of its 'Working Well' programme.
- **Seven cities are part of local or regional bodies that coordinate ESF allocations:** Gothenburg, Karlsruhe, Karlstad, Nantes, Rome, Stockholm and Stuttgart

In some countries, cities are part of local or regional entities that coordinate the allocation of ESF resources for that local area. In some German landers (e.g. Baden-Wurttemberg), cities and regions dispose of regionalised ESF funding envelopes whose allocation is decided in local or regional working groups of stakeholders, including cities. For example, Karlsruhe has an ESF allocation of €440,000 per year and can decide, together with local actors, how to spend and

which local projects to support. Stuttgart is part of a regional working group that has an ESF allocation of €990,000 per year. In Sweden, since 2007 there are eight ‘structural funds partnerships’ (NUTS2-regions), composed of politicians from municipalities and county councils, as well as senior executives from academia, industry, public and non-profit sectors, who decide on the projects to be prioritised and funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) regional action plans. In France, some cities such as Nantes Metropole take part in the governance of the intermediate bodies in their territory (role held by Organisme de Gestion InterPLIE Mutualisé Nantes Saint-Nazaire - OGIM) and in the definition of the strategic framework for their ESF activities (an agreement between Nantes Metropole, the state and the departmental council).

- **16 cities receive ESF support via specific calls for project proposals**

Most cities in the EU and predominantly in Southern and Central-Eastern Europe obtain ESF grants by applying to calls for project proposals of ESF managing authorities. In many cases, cities use the ESF grant to deliver local initiatives on employment or social inclusion in cooperation with vocational schools, employment services, employers and NGOs.

- **Two cities are involved in ESF projects only as partners**

Cities can be partners in the implementation of ESF projects led by other organisations such as public employment services, schools or NGOs and co-financed by cities. For example, Zagreb is part of an ESF-funded project that provides personal assistants to children with disabilities in primary schools. Given that the municipality is not eligible to apply for ESF grants, Zagreb could only be involved as partner, but in fact its role is much bigger in this project. The city encouraged the schools in its jurisdiction to apply for the call, provided co-financing and gave expert and administrative support for project application and implementation. This shows that even if they are limited by formal rules, cities are still keen to play an active role in ESF.

City-led initiatives with ESF

Cities use ESF support in different ways. Some cities implement one major programme with a large ESF grant while others carry out multiple projects in parallel, each with separate objectives and target groups. Warsaw holds the record for implementing 35 projects with support from ESF 2014-2017, 30 of them as lead beneficiary and five as partner.

Based on our survey data, we identified three major ways in which cities use ESF support:

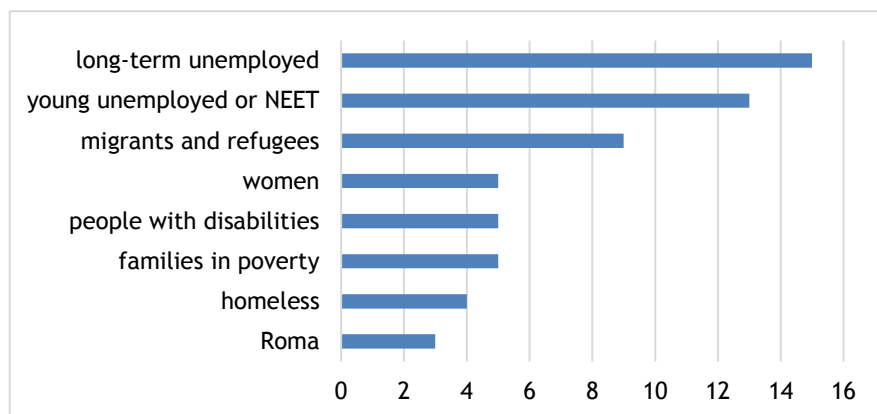
- five cities use ESF for integrated plans for sustainable social urban development
- seven cities use ESF to develop and deliver local labour market strategies
- 18 cities use ESF for targeted projects to address a specific need or target group

Chemnitz, Bologna, Milan, Munich and Rome use ESF funding for developing integrated plans for sustainable social urban development. For example, the ESF OP of the Free State of Saxony ‘Sustainable social urban development’ identified two deprived neighbourhoods in Chemnitz (south and city centre) and planned 25 projects to help people living there. The projects integrated five fields of action, from lifelong learning and youth work to labour market integration, social inclusion and the economy in the area. In Munich, many of the 100 projects within the Munich employment and qualification programme are co-financed by the federal and/or the Bavarian ESF programme(s). Bologna, Milan and Rome combine ESF and ERDF funding in delivering the national operational programme ‘Metropolitan Cities’. They match ERDF measures for refurbishing buildings with social inclusion interventions funded through ESF such as social work and social services to support disadvantaged people to move into new housing in the refurbished buildings.

Angers, Karlsruhe, London, Lyon, Greater Manchester and Vienna mobilised ESF funding for the elaboration and delivery of strategic metropolitan programmes for employment and social inclusion, with the involvement of a wide network of local partners. These are the same cities that received additional responsibilities as intermediate bodies. This shows that when cities are given the opportunity to manage a global ESF grant they put it to good use in strategic plans that benefit a large part of the population. An interesting example is in Karlsruhe where the city has integrated the ESF-funded projects, the state-funded job centre and its Local Employment programme under one umbrella strategy of the city to prevent long-term unemployment. This approach was praised by all partners involved.

Most of the cities in our sample (18 of 32) use ESF funding to develop and implement specific projects for tackling the social challenges of specific target groups. The common feature of city-led ESF projects is that they reach out to those people furthest away from the labour market and most marginalised groups in society, who are usually hard to reach through mainstream public services. This is a key added value of ESF as it enables cities to give tailored support to vulnerable groups and find new ways to integrate them into society. The majority of city-led projects focus on the labour market activation of long-term unemployed, youth not in employment, education or training (NEET), migrants and refugees, women, homeless, people with disabilities, families in poverty or Roma. For example, Karlstad’s project ‘Porten’ (*Gate*) helps people with Asperger syndrome find work, Ghent provides tailored vocational guidance to Roma people, Bologna gives active inclusion support to families in debt or poverty while Brno supports homeless people to move into social housing.

Figure 1. Most common target groups in city-led ESF projects

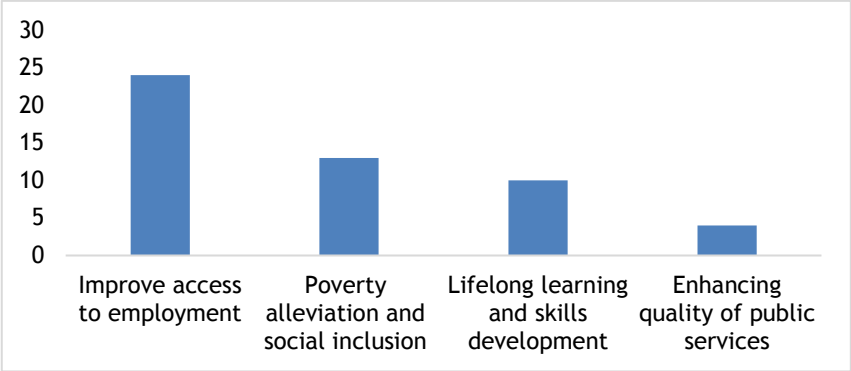


Note: data shows the number of cities that mentioned each target group. Each city reported more than one.

Priorities

City reports indicate that all major ESF priorities are covered, as illustrated below. The vast majority of cities in our study (77%) use ESF to improve access to employment. For example, many ESF projects led by cities support young people make the transition from school to work, train the less-skilled job-seekers to improve their job prospects and prepare newly arrived refugees and migrants to get into the local labour market. Actions for labour market activation usually include tailored guidance for job-seekers, language classes and professional orientation for migrants, vocational training and guidance, and matching job seekers with available jobs. Cities work closely with local employers to fill the gaps on the labour market and create new employment opportunities and work placements. Some cities do not only help people ‘get into’ work, but help them stay in work: Greater Manchester’s ‘Working Well’ programme for 2015-2020 supports 35,000 long-term unemployed to move into sustainable, quality employment.

Figure 2. Priorities of city-led ESF projects



Note: data shows the number of cities that mentioned each priority. Each city reported more than one.

Combating poverty and supporting social inclusion is another key priority that 42% of the surveyed cities include in their ESF projects. City authorities use ESF funding to reach out to people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion (many facing multiple deprivations), and help them integrate into society. Measures for poverty alleviation and active inclusion often involve tailored support from social services, housing assistance, healthcare and long-term care services, second-chance schools, debt management, active job search, all seeking to empower individuals to regain autonomy. Cities also work with local employers to lift barriers to employment and make the local labour markets more inclusive of single parents, refugees, migrants, Roma, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

32% of cities in our sample reported using ESF funding to support lifelong learning and skills development. City-led ESF projects in this area seek to help people acquire new skills (e.g. digital skills), obtain or validate their qualifications, prevent early school leaving, train teachers, adapt learning programmes to fit the needs of those with learning difficulties, and support youth gain practical experience through apprenticeships and job shadowing in local companies. With support from ESF, Vienna set up a new ‘youth college for refugees’ where educational programmes are adapted to the needs of newly-arrived refugees. Stockholm mobilised ESF to upskill the digital skills of staff in elderly care facilities.

A few cities in our study (15%) also use ESF support for improving their institutional capacity and raising the quality of the public services they provide. Gothenburg, Stockholm and Warsaw introduced social clauses in public procurement as a way to stimulate creation of jobs inclusive of vulnerable groups. Warsaw is also using ESF to integrate social services into a new digital platform accessible to all residents and they also mobilised ESF to increase childcare services in local communities.

2 How are cities involved in the programming?

The European code of conduct on partnership had a positive impact on the involvement of cities in the preparation of the ESF operational programmes (OPs) for 2014-2020. Our survey found:

- 26 cities were consulted in the preparation of ESF OPs, out of which:
 - 14 were satisfied with the consultation process
 - 12 were not satisfied
- Six cities were not directly consulted or involved in the OP preparation

The findings confirm that more cities took part in the development of ESF OPs for 2014-2020 than in the previous period. However, more needs to be done by national authorities to fully apply the partnership principle and meaningfully involve cities in defining OP priorities.

Directly consulted in the programming of ESF OPs

Most cities in our study (26 of 32) took part in the ESF OP preparation. However, the extent to which cities were involved varies depending on the national or regional approach to ESF:

- in countries with centralised systems, cities took part in consultations organised by the central government on the OP (e.g. Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland)
- in countries with one country-wide ESF OP and a strong tradition of decentralisation, cities took part in drafting devolved action plans to inform the OP (UK, the Netherlands)
- in member states with both a national and several regional ESF OPs, cities were consulted by the ESF regional authorities and by the state (France, Italy, Sweden)
- in countries with federal system or autonomous communities, cities' participation is mostly organised through umbrella associations of cities (Belgium, Germany, Spain)

Cities' involvement depends largely on the willingness of the national or regional authorities to consult them. Some cities were involved from an early stage in drafting the OP while others were only briefly consulted. Some noted a significant contrast between how they were involved in the ERDF programme, while in ESF they were 'hardly involved as stakeholders'.

Cities such as Bologna, Chemnitz, Gothenburg, Karlsruhe, Karlstad, Lyon, Milan, Riga, Stockholm, Vienna and Warsaw were involved in the elaboration of the ESF operational programme for their country or region. Cities were able to contribute to drafting the OP by submitting input and comments at various stages of the drafting process. They could have a say on the OP priorities and targets, and on the conditions (Riga), funding guidelines (Chemnitz) or the application process (Karlstad, Riga). Cities achieved this through open dialogue and regular exchanges with the ESF authorities during the preparation stage, which in some cases continued throughout the implementation period (Chemnitz, Karlsruhe and Warsaw). This was possible due to the series of consultation meetings organised by the managing authorities in the form of seminars, workshops, roundtables, conferences and working groups on the elaboration of OPs. In France, where there is both a national OP managed by the central government and regional ESF OPs managed at regional level, two separate consultations took place, one at national and one regional level, and French cities could contribute to both. In Stockholm, the OP was written by the County Administrative Board of Stockholm together with the ESF managing authority and other regional actors including the city of Stockholm.

Good practices

14 cities were satisfied with how the partnership principle was applied and how they managed to influence the content of the ESF OPs. Some good practices include:

- In England, ESF allocations are made through 40 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP), who choose how the allocation is spent in their area. Each LEP wrote an ESIF strategy for their area (including both ESF and ERDF) that was then sent to the ESIF managing authorities who fed the inputs into the country-wide OPs to ensure they meet the needs of local areas.
- Baden-Württemberg ran an online consultation on local needs and organised a series of conferences to discuss the results of the consultations with cities. Karlsruhe was able to get actively involved. The city had regular meetings and exchanges with all heads of the regional ESF offices where it could submit and discuss amendments and suggestions for the OP content development, target setting and indicators for funding allocation.
- Another good practice comes from Italy where a multi-level partnership approach was used to prepare the multi-fund national OP 'Metropolitan Cities'. For example, Bologna participated in the OP development through a partnership gathering mayors, the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI), the regions concerned and the national authorities as well as stakeholders from the economic, social and environmental fields.
- Since 2007, Sweden has eight 'structural funds partnerships' (NUTS 2 regions) that gathers politicians from municipalities and county councils, as well as senior executives from academia, industry, public and non-profit sectors, to decide on the projects to be prioritised and funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). For the funding period 2014-2020, the 'Stockholm model' was developed. This model means that the structural funds partnership defines yearly needs in the regional action plan of ESF and mobilises actors in the region. In this way, based on the locally identified needs and challenges, specific calls for proposals are launched. The partnership is also involved in selecting projects.

Shortcomings

Some cities were offered only a limited possibility for inputting to ESF OPs. While they appreciated they could contribute, they were dissatisfied with how the consultation was run and the limited influence it had on shaping the OP. Cities reported the following limitations:

- restricted public consultation with no further inputs (Antwerp, Leipzig, Munich)
- too short time given to provide comments on the draft OP (Glasgow, Leipzig, Malmo)
- final OP not reflecting city concerns (Angers, Leipzig, Lyon, Preston, Riga)

A general obstacle identified by some cities is the difficulty to have their views on ESF heard within the broad, national scope of the OP given that the local needs are varied and specific. They agree that local programming is a better way to match ESF with locally identified needs.

Not directly consulted at programming stage

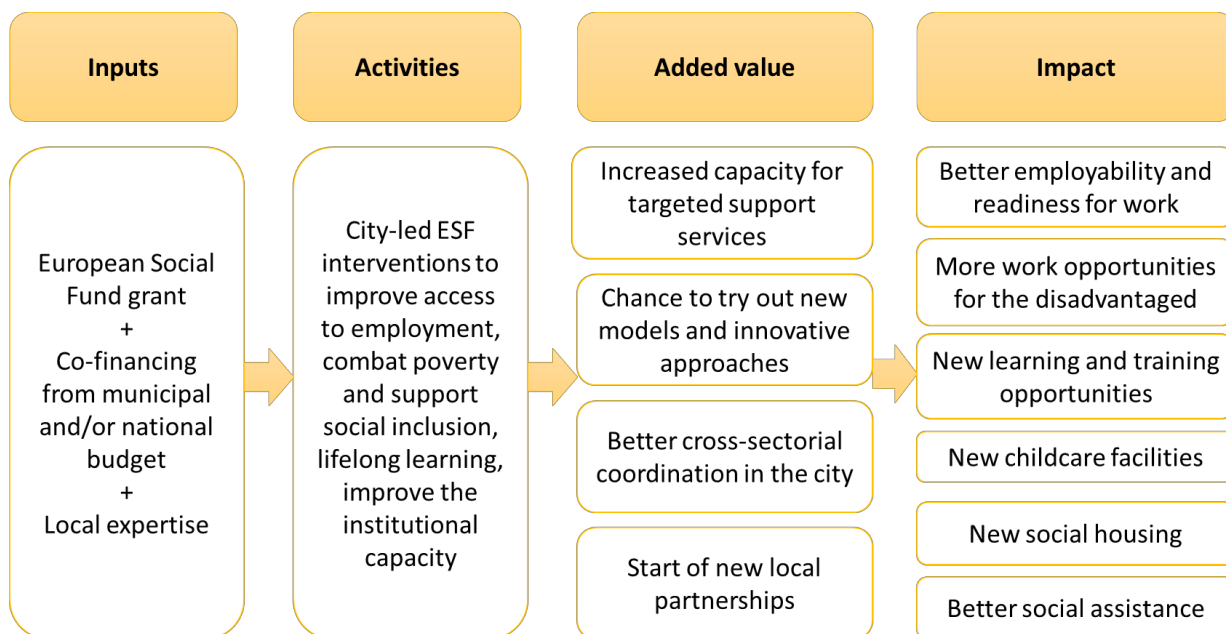
Six cities (Barcelona, Ghent, Gijon, Malmo, Terrassa, Zagreb) were not directly involved in developing the OP. All of them except Zagreb had to rely on information from the umbrella association of cities, which were consulted by the national and regional authorities. However, these associations did not involve all cities in the process. For example, while Barcelona was consulted, Terrassa and Gijon were not. Ghent was also not consulted by the Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG). This shows that indirect consultation through umbrella organisations is not an effective way to get views from cities.

There is consensus among cities that the mechanisms of consultation need to be improved to ensure the direct participation of cities. This is the only way ESF funding can be used where it is most needed.

3 Added value and success factors

All city authorities surveyed for this study acknowledged the added value of ESF assistance to complement and improve their employment and social services. Cities appreciate that ESF gives space to trying out new and innovative approaches, reaching out to those most in need and offering them targeted support. More than half of cities reported that without support from ESF, they could not have achieved the same results or impact in employment and training opportunities. ESF assistance is very important to all cities as all cities have pockets of poverty or vulnerable groups who need extra support to integrate in the labour market and in society.

Figure 3. Added value and impact produced by ESF-funded interventions in cities



3.1 What added value does ESF bring to city authorities?

- ESF allows cities to fill gaps in mainstream employment and skills provision. Marginalised groups are usually difficult to reach through mainstream provision due to the limited resources cities have at their disposal within their constrained budgets. Cities can through ESF complement their mainstream provision with tailored support for those most in need (e.g. young NEETs, long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, migrants and refugees, Roma people), who may otherwise fall through the cracks in mainstream provision, or for whom mainstream provision is inappropriate. For example, after the sudden influx of refugees in 2015, the ESF made it possible for (some) cities to finance measures for the integration of newly-arrived refugees, which they could not cover through their regular services, e.g. establishment of a youth college for refugees in Vienna. The costs incurred by the social exclusion of vulnerable groups is massive for cities, which means that by supporting their social inclusion, ESF also helps generate economic benefits for cities.
- ESF enables cities to focus on the hard-to-reach with tailor-made support. Beneficiaries of city-led actions co-financed by ESF are usually those people furthest away from the labour market who often face multiple deprivations (e.g. poverty, poor housing, health issues) that constitute big barriers to get (back) into work. Thanks to support from ESF, cities are able to reach out to vulnerable groups and to better understand their specific needs for inclusion. In this way, cities can then design tailored solutions targeted to the specific

needs of disadvantaged groups, notably how to best combine appropriate training with active support to employment. Tailored social and professional support helps lift barriers to labour market so that young people can more easily obtain their first job while the long-term unemployed are helped to return back to employment. For example, in Netwerkstad Twente, low-skilled young people could benefit from tailored guidance from supervisors who matched their skills with available vacancies in mediation with employers.

- ESF helps cities build capacity. Many city experts reported that they developed new skills, knowledge and capacity, such as how to better support pathways into employment and inclusion in society, due to their involvement in ESF projects. This has helped cities develop new support services or improve the existing ones for the benefit of residents. Some reported that ESF helped them adopt good practices from other EU cities. Transnational ESF projects enable cities to develop expertise and acquire a new perspective by working with other cities with whom they share experiences and challenges, adding value to their local work. For example, Stockholm reported that hundreds of jobs were created through social clauses in public procurement as a result of a good practice from a transnational ESF project ('Transnet') from the previous funding period 2007-2013.
- ESF gives cities the chance to try out new methods and innovative approaches, helping individuals move easier from inactivity to active inclusion in society. Six cities reported that they were able to develop innovative pilot projects on how to best tailor the support provided to the most disadvantaged in society. For example, Bologna created a social card for active inclusion support for families in vulnerable economic situation who receive economic support (funded from national budget) together with training and active support to employment (funded through ESF). Brno piloted the Housing First approach to combat homelessness in the city. Karlsruhe developed part-time training for single parents while Warsaw tested a community-based approach to care services and an integrated system for social support to families at risk of poverty. Stockholm tested several new methods, including how to support people with mild mental health problems as well as former prisoners to (re-)enter the labour market. They also tried out mentorship training for employers who hire long-term unemployed as well as new ways to improve mental health coaching for the unemployed. Some of the good practices from ESF projects have been mainstreamed in the regular service provision of the city, leading to wider structural changes and improving public services.
- ESF drives cross-sectoral coordination in the city. For example, in Gothenburg, the ESF-funded project 'Young East' led to a more proactive and coordinated approach among the projects partners, namely the social services, local police and employment services, and provided extra support that enabled these partners to work together and share vital information. Another example is Greater Manchester where support from different local services was coordinated - mental health, debt management, housing services - by case workers to give tailored and personalised help to long-term unemployed.
- ESF builds bridges between different sectors and actors in the city. ESF projects give cities opportunities to bring together and collaborate with a wide range of local stakeholders (public employment services, vocational schools, training institutes, employers, universities, NGOs and citizens) and build relevant networks. Many cities reported that the ESF project was a means to start new, sustainable partnerships at local level. For example, Lyon's ESF-funded metropolitan programme for inclusion and employment bridges the gap between actors involved in social inclusion and those in economic development by linking the demand and offer on the local labour market to fill skill gaps, create new jobs and social enterprises.

3.2 What did cities achieve with support from ESF?

With support from ESF, cities have delivered local measures for labour market integration and social inclusion that had a positive impact on improving people's lives, in particular those from vulnerable groups. City reports show that ESF has made a difference in terms of:

- increased employability and readiness for labour market (better professional skills)
- improved employment opportunities for specific groups (creation of new jobs)
- improved learning and training opportunities (set up new schools, skills centres)
- reducing the level of poverty and social exclusion (new housing, new childcare)

Most cities (80%) reported visible results in labour market integration of people from vulnerable groups. For example, Karlstad reported that 54% of young people have entered work or training after an average of seven months of participation in the project. This is a significant achievement given that most of the participants were low-skilled, long-term unemployed or with mental disabilities. Greater Manchester also reported early results of its 'Working Well' programme. 20% of participants made it into employment after two years in which case workers provided individualised support to each participant. This is roughly-four times greater than the rate of national employment programmes. Given the payment by results approach of the programme, providers are paid 60% at contract signature and the remaining 40% only when the participant has been in work for 50 out of 58 weeks. This places the emphasis on providers finding sustainable and quality employment and helping people 'stay in work' through this additional one year of 'in work' support.

Fewer cities (27%) reported that new employment opportunities were created thanks to the ESF projects. For example, some cities used social clauses in public procurement to stimulate job creation. Warsaw used an ESF-funded project to introduce social clauses in selected categories of public procurement, which has improved the situation of socially excluded people in the labour market in Warsaw. 3,700 people were employed within the first year of implementation due to the obligation of employing people under an employment contract to fulfil public procurement obligations.

In over a third of cities (37%), ESF projects led to the creation of new learning and training opportunities by opening new schools, vocational or skills centres, or new programmes to address the learning needs of specific target groups. For example, Munich used ESF assistance to open new vocational schools and to give support to the schools to develop new qualification programmes in line with the needs of migrants and refugees, and tailor existing programmes to fit the specific needs of pupils with learning difficulties, such as former drug abusers. In Bialystok, new teaching methods were developed as well as programmes for training the teachers on work-based learning. In Warsaw, new apprenticeship programmes were developed by the city in collaboration with local employers and vocational schools.

To improve educational outcomes, some cities focused on increasing access to pre-school education and used ESF to create new facilities for early childhood education and care. For example, Bialystok and Warsaw used ESF to increase the number of childcare services. Warsaw reported that about 486 new places were created in nurseries for children under three years of age because of six ESF projects that the city ran during 2013-2015, and other 1,186 new places will be created through eight ESF projects in the period 2017-2020.

A reduction in poverty and social inequalities among people living in urban areas was also reported as expected results of some of the newer city-led ESF interventions, although reported less frequently (only in 15% of cities) than the labour market integration outcomes.

Bologna, Brno, Milan and Rome have created new opportunities for Roma people and families in vulnerable economic situations to access social housing and adequate social assistance support. Chemnitz created new opportunities for people in deprived areas to access education.

3.3 Could ESF have more added value for cities?

While ESF has been successful for labour market integration at local level, its added value could be even higher if it were better used to tackle other societal problems besides unemployment. This is what half of the cities reported, highlighting that combating poverty, discrimination and social exclusion, preventing early school leaving and active inclusion of marginalised groups in society, could be better addressed. The ESF could support efforts towards meeting not only the EU2020 target on employment, but also the targets on reducing school leaving and lifting people out of poverty. Moreover, the way ESF assistance is designed means that many stakeholders are driven by concerns about financial risk and meeting the strict indicators and targets, rather than making sure ESF projects support the most disadvantaged in society as well as possible. These challenges, which are analysed in the next chapter, limit the potential of ESF to produce even wider and more impactful changes in people's lives and in society at large.

Another common consideration among cities is that the achievements and added value of ESF projects should be communicated more effectively at all levels from local, regional, national and EU level. Wide-reaching communication campaigns could be organised to inform and raise awareness of the public on the ESF-funded actions in their city. Making the benefits of the ESF more visible has the potential to bring citizens closer to the EU.

3.4 Success factors

The experiences of cities with ESF reveal the necessary ingredients that, if combined, can bring about the best results and maximum impact. These success factors are:

1. Make sure the intervention addresses the real needs of people in the local area. Any public policy intervention starts with problem definition, and ESF is no different. Cities are well aware of the most pressing needs at local level, but they do not all have equal possibilities to use ESF assistance to design interventions that respond to the real needs on the ground. This depends on the extent to which local needs are reflected in the ESF OPs (see section 2). Where a local programming approach to ESF is in place, the ESF projects are more relevant to the local situation and can have a bigger impact on improving people's lives. This is the case for Angers, Lyon and Nantes that developed strategic plans for employment and inclusion, in line with the specificities of their local labour markets.

2. Focus on empowering the most vulnerable to gain autonomy. Interventions that place the individual person at the centre achieve the best results because they focus on helping individuals define their own goals to achieve their full potential, whether this means further education, training, employment or better participation in the local community or in society at large. Cities do this by identifying specific groups that most need support, taking the time to understand their needs and responding to them with tailored support services. This involves a pro-active approach to reaching the hard-to-reach and building a trust-based relationship through personalised guidance by well-trained professionals. For example, youth beneficiaries of ESF projects in Karlstad, many of whom had multiple deprivations, reported that "being listened to and receiving coaching support towards their own goals was the main factor that helped them succeed towards employment or further training".

3. Adopt an integrated approach by linking up employment and social services. The challenges people face in urban areas, such as unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, are complex and cover multiple social problems that can be best addressed through an integrated approach. For instance, most cities approach labour market integration by combining training with guidance to access employment and support from social services, for instance help to find affordable childcare. Success ultimately depends on the quality of collaboration across services. For example, Greater Manchester's programme 'Working Well' is based on integrated provision of support services by linking case workers with housing services, mental health, debt management and other services, in view of supporting 35,000 long-term unemployed people to move in sustainable and quality jobs by 2022.

4. Deliver the intervention through a participatory and bottom-up approach. Working in partnership with all relevant actors at local level from public, private and non-profit sector is key to achieving good results. However, for best results, cities need to involve citizens and local stakeholders in shaping the ESF project from early on, to instil ownership of the project delivery and its results. For instance, to contribute to the delivery of the multi-fund national OP 'Metropolitan Cities', Bologna involved citizens and local partners in co-creating the vision for the renewal of their neighbourhoods and co-designing social innovation actions. Chemnitz involved citizens, local initiative groups, experts from the social sector and district managers in co-creating integrated actions plans for socially deprived areas.

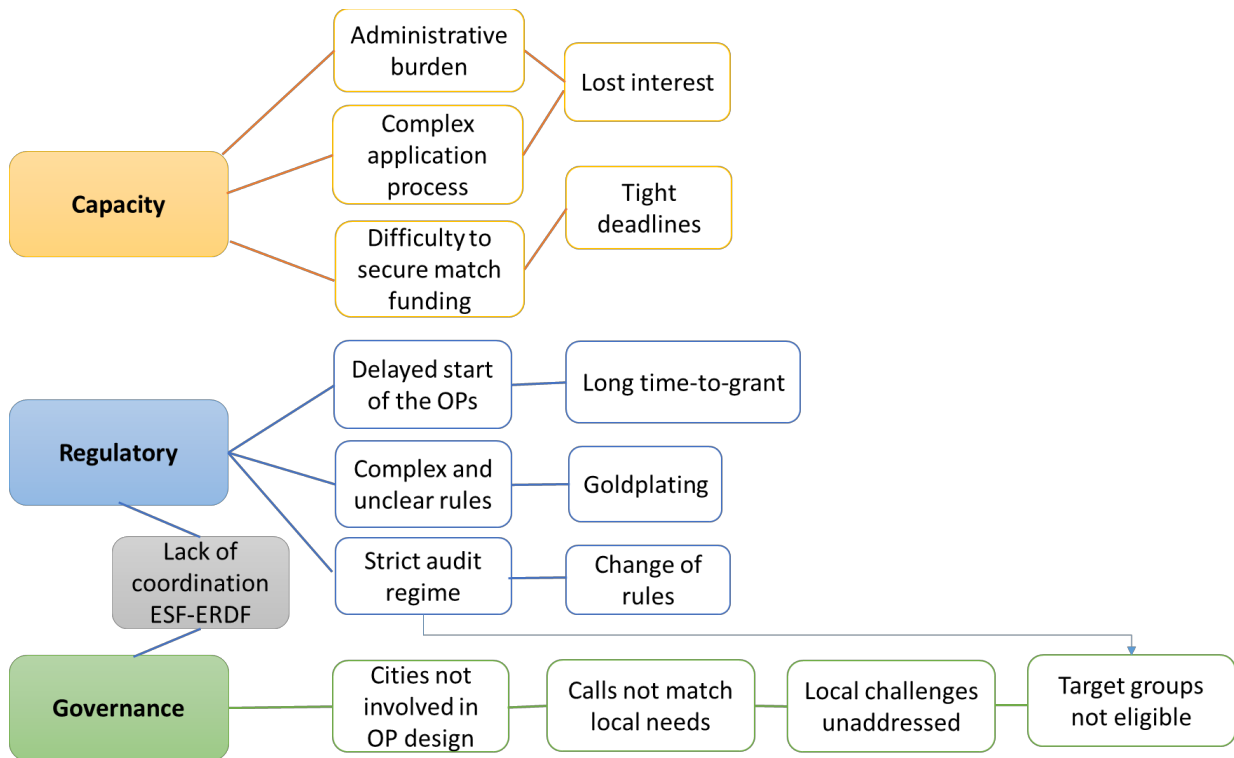
5. Ensure good coordination within the city and region. Strategic internal coordination is key to avoid duplication of efforts and maximise results and impact. For example, Gothenburg is one of the most active cities in ESF because of how the city coordinates internally on ESF, including coordination of grant applications to avoid unnecessary competition within the city. Karlstad went even further and set up a project office that centralises administrative tasks to coordinate the small ESF projects of all municipalities in the region to enable them to focus on project implementation. Both cities have a good cooperation with the national and regional ESF managing authorities.

4 Obstacles and challenges

All cities in our study reported obstacles to accessing and using ESF in an effective way where is most needed. Three types of challenges were identified across cities:

- capacity-related - administrative burden, timeframes, lack of match funding
- regulatory obstacles - gold plating, strict auditing, inflexible indicators
- governance-related - OP definition of priorities and targets, lack of coordination

Figure 4. Overview of key obstacles for cities to access and use ESF



4.1 Barriers in accessing ESF funding by cities

The high administrative burden remains the biggest obstacle cities face in accessing ESF, despite recent efforts in some countries to simplify procedures. Two thirds of cities (20 in 32) consider the time and effort needed to apply for, manage and report on an ESF project, is too high compared to the resources for the project implementation. In particular, data collection, accounting and auditing on beneficiaries of all project activities is burdensome when the justification of costs could be made simpler.

The excessive administrative burden makes smaller municipalities and local partners with limited capacity lose interest in ESF even if they have expertise in working with the most disadvantaged in society and could make a valuable contribution to using ESF where most needed. Simplification of ESF rules and procedures is necessary to lift this entry barrier.

Nantes assessed that the ratio between the cost of project development and the grant amount makes small projects ($\leq 20-30K\text{€}$) unfeasible. Small organisations are discouraged to submit projects whereas they are the most innovative and efficient operators on the ground and are highly interested in recognition through a ESF grant. Nantes advises small operators to work as subcontractors with large operators to overcome this entry barrier.

Another obstacle cities face in accessing ESF funds is the difficulty to secure matching funding. One in four cities (8 in 32) find it difficult to get match funding. This is due to the austerity measures that have limited the matching funding available from municipal and national budgets. Some cities would appreciate more flexibility in the rates of co-financing.

Cities that manage to get matching funding and are willing to accept the administrative burden are faced with a complex and lengthy application process. A third of cities believe the application forms are too complex, have too many formal criteria, tight deadlines to respond to calls and that the documentation required is too extensive. Some ESF proposals require many documents from cities to prove their financial and operational capacity, which could be more trust-based given the competences cities have. Some cities reported that the two-stage application process is too long and significantly delays the start of projects. The guidance from the managing authority could also be improved. Some cities experienced applying for different ESF projects that require different formal guidelines, which makes it difficult to synchronise the ESF projects at city level (London, Glasgow, Lyon).

Cities face a long waiting time after submitting their grant application and until they can start their ESF project (time-to-grant). This is due to the lengthy assessments and appraisals by the managing authorities. The time-to-grant has increased significantly in the current programming period. For example, Nantes reported that the time-to-grant was 12-18 months during the 2007-2013 period and it is 18-24 months during 2014-2020.

Not only is the time-to-grant longer, but also the calls for proposals are launched much later after the start of the programming period due to the lengthy process to transpose ESF rules. Delays in the start of the ESF programmes and the increasingly longer time-to-grant lead to shorter timeframe for projects, which affects the capacity of cities to deliver ESF projects in the most effective way. A quarter of cities in our study reported problems caused by delays in the start of their projects. In some countries, the first calls for ESF projects were only launched in 2015 with projects starting in late 2015 or 2016 (Ghent, Riga). The challenge is that despite the big delays accumulated, the targets and expected outcomes remain unchanged, which puts pressure on cities to deliver double in half the period. The biggest constraint is that projects for two-to-three years are not sufficiently long to address complex societal issues in urban areas and for the size of target groups concerned, which would require a minimum of four or five years, according to city experts, especially in the case of integrated actions that combine efforts from different services and local partners.

Due to big delays in the start of ESF projects in Latvia, Riga is facing constraints to deliver the outcomes foreseen. For example, the project 'KNOW and DO' was planned in 2014 with the target to reach out to 800 young people not in employment, education and training, and involve them in pathways towards employment, training or further education. The target was to be achieved over a four-year period, between 2015-2018. However, due to long delays in project grant selection, the project only started its implementation at the end of 2016. The target remains unchanged, which means that the city needs to achieve the same outcomes in half the period - from end of 2016 to end of 2018.

The gap between the funding periods (end of one project and beginning of the new one) puts at risk the sustainability of measures. Long delays produce insecurity about human and other resources, especially for municipalities and local partners with limited capacity. Some experienced staff with good knowledge and trust of the target group may become unemployed or unavailable by the time the new project gets the ESF grant. This makes it difficult to maintain the trust of the target groups, which is essential for effective measures.

The core problem underlying all challenges described above is the complexity and ambiguity of ESF regulations, aggravated by the financial risk of non-compliance. ESF grants come with many rules about eligibility of costs for project activities and beneficiaries, and their compliance is monitored through a strict audit regime, especially for those cities with delegated responsibility to manage a large ESF allocation (see section 1). As explained by one city expert, “putting together a ESF project requires solid legal and financial expertise”. Not only are the EU rules on ESF complex, but they are also interpreted differently by different managing authorities. The challenge is bigger where there are the multiple ESF managing authorities in the same territory (see example in the box below). In many cases, they give a narrower interpretation and apply stricter rules than at EU level. Six cities reported facing stricter rules or gold plating. It is most problematic when different authorities and auditors apply a different interpretation of the state aid rules. This leads to uncertainty about which rules cities need to follow, posing a big financial risk for cities and even leading to lawsuits.

In France, two managing authorities co-exist at national and regional level with additional intermediate bodies at metropolitan level (e.g. Angers and Lyon) in charge of coordinating ESF allocations for the benefit of local operators in the area of job insertion and inclusion. In some regions, the number of intermediate bodies was streamlined in 2017 to facilitate the grant application process. For example, in Lyon, since the metropolitan area of Lyon became the only intermediate body on that territory, this led to an easier grant application process given that now applicants have a single interlocutor while beforehand they needed to apply both to PLIE Lyon as well as to PLIE Lyon East. Where this streamlining has not yet occurred, like in Nantes, a project leader may need to submit two or three ESF grant applications for one single project (one to PLIE Nantes, one to PLIE Saint-Nazaire, one to the departmental council in charge of ESF for social income). The lesson is that having a single interlocutor is beneficial for applicants.

Cities also face changes in rules and requirements during the project implementation. Several cities reported that conditions and criteria, such as for the eligibility of activities and participants, were changed from the moment the project was selected and until it was completed. Sometimes, the changes occur due to a different interpretation of rules given the turnover of staff at managing authorities. However, there are also many legal changes due to revisions in national law (e.g. in France, Poland). This creates difficulties for project leaders at audit stage because the controls are carried out after the project was completed and they apply the regulation that was applicable at the time of project closure instead of the one at project selection. Such controls can lead to retroactive changes in rules (in Lyon, Chemnitz) and may incur penalties not only for the city but also for local partners (in Angers).

4.2 Challenges in using ESF funding by cities

Cities wish to make more and better use of ESF to innovate, define and implement large-scale strategies and integrated approaches, but this is only possible in few countries or regions where cities can influence the ESF allocation through delegated responsibility by managing authorities. In most countries and regions, cities have little margin for innovation because access to ESF is channelled through specific calls that define in detail the implementation process and content of projects.

Two thirds of the cities in our study (20 in 32) reported a lack of suitable calls for ESF projects for cities to apply. The calls that exist are too narrow in scope, too prescriptive and offer little room for innovation. Some calls are so specific that exclude cities from being eligible even if

the calls concern their needs. For example, in Flanders, 40% of the ESF budget is used by the Flemish Employment Agency (VDAB) to deliver services that sometimes could be better carried out by cities. There are not enough calls directed to cities, designed with cities or in which cities can take the lead, especially in the south and east of the EU.

Another obstacle in using ESF funding by cities is that the existing calls do not match all their local needs. 50% of cities in our study reported that the ESF operational programme(s) does not fully address their local needs. Key social problems in urban areas are left unaddressed, such as support for homeless, elderly and people with disabilities, need to address early school leaving, skills mismatch, social housing, early childhood care, deinstitutionalisation and community-based long-term care services. Most cities agreed that their local needs related to labour market activation are met to a large extent by the ESF OP, but other societal problems in cities are ‘hardly tackled through ESF’. This is due to the narrow interpretation in some member states focusing ESF resources mostly (or exclusively) on labour market integration through vocational training and access to employment. While unemployment is a key issue, it is not the only societal problem cities are facing. The challenges people face in urban areas are complex and inter-linked, such as increasing inequality, poverty, social exclusion, lack of affordable housing and discrimination, among others. Cities would like to be able to use the 20% of ESF budget meant for social inclusion to develop other types of projects to address local needs beyond unemployment, such as projects for Housing First, Roma integration and school mediators, but this is not possible due to the narrow approach to social inclusion by the ESF managing authorities, despite the flexibility within the EU regulation. The thematic concentration needs to be revised to better match local needs.

Not only the definition of priorities but also that of target groups does not match the local reality. Some cities have seen a narrowing down of the target groups between the previous and current programming period. In Netwerkstad Twente, the ESF can now only be used to offer support to young job-seekers up to 27 years of age, while no provision is given for over 28-year olds. Some target groups in need of support are left out as considered not eligible for ESF projects. For example, people in precarious jobs cannot benefit from ESF because they are already ‘in employment’. Hence, the binary approach of ESF focusing on ‘employed’ versus ‘unemployed’ does not capture the reality on the ground where precarious and atypical employment is on the rise. According to city practitioners, support to sustain people ‘in-work’ should be factored in the design of OP to avoid ‘zero-hour contracts’.

Cities in England (London, Greater Manchester) reported that, for many years now, they followed the policy approach to support people to ‘sustain work’ not just ‘get into work’, given that the transition into work is very difficult for many of the most disadvantaged. However, ESF results are counted on the basis of ‘entering work’ meaning that no ESF ‘in work’ support can be claimed for ESF participants who enter work but who, despite support, are unable to sustain it. The inflexibility of the ESF regulation provides an incentive for projects to stop supporting participants as soon as they enter work.

A third of cities said they cannot use ESF to help the most disadvantaged because the ESF approach is too results-oriented and the indicators are too rigid. The ESF rules, particularly the robustness of the audits on participants’ eligibility and ambiguity of guidelines from ESF authorities, are a real constraint to developing new projects that involve the most vulnerable groups because of the financial risk incurred. This is due to the result-oriented approach to funding ESF projects whereby funding is linked to the number of people who enter employment by the end of the project. To meet the set targets, project leaders deliberately choose to leave

out the most vulnerable groups (those lowest-skilled or with multiple deprivations) because their outcomes (labour market integration) are most uncertain as they need longer time before results can be visible. Given the financial risk involved, the current audit regime drives towards the exclusion of the most disadvantaged groups from ESF projects or the exclusion of ESF projects that focus on these groups. There is a need to make the audit regime more risk-based as it currently is a significant disincentive to developing new or innovative types of support for the most vulnerable people.

Many city practitioners reported that the audit regime is stifling creativity in the commitment of ESF. ESF should be an excellent testing ground for new and innovative approaches in supporting the most disadvantaged in our society. However, the fear of incurring financial penalties from audit means that there is a focus from many stakeholders to spend the grant with as little audit risk as possible. This is a missed opportunity that significantly limits the impact that ESF could have on citizens and particularly the most marginalised in our society.

Besides the financial risk, cities and their local partners face difficulties to collect data on participants from the most disadvantaged groups to fulfil the strict reporting requirements in ESF projects. It is particularly difficult to report on newly arrived refugees whose status can only be justified through the availability of residence permits, Roma people whose status would have to be justified through the production of an ID document, former prisoners whose eligibility would require the production of a criminal record, all of whom would greatly benefit from ESF support if their eligibility could be proved more easily. Furthermore, if low threshold is intended for project activities, gathering data from participants can prevent them from joining project activities (Chemnitz, Karlstad). Potential beneficiaries drop in for information sessions on employment opportunities and they are reluctant to give their personal data, which if compulsory, might prevent them from attending in the first place or following up after the first information session. Some member states have strict national laws for data protection and forbid collecting data on ethnic origin. According to some cities, the core problem is that the strict indicators do not reflect the real impact of ESF on the target groups, both in terms of volume (focus on number of activities and not the paths to inclusion) and quality (misused definition of the targets). There is clearly a need for more flexibility in defining targets and indicators at project level, and for bigger emphasis on encouraging the inclusion of most vulnerable groups in projects.

Lack of flexibility to adapt ESF project implementation to the changing needs in society is another obstacle reported by seven cities in our study. Sudden and urgent needs may arise in cities between the time of grant application, the start of project and its completion, but the ESF does not allow for adjusting the project activities, objectives and target groups during project implementation. Some cities reported that their local needs changed significantly since the set-up of the ESF operational programme, for instance given the influx of refugees. For example, Gothenburg reported that at the beginning of the programming period, the main social problems of the city were youth unemployment, labour market integration and inclusion of people with disabilities, but the city is faced with new challenges at the mid-point such as integration of refugees and asylum-seekers, inclusion of EU mobile citizens (Roma), housing and unemployment of specific vulnerable groups etc. Some target groups have become the responsibility of municipalities, such as EU migrants living in poverty in Sweden, but the rules set by ESF managing authorities did not change to allow for the inclusion of these target groups in ESF projects. While the EU made it possible to use ESF for supporting the integration of

refugees and asylum-seekers, it was up to the member states to re-prioritise the ESF allocation. While this was done in some countries (e.g. in Belgium, France), it was not the case across the EU (Czech Republic and Poland), but depended on the political willingness of the national governments to recognise the new challenges and address them through ESF OPs. There is a need to ensure that all member states allow some flexibility to use part of the ESF grant for new needs that arise during the programme implementation.

Several cities also reported a lack of strategic coordination of ESF-funded interventions at the level of the managing authorities. According to some city experts, a ‘silo’ approach in the programme management arrangements leads to duplication of efforts in the same territory. A more flexible and coherent process is needed connected to the calls to ensure they tackle the local challenges in a coordinated and integrated way.

All the obstacles mentioned above lead to the same core problem that is the definition of priorities, target groups and indicators do not fully match the local needs in cities. The source of the problem is that ESF allocation through operational programmes is not designed with local needs and challenges in mind. The extent to which the local needs are met is directly proportional to the extent to which cities were involved in the elaboration of the OP. Where cities were not consulted in OP preparation, their needs are hardly met. On the other hand, those cities that were strongly involved in the development of OPs or regional implementation plans are much more satisfied with how their local needs are accounted for in the ESF allocation. Cities need to be involved in the definition of priorities and targets from the onset to ensure that ESF is used where most needed.

4.3 Bottlenecks in combining ESF with other sources of EU funding

Only 4 in 32 cities are combining ESF with other EU funding programmes. Bologna, Gothenburg, Milan and Rome are mixing ESF with ERDF in projects that match investments in infrastructure with investments in human capital. Such integrated actions are beneficial for improving the situation of people living in deprived neighbourhoods. Other three cities (Chemnitz, Ghent, Glasgow) did so in the past programming period.

The majority of cities did not combine ESF with other EU funding due to the difficulty of integrating different EU funding programmes. Some cities, especially those that are intermediate bodies for both ESF and ERDF - London, Greater Manchester, Stockholm - have tried to align ESF activities with ERDF measures, but this is not the same as having a fully integrated ESF-ERDF provision. This is the case in Stockholm where the DigIT project funded by ESF and Stockholm’s Digital Care funded by ERDF are working closer together without being part of an integrated funding strategy. Other cities would further combine ESF and ERDF if this was made easier. For example, Angers would like to create a ‘job store’ offering both investment in the infrastructure and equipment through ERDF assistance and investment in people working there through the ESF.

The biggest obstacle is that ESF and ERDF are managed by different authorities that follow different legal frameworks and enforce different rules, which are not aligned. In most countries, there is hardly any cooperation between the ESF and ERDF managing authorities. This makes it very complicated and too costly for cities to engage in.

Not only is it too difficult to organise, but it is also discouraged in many member states. Many cities reported that the national authorities do not promote or encourage co-funding between ESF and ERDF not combining them. In some cases, the ERDF managing authority advised against combining ERDF with ESF as the complexity could jeopardise the project outcomes. Even in

countries where the Integrated Territorial Investment tool is used, it is financed exclusively by ERDF at the decision of the state not to combine structural funds on ITI (Lyon).

This means that cities that want to apply an integrated approach by combining different EU funds need to invest resources to organise two or more different programmes with different guidelines and accounting procedures. Even those cities that managed to combine ESF and ERDF have faced many challenges in the process.

The experience of two cities, Gothenburg and London, shows the need to make the combination of ESF and ERDF easier in the next funding period.

Gothenburg is running projects for Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) to drive local growth and labour market from an urban-rural perspective. It is financed through a combination of ESF, ERDF, EAFRD and EMFF. The managing authority for CLLD in Sweden was faced with the difficulty to combine four EU programmes that have different regulations and are managed by different authorities. This caused delays in the start of Gothenburg's three Local Action Groups and even the approved projects were put on hold.

Gothenburg's ITI strategy was developed in parallel to the ERDF and ESF operational programmes. ITI focuses only on ERDF on the advice of the ERDF managing authority. A local fund coordination group was established, gathering representatives from relevant municipal programmes and processes and linking political decisions on municipal level to those on regional, national and EU levels. However, the ERDF funding for ITI was kept at the minimum level of 5% and the city was not consulted in this decision.

Greater London Authority is the intermediate body for both ESF and ERDF, but they had difficulties in linking up funding between the two programmes. London tried to coordinate overlaps between ESF and ERDF financial instruments to define types of organisations for each fund to work with. After assessing whether any joint ESF-ERDF projects should be developed, the Greater London Authority concluded that working under two different OPs with different regulations and different ways of working was not feasible.

5 Conclusions

ESF interventions brought tangible results in cities: better access to jobs, schools, training, housing and early childhood care, leading to improved social cohesion at local level. It has been a major financial resource for cities in providing targeted and tailored support to vulnerable groups. ESF has added value to all cities by equipping them to better deal with the social challenges affecting them, catalysing local policy innovations and bridging different sectors and actors in cities.

The current programming period introduced an important innovation by giving cities, in some countries and regions, expanded responsibilities to manage localised or regionalised ESF allocations as intermediate bodies, a spillover from article 7 in the ERDF regulation. This has demonstrated the ability of cities to manage global ESF grants and use them where most needed. This local programming approach has been successful in enabling cities to set up strategic plans to boost employment and social inclusion in metropolitan areas.

However, most cities do not have such an ESF allocation nor the possibility to decide how to spend it, but most access ESF through specific calls. The challenge is that there are not sufficient calls for cities and the existing calls do not fully address the locally identified challenges. Cities would like to be able to use ESF not only for labour market integration, but also for other types of projects concerning poverty alleviation and social inclusion, and to include target groups that are currently omitted from the list of eligible beneficiaries.

The extent to which cities' needs are met by ESF depends on the extent to which they were involved in the design and priority-setting of the operational programmes. While most cities were consulted in the OP preparation, many were disappointed with the quality, timing and outcomes of consultation. The European code of conduct on partnership was an important step in the right direction, but there is ample room for improvement before it is fully applied across the EU.

The biggest obstacle for cities to access and use ESF funding is the complexity of rules and procedures. Despite the simplification measures at EU level, the management of ESF remains very intricate and burdensome. The strict audit regime stifles innovation and the result-oriented approach is a major disincentive to focussing efforts on the most disadvantaged in society. Cities would like more possibilities to use ESF to pilot social innovations to help those that need most support, and be able to combine ESF with other EU funds to match investment in human capital with investment in infrastructure.

A stronger focus on sustainable urban development could drive social progress and inclusive growth in the EU. Cities are best placed to ensure ESF is used where it is most needed and feed evidence from ESF interventions into policy-making at local, national and EU levels. Better support from ESF to cities is a smart way to deliver the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Urban Agenda for the EU and the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU. We propose several issues for consideration for ESF post 2020:

- 1. Supporting all cities affected by profound social challenges.** Most cities in the EU face social challenges like demographic change, rising urban poverty and inequality or increasing numbers of refugees and migrants. It is important that all cities can benefit from ESF support to deal with these social issues. To better reflect the reality on the ground, ESF could be allocated not only based on GDP indicators, but also consider multiple indicators of social progress and well-being, such as the EU Regional Social Progress Index.

- 2. Involving cities in defining ESF priorities.** Cities are closest to citizens and know best their needs and challenges. To ensure the ESF resources match local needs, cities should be meaningfully involved in the elaboration of the ESF operational programmes, from the definition of thematic priorities to the setting of targets, indicators and criteria for funding allocation. No groups in need of support would be left behind if cities' concerns were taken into the OP design and the most disadvantaged would receive adequate support not only for labour market integration, but also for social inclusion and full participation in society. It is important that national and regional authorities work in direct dialogue and full partnership with cities by following the model set by the Urban Agenda for the EU and using its structures for multi-level governance, such as the urban partnerships on poverty, affordable housing, jobs and skills, and integration of migrants and refugees.
- 3. Ensuring ESF can better address the social challenges in cities.** The social challenges in cities are complex and cannot be solved with sector-specific solutions; only integrated actions tailored to the local context can deliver effective solutions. The ESF could increase support to cities that work towards long-term integrated measures to further sustainable urban development. A minimum earmarking of national ESF allocations could be introduced in the ESF regulation following the successful model of Article 7 of the ERDF regulation. Urban authorities should be involved in the selection of projects and, where possible, could be given expanded responsibilities and sufficient capacity-building resources to manage ESF funding allocations as intermediate bodies. Greater and more direct deployment of ESF to urban areas would better align ESF interventions to the circumstances of local labour markets and local economic development. A stronger focus on a place-based approach to deploying ESF would lead to more visible positive changes for disadvantaged communities.
- 4. Making ESF programmes more flexible in adapting to new challenges.** Cities face rapid societal and economic transitions that give rise to sudden and unforeseen challenges, such as the integration of increasing numbers of refugees, which call for urgent action. A flexibility clause and budget reserve could be introduced in the ESF regulation to allow for addressing sudden and unforeseen needs as they arise. The existing procedures for modifying ESF programmes and re-adjusting priorities could be sped up and simplified. It is important to introduce more flexibility at project level to enable adjusting interventions to the specific needs and situations arising at local level that call for changes in activities, beneficiaries and targets during project implementation.
- 5. Making ESF a catalyst for social innovation at local level.** Cities are the best level at which to test and pilot social innovation before mainstreaming. Evidence shows that when cities have the chance to use ESF to pilot social innovation, they later upscale the good practices in their regular service provision to make structural changes and improve public services. However, the potential of ESF as catalyst for local social innovation is far from being achieved given the overly prescriptive calls and the strict audit regime that is stifling risk-taking and creativity. A shift is needed from rewarding procedural compliance and provable outputs to incentivising risk-taking for innovation and impact. Cities could realise the full potential of ESF as a testing ground for social innovation and piloting new types of support for those most in need. The successor of ESF post 2020 could include an objective on piloting social innovation in urban areas. This objective could place a specific emphasis on integrated approaches to combine people-based interventions with a place-based focus.
- 6. Simplifying the rules and procedures governing the ESF.** All rules and procedures to apply, manage and report on ESF grants need to be simplified in a way that lifts the

administrative burden on ESF lead partners. It is important to state the rules in a clear and unequivocal way and in due time. To this end, the ESF legislation and guidance could be prepared and adopted in advance to allow for the timely start of programmes and prevent legal uncertainty and retroactive effect. The management and control of how the ESF funding is spent could be done based on mutual trust between the managing authorities and cities and in line with the subsidiarity and proportionality principles (a single audit principle). The state aid rules need to be clarified and simplified with sufficient flexibility to enable city authorities to work with public and private investments.

- 7. Making it easier to combine ESF with other EU funds.** Social disadvantages are concentrated in specific urban areas, causing socio-economic disparities between city districts or between parts of a region. To help address such disparities, it is important to make the combination of ESF with other EU funds easier to allow complementing people-based actions supported through ESF with place-based measures supported through ERDF. For example, when designing employment or training services using ESF support, cities could be supported to also create the matching infrastructure e.g. training facilities, skills or job centres. A single 'rulebook' for EU structural funds could be put in place and the managing authorities could be encouraged to work closer together to enable the easier combination of EU funds or even full integration where possible. This would make it feasible for cities to develop larger-scale, innovative projects leading to a bigger impact on citizens and their communities.

Annex Good practices of city-led interventions with ESF support

ESF in Angers: personalised support for people furthest from the labour market

Approach

Angers signed together with the city of Cholet a three-year ESF-convention with the French state for the period 2015-2017 to obtain a financial support of €4 billion from ESF. Another similar convention will be signed for 2018-2020. The city uses the ESF support to implement its multi-annual local plan for job insertion and employment (*Plans Locaux pluriannuels pour l'Insertion et l'Emploi - PLIE*).

With support from ESF, Angers developed a local plan for employment to help integrate into the labour market people furthest away from it and especially women, older people and people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. As part of this plan, Angers manages about 15 projects per year with an annual budget of €1 million from ESF. The main actions are:

- job insertion sites (*chantiers d'insertion*) to help people furthest away from the labour market gain access to employment. A job insertion site is organised as a workplace that employs inactive people and gives them tailored guidance to develop the know-how to work in a team and with the support of a supervisor while under a contract of 'support to employment'. The job insertion projects are managed by the French state in collaboration with the department council and the municipality.
- projects run by metropolitan city to provide:
 - personalised support to help people find a job
 - workshops to help people cope with their unemployment situation, understand its root-causes and take the necessary steps to get (back) into employment
 - workshops in which people learn alternative ways and tools to find a job such as through networking ('job clubs'), up- or re-skilling, new training and job coaching

Initiative implemented

The most important ESF-funded project is the personalised support to people far from the labour market. The project is run by the metropolitan area Angers Loire Métropole. A public contract is signed between the metropolitan area and 5-6 organisations in charge of delivering this support, covering all territory. The objective is to define an individualised pathway for re-insertion into employment for each job seeker to respond to individual needs, and help the job seeker understand their obstacles to access or find employment. The job seeker together with the coach define a re-insertion plan including steps such as vocational training, studying for a (new) qualification or doing a work placement. A contract is signed by the job seeker and the referent coach. All this is done within a strong partnership between all public actors from the state, department council and the metropolitan city.

Impact

Thanks to the support from ESF, Angers provided training to 914 people from disadvantaged backgrounds in 2016 alone (35% being young people, 24% elderly over 45-years old and 44% living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods). More than half were supported into professional insertion pathway (e.g. in job inclusion sites). About 140 people completed so far the personalised support programme and 84 got a work contract or vocational qualification.

Added value

ESF has made a clear difference in Angers. Without support from ESF, Angers could not have developed and implemented the local plan for job insertion and employment at the current level of implementation. The biggest added value is in terms of the personalised support offered to people furthest away from the labour market. In the future, Angers would like to combine ESF and ERDF to create a 'Job store' by connecting in one place job-seekers (and their needs for training) with employers (and their needs for infrastructure and equipment).

ESF in Antwerp: integration of refugees into the labour market

Approach to ESF

Antwerp is using ESF to deliver on two main priorities of its social policy agenda: provide training and support for people to get into employment, and to promote social inclusion of disadvantaged groups at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The city received financial support from ESF 2014-2020 to implement two projects: the project 'Activating Refugees Antwerp' that aims to give vocational training to refugees to enter the local labour market, and the 'Amalia II' follow-up project on Roma inclusion. The presentation below focuses on the first project.

Initiative implemented

'Activating Refugees Antwerp' is a project running between 2016-2018 with financial support of €480.000 from ESF and co-financed with €720.000 by Flemish co-financing Fund (VCF) to provide integrated services that facilitate a better and faster integration of refugees into the labour market. Antwerp also provides €1.2 million for engaging and mobilising employers.

As part of this project, Antwerp created a Single Point Contact Office (SPOC) for the labour market activation of refugees. The target group is made of refugees who ask for financial aid from social services and who are recognised refugees or subsidiary protected. The SPOC gathers in one central location all relevant services provided by the municipality, the Flemish employment agency (VDAB), the integration agency (Atlas) and social services (OCMW). This enables optimising regular services and setting specific actions to respond to the refugees' special needs by allowing different services to work in partnership to define and deliver as efficient and fast pathways to employment as possible.

The project works on two strands:

- **Accelerated activation of refugees with working experience** - refugees undergo skills audits to screen their level of skills and competences, with specific attention to medium and low-skilled people who can be activated at 'bottleneck' occupations. A specific pathway to employment is then defined for each refugee accompanied by guidance.
- **Orientation activation of young refugees (aged 18 to 25) without work experience** - young refugees receive coaching, language courses, short orientation courses and on-the-job-training. The aim is to give them some work experience over a short period (an average of 6 months) during which they (hopefully) can get activated with a job offer.

The project ensures an integrated, coordinated and efficient labour market activation by:

- delivering integrated services for refugees to find employment,
- assessing the current needs on the local labour market to inform innovative support initiatives to cater for the specific needs of the target group,
- coordinating an inclusive scheme for the integration and activation of refugees.

Results and impact

The goal is to screen and assess 1,440 refugees during two years to determine if they qualify for an accelerated pathway for labour market integration. As part of this total, 268 young refugees who only have learning experience will receive specific coaching for work. Another goal is to mobilise 10 new companies each month with 50% success rate for hiring refugees.

The project's mid-term evaluation reveals good results: 17% of refugees entered employment, 14% entered education or training and 18% received coaching via the accelerated pathway.

Added value

The ESF support was useful to build the capacity of the city to develop and implement an integrated approach to services for refugee integration into the labour market, and to manage the coordination of different services and local partners. Thanks to the ESF support, Antwerp was able to employ additional staff, namely two social workers, two job hunters, three coaches for young refugees, a project coordinator and a project officer for accounting and reporting.

Website: [Activating vluchtelingen Antwerpen](#)

ESF in Barcelona: Trade-Skills Houses

Approach to ESF

The operational programme for ESF 2014-2020 in Catalonia is focused on combating high unemployment rates and the increasing poverty rates, promoting quality employment as well as vocational training and entrepreneurship, reducing the labour market gender divide and investing in qualification and competence development schemes. Barcelona Activa - the local employment agency in Barcelona - runs two employment programmes with support from the ESF: the Youth Guarantee scheme (awarded over €3,2 million in 2016-2017) and 'Work in the Neighbourhoods' programme (awarded just under €4 million in 2015).

Implementation

'Trade-Skills Houses' is one of the projects developed within the framework programme 'Work in the Neighbourhoods'. The project seeks to promote employment and economic development in the city, and in particular to support the labour insertion of young people by combining training with remunerated work practice. Young people participating in the project perform public works or services that provide a social benefit to the community or neighbourhood. The target group is unemployed young people under 25 who have low qualifications.

The project implemented interventions in 12 neighbourhoods in Barcelona. Young people participated in the project for 12 months, of which 6 months in training and 6 months in paid work. Three types of 'Trade-Skills Houses' have been developed: live shows, digital field and environment field. The main objective is to create employment opportunities for young people and secure their insertion on the labour market. Equally important, the project seeks to ensure a coordination with associations and cultural organisations in the neighbourhoods in view of fostering the economic and social development of the neighbourhoods.

The main actors involved in the project implementation are: four districts of Barcelona (Nou Barris, Sant Martí, Les Corts and Gracia), Barcelona Libraries Consortium, Barcelona Culture Institute, Parks and Gardens Institute, Urban Ecology Agency, Barcelona Energy Agency and Barcelona's Zoo.

The project was co-funded by the ESF until 2015 with an annual budget of €911.235.

Results and impact

The main results of the project were:

- improvement in the vocational preparation and labour insertion of young people
- 85 beneficiaries benefitted from training, job counselling and skills development
- 45% of participants were successfully inserted into the labour market after the project

Added value

This ESF-funded project helped to set up a new and innovative approach to foster labour insertion of young people in vulnerable conditions by combining training with remunerated work. The project is being continued by the city, although not co-funded by ESF since 2015.

Website:

<https://treball.barcelonactiva.cat/porta22/cat/assetocupacio/programes/pagina22646/cas-es-doficis--programa-treball-als-barris.do>

ESF in Bologna: co-designing social innovations in neighbourhoods

Approach to ESF

Bologna, similarly to other 13 Italian cities, benefits from the national operational programme for Metropolitan Cities (PON Metro), a multi-fund programme that combines ESF and ERDF funds to support digital services, urban mobility, energy efficiency, social inclusion and innovation. The local challenges have been identified through a partnership comprising city mayors, the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI), the regions, the relevant central administration departments and economic, social and environmental stakeholders.

Initiative implemented

Within PON Metro, Bologna implements two types of projects with support from the ESF:

- actions to improve housing conditions: accompanying paths towards autonomy; Housing First projects; housing social agency - a total of €1.9 million for 6 years
- social innovation actions: training and skills development to help youth get into employment (€6 million for 7 years); support for young people at risk of exclusion via peer-to-peer education, workshops to promote social inclusion of disadvantaged groups at risk of poverty (€1.2 million for 5 years); social innovation actions related to cultural welfare and creative industries (€200.000 euros for 4 years); events, workshops and start-ups aimed at helping individuals in vulnerable situations, including youth who are LGBT or have criminal records or failed migration paths (€465.000 euros for 4 years);

In the definition and implementation of PON Metro measures, especially the social innovation actions, Bologna has applied a participatory and bottom-up approach involving stakeholders and citizens. This was done by creating a new role for neighbourhoods as community managers to create spaces for fostering dialogue between citizens and local stakeholders.

For example, the co-design process of social innovation actions, most of them hosted in renovated buildings (with ERDF support), is involving different departments and levels of government, different sectors, civil society organisations and citizens. The co-design process is implemented through neighborhood workshops. A Neighbourhood Team consults civil society organisations to define scenarios for regenerating the specific district areas. The identified scenarios are shared with citizens in public meetings for collecting feedback and prioritising the projects. A multi-professional team made of university researchers, educators and facilitators supports the Neighborhood Team in the co-design and implementation process. All these processes are supported by a municipal digital platform created in 2014.

The Neighborhood Workshops have been activated so far in 6 districts, under the coordination of Urban Center Bologna - Civic Immagination Office.

Results and impact

Although the project is on-going, the first evaluation shows that 1,471 citizens were registered at the 48 neighbourhood workshops in the first three months of 2017. As of March 2017, six meetings were held with neighbourhood teams, six with district councillors and nine meetings with intermediate bodies as well as nine meetings open to all citizens. Among these, six meetings were held in June resulting in 174 proposals, of which 54 were on PON Metro actions.

Added value

Thanks to support from ESF, Bologna was able to pilot and scale up social inclusion actions, and to experiment new participatory methods to involve citizens and stakeholders in decisions at neighbourhood level. The project enabled Bologna to face old problems with new solutions.

Website: <http://www.comune.bologna.it/ponmetro/inclusione-sociale/>

ESF in Brno: social housing for homeless people

Approach

Brno is using ESF funding to develop and implement specific programmes for affordable and social housing.

Implementation

The Social Housing programme of Brno aims to set up a new system for social housing support to respond to the challenges of people in need of housing. The system aims to provide two types of social housing:

- **affordable housing** for low-income households that do not need complex social support
- **social housing** for households that need complex social support

With an ESF financial support of €593,300, Brno provides 115 allocated apartments (50 affordable housing flats and 65 social housing flats) as well as a support team of social workers.

The programme implements the Housing First method. As this method had not been applied in the Czech Republic before, the team of social workers received training in Amsterdam.

The project is addressed to households of single people or families in sub-standard or unstable housing or households who pay more than 40% of their income on rent, as defined in the Czech Plan for Social Housing. The target group is made of two categories of beneficiaries:

- young adults who left foster homes, who are in housing need or live in unsafe housing
- people with criminal records or facing mental illness, substance addiction or long-term homelessness

The main activities of the project include:

- assessing the current local needs for social housing,
- developing a local strategy for social housing,
- training social workers
- elaborating supporting materials for methodology for social housing support

The project is run by the municipality of Brno that provides the flats for the project as well as the support team of social workers. The team is applying the approach of intensive case management (ICM) which means that the social workers are linking the network of social services and other experts to respond to the specific needs for housing of every individual.

Results and impact

Although the project is still in the beginning of its implementation, 25 people have already received social housing in newly allocated apartments, which led to an improvement in their quality of life (in terms of health and well-being). Other 39 families received a new, extended contract for apartments in Housing First.

Added value

Thanks to support from the ESF, Brno was able to develop and implement the Housing First project, which is an important achievement for the city. It is an innovative method to tackle the housing problems at local level. Without the support from ESF, the city could not have developed the strategy and implementation tools to combat homelessness.

ESF in Chemnitz - giving a 'second chance' to people in deprived neighbourhoods

Approach

Currently, Chemnitz implements 25 projects in two disadvantaged areas in the city with funds from the ESF. These projects fall under the axis B priority of the Free State of Saxony's ESF operational programme to 'support social inclusion and prevent poverty and discrimination of any kind'. Projects are divided into three main actions:

- informal youth education
- lifelong learning
- employment integration and associated measures

Chemnitz was granted €3.2 million from the ESF and the Free State of Saxony for 2016-2020.

Implementation

The 'Second Chance' project aims to teach basic skills to socially disadvantaged people living in Chemnitz's inner city, an 'assisted' area, which has experienced a rise in financial hardship, unemployment and social isolation of its residents in recent years. The project aims to improve the social behaviour of participants through teaching them life skills (i.e. housekeeping, finance and debts management, and home maintenance) and by providing them with support to gradually, through individual strategies, better integrate into society and improve their situation. The project focuses on an individual approach, which is adjusted to each participant's needs and which uses client-focused counseling techniques and case management. At the same time, activities in the neighbourhood and self-help networks are encouraged and brought together. The non-profit organisation, Selbsthilfe 91 e. V. is responsible for the project's implementation. The city's social services department and office for youth and families are partners in the project, along with Jobcenter - the employment agency and other NGO's, which deal with debt and addiction counselling. The city's agency for urban planning also monitors the project to ensure sustainable and social urban development of the neighbourhood. The urban planning agency pays Selbsthilfe 91 e. V and supports them in posing any financial or eligibility related questions to the authorising office of the Free State of Saxony. The project received just under €200,000 (€188,121.35) in funding and will run from August 2016 - June 2020.

Results and impacts

As the project will run until 2020 final results are not yet available. Nevertheless, there have been some positive trends since the beginning of the project. The project's concept was further detailed and adjusted to the target groups' needs with special attention paid to establishing trust between support staff and participants. This has resulted in a noticeable increase and prolonged use of services by participants. Until September 2017, 25 participants were supported (this is around 30% of the total number of participants for the project's duration). Another indicator of the project's success is the continuation of several beneficiaries' tenancy agreements since the beginning of the project (none have been terminated and one new tenancy agreement was added). This shows an increase in the beneficiaries' abilities and sense of personal responsibility thanks to the project's support.

Added value

Thanks to support from ESF, the city can provide citizens in socially deprived conditions with low-threshold access to education and employment leading to improving their skills and qualifications, and ultimately moving from unemployment to employment and social inclusion.

ESF in Twente: improving regional cooperation to help the low-skilled unemployed

Approach to ESF

In the Netherlands, only some municipalities can apply for the ESF grants for a region. Enschede has applied on behalf of Netwerkstad Twente for the ESF grants for the region of Twente.

Since 2014, Enschede has implemented seven ESF-funded projects with a total grant of €11.7 million from ESF in collaboration with 14 municipalities from Netwerkstad Twente, 16 schools and various other public organisations. Three of these projects have now come to an end. They included projects using re-integration activities, digital applications to help jobseekers become self-reliant and motivated to look for work, and a project to increase labour market opportunities for disabled young people through specialised education.

Of the four ESF-funded projects still running in Netwerkstad Twente, one remains focused on re-integration measures, two on practical (PRO) and secondary special (VSO) education and one on improving sustainable employability in the care and welfare sector. As part of the latter project, the municipality receives about €500,000 to work in cooperation with local partners to help improve sustainable employability of employers and employees in the care and welfare sector in the East and South Netherlands by investing in good employment.

Initiative implemented

Netwerkstad Twente is using ESF to (re-)integrate low-skilled unemployed people into the labour market in the region (across the Dutch-German border). The project aims to guide jobseekers into work, specifically young people under 28 years old and older people over 50 years old. The project also supports people who have been looking for work for more than six months. The project's activities consist of coaching, skills audits, and offering courses and training. There are also activities to guide young people towards entrepreneurship.

Results and impact

The project reached 7,500 people (53% male and 47% female). Thanks to the role of the supervisors in the project, the connection between municipalities and entrepreneurs and jobseekers in the region was strengthened. The Leerwerkloket Twente, Werkplein Twente and the ROC van Twente projects also helped to establish a connection between the labour market and education by advising and informing employers, employees and jobseekers about education courses, whether it's dual work and learning programmes, tailor-made programmes or courses to obtain a certificate of experience (EVC).

Added value

ESF funding in Netwerkstad Twente has helped improve the post-school outcomes for low-skilled young people. Through the extra guidance provided by the supervisors jobseekers are better matched to available vacancies. Regional cooperation in Netwerkstad Twente is also in better shape because of these projects. For example, the region has employed coaches with ESF funds at regional level for the new 'Matches at Work' project. This project takes jobseekers that cannot search for a job by themselves (those furthest from the labour market) from across 15 public organisations and gives them individualised and personal attention. Without ESF resources, this would not have been possible. The coaches can also take local entrepreneur's request and pull the best matches from these 15 public organisations, ensuring the best match for the entrepreneur's request out of the available jobseekers.

ESF in Ghent: offering tailored employment guidance to Roma

Approach

Ghent regularly applies for ESF through the Flemish ESF (e.g. call 359 addressed only Ghent and Antwerp on refugees and the labour market or call 367 on tailored guidance for Roma towards the labour market) and transnational calls (e.g. the project 'Link to work', which Ghent led until it finished in 2015).

These projects have two main priorities:

- to train people and help them into employment
- to promote social inclusion

The total budget of the above projects was just over €2 million (€2,197,242.98). Since local co-financing was required, just under €800,000 (€791,952.19) of the total budget was provided by the city and other local partners.

Initiative implemented

The project 'Labour Team IEM' offers tailored guidance to Roma people to help them access the labour market (call 313 and 367). The project ran from September 2015 - December 2017. The main objective was to help at least 190 intra-European migrants (IEM), mostly Roma of Bulgarian and Slovakian origin, enter the labour market by finding tailor-made solutions for their existing barriers to employment. Job coaches worked with the communities by reaching out and finding solutions to existing issues such as housing, residence status, education etc. The team was made up of employees from seven organisations (the city of Ghent, the employment service VDAB, the client support organisation 'Group Intro', the Centre for Social Work CAW East-Flanders, the NGO De Sloep, the Microfinance Institute and the job coaching NGO Compaan). This provided the project with a much needed mix of local authority, welfare organisations, public employment services and labour mediation experts. The total budget for the project was just under €1 million (€986,586.98), 40% of which was funded by ESF. The remaining 60% was provided by the city and local partners.

Results and impact

During the project, more than 270 participants received tailored guidance to address their existing barriers to employment and support towards accessing work. Ghent is still collecting the exact data on hard outcomes but it is estimated that at least 60 % of the participants got into temporary employment through the support of the job coaches. More importantly for Ghent are the soft outcomes: participants gained more self-confidence, became more independent and gained insight into how the local labour market works.

Added value

Without the ESF funds, it would not have been possible to conduct labour mediation for the Roma community on this large scale in the city.

Website: <https://gsiw.stad.gent/A-TIEM>

ESF in Gijon: promoting the labour market integration of women

Approach

From 2014 to 2017, Gijon implemented several projects with ESF financial support. These included projects on employment plans, kick-starting the Youth Employment Initiative (€239.000), the EURES - ESF project, and the Clara programme that aims to promote the integration of women on the labour market. The priorities of these projects were to:

- promote social inclusion of disadvantaged groups at risk of poverty
- promote gender equality in the labour market
- promote the training and development of new professional profiles
- promote the sustainable growth of employment (with special support given to young people, women and people over 45 years old)
- promote entrepreneurship, SMEs and new forms of business

Initiative implemented

The CLARA programme, managed by the training department of the local employment agency, involved 32 women with difficulties to access the labour market. 28 local enterprises and institutions were mobilised to support the programme. CLARA ran for one year in 2015 with the support of €25,000 in ESF funding.

CLARA offered support to women with difficulties (unemployed and at risk of poverty and social exclusion) to access the labour market. The focus was on improving employment opportunities by enhancing their skills and personal abilities through undergoing a pathway for social and labour insertion. A personalised intervention methodology is developed for each individual participant, which takes into account the starting point of each one and their specific needs in order to improve their employability. The pathway is kept flexible and adaptable to follow the women in their journey to access employment, and is accompanied by coaching by the 'Mujeres' Foundation.

The programme was implemented in four phases:

- motivation - group and individual actions were used to improve the self-confidence and social skills of the women to motivate them in their search for employment
- orientation - actions to help the women design their professional profiles
- occupational training - actions to increase participants' professional qualifications
- active search for employment - job counselling and mediation with local enterprises and institutions were provided.

All 32 women participating in the programme received occupational training in one of the 28 partnering enterprises and institutions in the city (e.g. in tourism, fashion, sports, medicine and other occupational profiles).

Results and impact

The programme had positive outcomes with 17 women re-entering the labour market. All participants improved their self-confidence and gained a sense of empowerment.

Added value

The ESF fund not only provided Gijon with the financial means to carry out the project but also promoted new social topics within the city in line with the EU priorities. As a result, the local employment agency has supported different social projects within its own budget using similar features developed with the help of ESF funding, such as working to support disadvantaged groups to access employment and focus on equal opportunities.

Website: <http://empleo.gijon.es/page/14480>

ESF in Gothenburg: support to young people at risk of criminal behaviour

Approach

Gothenburg is leading 11 ongoing projects with support from ESF. Their total budget is over €12 million. The city is also part of five ESF projects led by other organisations having a total budget over €7 million. These projects mobilise ESF funding to train people and help them get into employment, develop new skills for labour force and improve the quality of public services.

Initiative implemented

Crime among young adults is on the rise in Gothenburg's city district East Gothenburg. Compared to the average in the city, this district has higher deprivation levels, higher unemployment rates and poorer health indicators. The local council and community lack methods and tools to work proactively to prevent the risk of criminal and anti-social activities, anti-social behavior, street gangs and radicalisation among young adults.

The project Young East aims to develop a local partnership and platform between partners in the local community and set up a team of youth workers to develop, support and prevent young people at risk of engaging in criminal behaviour. Young East is a partnership between the district administration and Social Welfare Office, police, job centre and emergency services, that work together to identify at-risk youth and create opportunities for them to engage in education, work and other positive activities. Young East is a three-year project running from April 2016 until March 2019. The budget is €1.8 million with a 47% co-financing from the ESF.

With the support of transnational benchmarking, the project is adopting new tools and methods for crime prevention and support. A team of six youth workers focus on combining behavioural programmes with support for education, training and job insertion, to motivate young people aged 15-24 years to avoid engaging in criminal activities, radicalisation or anti-social behaviour.

Through prevention and support, the project aims to contribute to the long-term goal of declining youth crime in East Gothenburg. It also seeks a decrease in costs for health, housing and support services for young people by boosting their autonomy and social inclusion.

Results and impact

The initiative has had 60 participants so far and 13 of them have gone back to education or employment. Moreover, a valuable outcome of the project so far is the creation of a local platform and network to link up all relevant services and ensure an efficient cross-departmental coordination.

Added value

The ESF funding has enabled a comprehensive support for young people in the East Gothenburg district and added new knowledge and partnerships on a local, national and transnational level. The ESF funding has allowed the district to cut costs in placements and to support young people at local level through a tailored, long-term approach.

Website: <http://goteborg.se/wps/portal?uri=gbglnk%3a20174213349279>

ESF in Karlsruhe: helping migrant women acquire qualifications in catering industry

Approach to ESF

Since 2000, the Land of Baden-Württemberg has regionalised ESF allocations in large block grants and has created working groups of local stakeholders (employment agencies, job centres and chambers of commerce and industry) to develop regional strategies to determine how to use the ESF funds. Karlsruhe's ESF working group is chaired by the city's deputy mayor for social affairs and is managed by the city's employment agency (AFB gGmbH).

Karlsruhe's regional ESF strategy aims to a) combat young people's school dropout and improve their access to training, and b) improve employability and participation of the long-term unemployed who are at risk of poverty and exclusion. In particular regarding the long-term unemployed, Karlsruhe has an innovative approach in using ESF. Together with the local job centre, the city is integrating provision from federal mainstream schemes, innovative ESF-projects and locally funded long-term support services to deliver the objectives of its Local Employment Programme (Gesamtkonzept Arbeit), adopted in 2013. To implement the programme, the city is pooling an annual budget of €1.2 million from ESF (€300,000), local budget (€600,000) and local partners (€300,000 in co-financing).

In 2018, Karlsruhe is involved in four ESF projects, being the lead beneficiary in two of them with a total budget of €150,000 per year. In addition, the city manages a regionalised ESF funding envelop of €440,000, which the city re-directs to local projects run by local partners.

Implemented initiative

A successful ESF-project that emerged in 2010 from the Karlsruhe approach of combining ESF with federal and local mainstream funding is **Café Initial**. Managed by the local association 'Initial e.V.', this project targets adults affected by a range of social conditions, notably long-term unemployment and health issues, with a balanced diet being important to all support measures. Currently, it aims to help disadvantaged people, notably women with migration background, to obtain a qualification for better career prospects in the catering and hospitality industry. In 2017, the project got €82,000 from ESF and €88,000 from federal and local budget. The intervention method is based on the qualification methods developed in the 'learning restaurant' in which the target group is supported based on their learning preconditions and personal circumstances. The support package ranges from training for low-key assistance tasks in the hospitality industry (six months) to a full qualification in hospitality and catering (16 months). A qualified team of supervisors, social workers and teachers carries out the training and support work. In addition, each participant receives individual counselling and guidance.

Results and impact

In 2017, 20 women and six men participated in the training measure. By the end of 2017, 13 participants with very challenging social conditions completed the measure successfully.

Café Initial is a testing ground for innovative support measures. The project has been adjusted several times in line with local needs and new approaches have been experimented.

Added value

Thanks to support from ESF, wider structural changes were initiated in Karlsruhe: a consensus-based, integrated support system for social work was created by bringing together the job centre, local authority and service providers. The Karlsruhe approach also contributes to the sustainability of ESF-funded projects: in 2016, two former ESF-projects for the long-term unemployed (social gardening and work opportunities in a low-threshold workshop) were mainstreamed in local provision.

Websites: <http://www.cafeinitial.de/beiunslernen.html> and <http://www.afb-karlsruhe.de/de/esf-projektberatung.html>

ESF in Karlstad: preventing social exclusion of people with disabilities

Approach

Karlstad is running five ESF funded projects in 2014-2020 with a total budget of just over €20 million (199 million SEK) of which EU co-financing accounts for €12 million (119 million SEK):

- ‘Future of Varmland’ aims to get young people aged 18-24 years old into work or study, to prevent drop-outs and increase education levels.
- ‘The Young of Varmland’ has the same priorities as ‘Future of Varmland’ but is aimed at 15-18 year-olds. It focuses on preventing early school leaving.
- The project ‘New to the region of Varmland’ aims to help refugee children, aged 15-24 years old through the school system and into the labour market.
- ‘Varmland Together’ - together with the employment service, the county council of Varmland and civil society, ten municipalities develop methods and activities to support foreign-born women and men to enter the labour market.
- The Porten (‘gate’) project - detailed below.

Initiative implemented

The Porten (‘gate’) project aims to help disabled people get a better access to work. The budget for this project is nearly €2 million (19.6 million SEK) with a 47% co-financing from the ESF. The project started in September 2015 and runs until March 2019. Four out of 16 local municipalities participate in this project through a structured cooperation between the county councils (Landstinget), municipalities, the national employment agency (Arbetsförmedlingen) and the social insurance authority (Försäkringskassan).

The goal of the Porten project is to help people with disabilities achieve a sustainable future with their own livelihood and income by collaborating with employers. Most of the participants have some sort of neuropsychiatric diagnosis like Asperger’s, ADHD or ADD. The target groups are people aged 18-61 years old with a disability living in Varmland region.

Employers are mobilised in the project through actions that market the target group as a potential workforce for employers. The project has developed a model for this, which is of great benefit to participants. For example, the project reaches out to employers and shows them how the new potential workforce (people with disabilities) can adapt to the needs of the workplace, such as by breaking work tasks into smaller activities and selecting which of them can be done by people with lower-levels of skills. By offering hands-on support for both the participant and the employer, the project helps to speed the transition from unemployment to employment. The project applies a tailored approach based on the participants’ needs.

The most successful activities in the project are: study visits conducted either on an individual or group-basis with employers; lectures on stress, personal finance, cognitive aids, the possibility of physical activity and health; internships and work trials as well as employment support and coordination between employers and the target group.

Results and impact

Results from January 2018 show the project had so far 101 participants, 66% of whom have gone into work or study. 12 in 31 people had come off social welfare benefits since the project started.

Added value

The project would not have been able to implement and test its methods in the same way without resources from the ESF, especially in the development of the coordination with employers and the integration of the methods of job coaches on how to help people with disabilities find, get and keep a job. The coordination of all four municipalities’ social services have also been developed and strengthened by the ESF, preventing people with disabilities from experiencing social exclusion.

ESF in Leipzig: encouraging children from disadvantaged backgrounds

Approach

Leipzig follows different approaches in using ESF, covering a broad range of initiatives from early childhood education and care measures to initiatives tackling early school leaving and labour market transition.

Initiative implemented

The project ‘Kinder stärken/Encourage Children’ was set up in March 2016 and will run until February 2020. The project is divided into two phases, which allow for a preventative and holistic approach to early childhood intervention.

The project aims to compensate the social disadvantaged backgrounds of children by improving their education opportunities. It is meant for children aged 3-6 years old who are living in deprived conditions. The project seeks that every participating childcare centre (kindergarten) gets one additional social worker on a part time (75%) basis. In total, 16 kindergartens are involved in the project, out of which five are run by the city. The participating kindergartens are located in the most deprived areas of the city.

The project mainly addresses children and their families but also external experts and teaching staff. The children are helped to build up their self-confidence through different measures while parents are encouraged to have a stronger cooperation with the childcare centre and benefit from educational guidance. The additional teaching staff also cooperates with external experts and social services while supporting cross-services consultation and internal training.

The main actors involved in this project are the kindergartens, the supporting organisations, the city administration’s department, the teaching staff and the parents. The total budget is €73,000 per year per kindergarten. The ESF accounts for 95% of the funding while 5% comes from the budget of the city or other (welfare) institutions that are running the kindergartens.

Results and impact

The project allows for more and deeper consultation with the parents as well as more support when they meet public authorities. There is additional time devoted to special projects for the children on an individual or small group basis. One of the main results is the stronger presence of parents at the kindergartens. Sixteen kindergartens with approximately 2,000 children and their families benefit from this project.

Added value

This ESF funded project helped to set up a new and innovative approach in prevention work in the phase of early childhood education. Generally, social work begins at school, from when children are 6 years or older. However, this project allows for more intense individual work with younger children and a better contact with their families from an early stage, and it places a specific emphasis on reaching the ones from disadvantaged backgrounds and living in the most deprived areas of the city.

Website: <http://www.kinder-staerken-sachsen.de>

ESF in Lyon: supporting the Metropolitan Employment Integration Programme

Approach to ESF

The metropolitan area of Lyon - hereafter Lyon - is an intermediate body for a global ESF grant. As such, it re-allocates about 90% of the ESF grant to local actors for supporting labour market integration projects (around 100 projects per year). It keeps only 10% of the ESF allocation for delivering its Metropolitan Employment Integration Programme.

Initiative implemented

The main project in Lyon financed by the ESF is the coordination of the Metropolitan Employment Integration Programme (hereafter the programme). The programme aims to help jobseekers, especially beneficiaries of welfare support (who receive 'active solidarity income'), to (re-)integrate into the labour market by bringing them in direct contact with employers. To achieve this, it operates tailored support services and works in collaboration with local providers to create new opportunities for training and work. This approach involves working with many partners, in particular the regional authority of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and the Public Employment Service, social economy actors and training providers.

The programme aims to achieve:

- improve the offer for training and employment in the metropolitan area
- increase employment opportunities for people entering the labour market
- secure pathways into employment by linking jobseekers, employers and operators
- improve coordination between employment services and the economic development actors in the metropolitan area.

Lyon is also working to offer unemployed people who have an entrepreneurial project adequate support to scale up their project. This is done by mobilising local operators who can provide guidance for launching a start-up, setting up a business and scaling it up.

The annual budget for running the programme is € 420,000, fully financed through the ESF.

Results and impact

The programme mobilised many employers to offer labour market integration opportunities:

- Thanks to the "Charter of 1000 companies for job insertion", 140 companies had been mobilised by the end of 2016 and 50 actions had been put in place. The largest companies in the area were mobilised, such as ENEDIS (electricity company). In 2017, the municipal charter (with similar goals) was merged with the metropolitan charter.
- A "public procurement charter" inserted social clauses for public procurement
- Mobilising the digital and service sectors to set up with the metropolitan authority a coordinated strategy for the job insertion of people furthest away from employment
- Following a call for proposals for provision of support for labour market integration, a pool of 10,463 new workplaces were created in addition to the existing offer.

Added value

The support from ESF made it possible to recruit and train 7 professionals at the *Metropole de Lyon* to work with employment services, employers and local partners to improve opportunities for social inclusion, labour market integration, projects structuring employment, quality of vocational training courses, and offer guidance to beneficiaries.

ESF in Greater Manchester supports people in Working Well

Approach to ESF

Greater Manchester is made up of ten local authorities (including the city of Manchester) and is led by an elected mayor. It operates eight ESF programmes as a co-financing organisation with a budget of €186 million for 2014-2020.

Implemented initiative

‘Working Well’ is the flagship programme for Greater Manchester’s devolved policy for work, skills and health agendas. The programme aims to help the most deprived residents to find their pathway towards employment and sustain it. To date, all residents who received support have been identified as long term unemployed, with an average period of 6-8 years of unemployment (many have never worked). Many are in or at risk of poverty, have health problems and have already been through the national Work Programme without finding work.

The programme provides tailored and integrated support through single-point-of-contact social workers who are equipped to give direct support to residents and to refer them to appropriate services for health, housing, skills and many other opportunities. The social worker develops with the individual a tailored action plan, outlining their barriers to employment and the actions necessary to alleviate the issues so as to move them into work. Action plans are updated on a regular basis and often require co-case management with local authorities. An integrated approach to provide tailored support to those most in need is at the heart of the Working Well programme. The support continues for up to one year after a person moves into work to encourage sustaining that work. Working Well aims to get at least 20% of clients into work and 15% to sustain work for one year or more. The programme is delivered by local providers from the non-profit sector in close collaboration with local authorities from Greater Manchester.

The programme is funded with €38 million from the ESF operational programme under priority axis 1 - Inclusive Labour Markets. This includes a pilot running until March 2019, an expansion running until the end 2020 and a new initiative - Working Well Work and Health - that started in January 2018 and will continue until the end of 2022.

Results and impact

By the end of December 2017, the Working Well programme had provided support to over 16,500 people. Over 2,500 of them secured employment, which is above the target set for 20%. To date, 78% were still in employment. Besides the job outcomes, Working Well also led to improved mental and physical health, improved skills, reduced debt, housing stability and reduced homelessness, broadened travel horizons and more stable households.

Added value

Access to ESF funding enabled Greater Manchester to scale up the size of the Working Well programme. For example, thanks to support from ESF, 7,000 additional people have been supported on the Pilot and Expansion projects and about 10,000 other people will be helped through the new Work and Health programme until 2022 (about 45% more people than without any support from ESF). With central government budget cuts and austerity still the norm, the ability to secure ESF funding has and continues to add significant value to the lives of people supported by the Working Well programme.

Website: <https://www.greaterGreater Manchester-ca.gov.uk/workingwell>

ESF in Milan: combining ESF with ERDF for sustainable urban development

Approach

Milan has planned 31 projects under the NOP Metro programme (with a budget over €37 million) and 5 projects under the ROP programme (with a budget over €9million) in the programming period 2014-2020, mixing ESF and ERDF funding in both programmes. Under the NOP Metro, these funds aim at supporting projects on five axes of intervention: Metropolitan Digital Agenda (€6.4 million), sustainability of public services and urban mobility (€10 million), social inclusion (€9.8 million), infrastructures for social inclusion (€10.4 million) and technical assistance (€1 million). The ROP projects are dedicated to the urban regeneration of a specific district of the city, Lorenteggio, in line with the programme agreement between Milan and Lombardia region. Some of the NOP Metro funds are also invested in this specific programme, but the mixing is done at local level, by the municipality.

	NOP Metro (ESF+ERDF)	ROP (ESF+ERDF)
Departments involved	5	4
Project managers	12	5
Scheduled projects	31	5
Funding	37.770.000,00 €	9.650.000,00 €

Implementation

Over 12 projects have already started under the NOP Metro programme. Most of them mix ESF funds to support measures for social inclusion with ERDF funds to support the measures on infrastructure development. The project ‘Living in the local community’ (Abitare in Borgo) aims at implementing an innovative model for urban regeneration to respond to the housing needs. The project’s main activities are related to the recovering, repairing, upgrading and refurbishment of currently unfit properties belonging to the city administration so as to increase the supply of available housing and create new living spaces and services. Another project ‘Digital services to promote the economic and social development of the metropolitan city of Milan’ aims at providing the municipalities within the metropolitan area with digital platforms to increase the simplification and efficiency of services accessible to citizens.

Results and impact

The range of projects and scopes is wide as well as their results and impacts. In brief, the main results so far in the social area is an increased supply of social housing and the creation of new spaces and services, leading to a better and more effective social inclusion.

Added value

The added value of these projects is the experimental feature of the processes put in place, such by enabling public-private partnerships. This specific feature of experimentation and social innovation, though, entails some complex administrative procedures. Another added value is the chance to strengthen the cooperation with the neighbouring municipalities especially in the axis on social inclusion.

Website: www.comune.milano.it/ponmetro

ESF in Munich: supporting the unemployed to integrate into the local labour market

Approach to ESF

Munich has implemented several initiatives with support from ESF during 2015-2018, such as:

- 'Work & Act' project aims to help the unemployed get back to work (€1.6 million);
- 'Power-M' project supports empowering women to get back to work after maternity leave (€3.7 million) and 'Guide' offers guidance to women entrepreneurs (€400,000);
- 'FIBA' (€370.000) and 'MigraNet' (€233.000) projects support the integration of migrants into the labour market.

Implemented initiative

One of the biggest projects is 'Work & Act', which is part of the BiWAQ operational programme of Germany for education, economy and jobs in city districts. The project has two objectives:

- To help unemployed people get into employment
- To boost the local economy through the regeneration of deprived areas

The project targets unemployed people with or without a migration background who live in the city districts of Ramersdorf, Berg am Laim and Giesing - some of the most deprived areas of Munich. At least 50% of the beneficiaries of the project are required to be from these city districts. The aim is to regenerate the districts through better qualification opportunities for the unemployed and supporting them in looking for work while at the same time strengthening the local labour market through support and counselling for local businesses and entrepreneurs.

The initiative aims at securing employment for these target groups through:

- basic qualification programmes with skills training - two qualifications are being offered: intercultural care assistant and facility manager service assistant
- specific theoretical qualifications and specific training
- German language courses
- theatre project: a common presentation of the acquired competences
- social care and mediation coaching

As for strengthening the local labour market, the project is targeting trade associations, retailers and property owners, and offers them:

- free-of-charge consultation and training for setting up and maintaining a business
- networking among small and medium businesses in the city districts
- counselling for refurbishment of business facilities, local marketing and branding
- participation and involvement in urban regeneration strategies

The project aims to support strategies for site development to occupy vacant spaces in the districts through specialised consultation, active marketing of vacant spaces and promotion of strategies for temporary use. The aim is to promote an attractive mix of businesses in districts.

This initiative runs between 2015-2018 and is an integral part of Munich's social city programme for Mittlerer Ring Südost. The project is coordinated by the city's department of labour and economic development and is implemented via a strategic partnership with the German adult education providers (DEB GmbH) and Munich's society for urban renewal (MGS). The project receives ESF financial support of €1.6 million for the entire project duration of three years.

Added value

Thanks to the support from ESF, Munich is developing and implementing targeted interventions to regenerate the city's most deprived areas by combining active support to employment with local economic development actions. This synergy between employment and social services with economic development agents is an innovation that adds big value to the city's districts. It led to a stronger cooperation of the city with the federal and state job centres, and NGOs.

ESF in Nuremberg: improving neighbourhoods through education and training

Approach

Nuremberg has carried out 20 ESF-funded projects in 2016 and led 13 of them. Out of the 20 projects, seven used ESF under the operational programmes managed by the state and 13 used ESF funding managed by the Land of Bavaria. The ESF funding for the 20 projects amounts to about €3 million. The key priority of these ESF projects is to improve education and training.

Initiative implemented

The project ErFolG (Integration in Employment - Training - Local Profit) is supported by the ESF national allocation of the Federal Republic of Germany through the operational programme BIWAQ - Bildung, Wirtschaft, Arbeit im Quartier (education, economy, work in the neighbourhood). The project aims to contribute to a sustainable integration of long-term unemployed people into employment, establishing a network of employers with the municipality as shareholder and improving the image of certain neighbourhoods.

The project targets one of the most deprived areas in Nuremberg where 68% of the population come from a migrant background. The target group are people living on social assistance who have been unemployed for more than 2 years. The project covers a wide range of activities from personal capacity building and language skills to apprenticeships and job placements. In addition to their module qualification, participants get a basic practical qualification in areas like gardening, refurbishment or basic elderly care. The work always has a direct link to the needs of the neighbourhood, for example planting of flowers or the renaturing of water creeks.

The project is implemented for Nuremberg by a city-led non-profit employment company, Noris-Arbeit gGmbH, and is supported by the city's department for youth, family and social affairs. The budget for the project is just under €2 million (€1,989,080) with 50% (€994,540) coming from ESF. The project was started in April 2015 and will run until December 2018.

Results and impact

The participants acquired important skills and abilities, and the project has several integrating functions (in general). It creates close links to the neighbourhood and its development. As of January 2018, 195 people have participated in the project with 44 people so far having been placed in work, training or further measures.

Added value

The project would not have taken place without the financial support from ESF. The added value of the project for participants is that it helps them get into employment through job coaching, internships and work placements. It prepares participants for new areas of work and helps them gain qualifications through vocational language training and basic IT training. The project also facilitates social participation in the neighbourhood through project activities and events, and promotes intercultural exchange between participants, with many coming from different countries, like Germany, Syria, Iraq, Vietnam and Ukraine. The added value of the project for the neighbourhood is that residents can enjoy and benefit from the changes brought about through everyday refurbishment and greening. The project also ensures that older and health-impaired residents are taken care of and given individual support.

Website: <http://www.noa-nuernberg.de/?p=903>

ESF in Riga: fostering social inclusion of young people through education

Approach to ESF

Riga is the lead beneficiary of two projects financed through ESF 2014-2020:

- ‘PROTI un DARI!’ (Know how to and do!) aims to foster the inclusion of non-registered NEETs (back) in education or youth centres, and support measures of Youth Guarantee;
- ‘We are for Healthy Riga!’ aims to improve accessibility to services for health promotion and disease prevention especially for people in or at risk of poverty.

Implemented initiative

‘PROTI un DARI!’/‘Know how to and do!’ is an initiative part of the national operational programme of Latvia ‘Growth and Employment’. It is delivered at national level with implementation at local level. The initiative aims to help young people, who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs), to get (back) in education or employment. It does so by providing them with tailored support based on their specific needs and abilities.

The project is for young people aged 15-29 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and are not registered as unemployed at the State Employment Agency (SEA). The target group includes the most disadvantaged young people such as youth with physical or mental disabilities, or learning difficulties, school dropouts, single parents or substance abuse addicts. Their common profile is being inactive and demotivated.

The programme consists of four well-defined phases:

- identify and reach out to the target group;
- profiling of young NEETs by trained specialists to identify their specific needs for re-training, up-skilling of active support to employment. Based on the profiling, a personalised plan for insertion in education or work is elaborated;
- participants work towards the realisation of their personalised plan with support from their supervisor and mentor. The implementation phase lasts between one to 9 months;
- monitoring of the situation of young beneficiaries after completion of their personalised plan, namely one month after the last activities and six months after.

In Latvia, the initiative was started in September 2014 and will run until October 2018. It is implemented at national level by the Agency for International Programmes for Youth (AIPY) and by municipalities at local level. In September 2016, the welfare department of Riga signed a partnership agreement with the AIPY. In the implementation of the project, Riga is involving as partners Riga’s social service, the department of education, culture and sports and seven NGOs providers of youth work and outreach to target groups. The overall budget of the project is €9 million of which €7,65 million (85%) comes from ESF and €1.35 million (15%) from the state budget. From this total budget, €8,1 million are allocated to municipalities to ensure direct support services to the target group. The ESF funding available for Riga is €1,3 million.

Results and impact

After one year of implementation, 124 young people had been reached and involved in the project and 48 people completed it and entered into labour market or education. In addition, 138 supervisors and mentors were trained in providing quality support to young people. Another key achievement was the partnership established between the two departments of the city - welfare department and the education and sports departments - and a partnership with NGOs.

Added value

Thanks to support from ESF, the city is now more involved in youth work development, especially in the social inclusion of young people in NEET situation. In particular, this project financed through ESF allowed Riga to develop a sustainable approach to working with youth for their social inclusion. A key added value is the synergy and partnerships created at local level.

Website: <http://www.ld.riga.lv/lv/Nacionala/limena/projekti/2018/gada.html>

ESF in Rome: supporting Roma families to access basic services

Approach

Rome is leading projects co-financed by the ESF with a total budget of more than €20 million. In particular, the national operational programmes NOP Inclusion and NOP Metropolitan Cities - that combine different EU funds, in particular ESF and ERDF funding - support interventions and services for social inclusion, combat poverty, promote integration pathways and job inclusion. These actions include the Roma Plan described below.

Initiative implemented

About 4,500 Roma people live in Rome in temporary dwellings (encampments). They receive welfare benefits under the form of free basic housing and utilities. These services are so far provided for free, regardless of the residents' contributing capacity and their eligibility. The city council of Rome decided in 2016 to support the integration of Roma people, in particular by facilitating their access to housing, employment, healthcare and education with the ultimate aim to close the encampments in which they currently live.

Rome adopted a Roma Plan in May 2017. The Plan aims to support Roma people to leave the encampments and integrate into the labour market and in society by improving their access to education, employment, housing and healthcare. The Roma Plan includes actions for labour market activation, professional training and services for (social) housing. The plan sets to:

- map and do a census of the Roma people living in encampments
- gradually close down the encampments
- support the housing inclusion of the Roma community
- promote the inclusion of Roma people into the local labour market
- facilitate the access of Roma people to education and healthcare

The Roma Plan of Rome is an integrated project requiring institutional collaboration between different local services and different organisations working on social integration on the ground. The project will be gradually implemented, starting with the closing of the encampments of Monachina and Barbuta during the period of 2018-2021. The intervention is co-financed from the multi-fund NOP Metropolitan Cities with a budget of €3.8 million. Additional funding is made available from the city's budget from the resources initially earmarked to maintain the camps that will be used to support Roma inclusion in employment and housing.

To benefit from the support foreseen for them under this plan, Roma families must sign an agreement with the city, which sets out their rights and obligations. This agreement defines the commitment between the Roma beneficiaries and the city of Rome, and requires to individuals and families to actively take part to the plan's activities, including vocational training, job inclusion, support to rent, compulsory schooling of children, compliance with the law. These conditions must be fulfilled to be eligible for support from the Roma Plan.

Results and impact

The plan aims to support the integration of 2,000 Roma people. The expected results are:

- the gradual closure of the encampments
- the prevention of the formation of new informal dwellings
- an increase in the capacity of local institutions to implement inclusive policies for Roma

Given the recent start of the Roma Plan, the results will only be visible in a few years.

Added value

Thanks to the support from ESF, Rome was able to pilot some innovations in its new Roma plan, such as a participatory approach to involve Roma in defining their pathways for social inclusion, and an integrated approach to link up local services and local partners involved in the actions.

Website: website: http://www.comune.roma.it/pcr/it/uff_spec_rom_sinti_caminanti.page

ESF in Stockholm: digital up-skilling of staff within elderly care

Approach to ESF

Stockholm is running six ESF-funded projects (DigIT, YFI, SUSA, SUVAS, VUX 2.0 and Start Stockholm) with a total ESF financial support of over €20 million. The city is part of the County Administrative Board that set up a structural funds partnership and works closely with the Swedish ESF managing authorities to identify relevant thematic priorities for ESF projects. It has been strongly involved in drafting and delivering a regional implementation plan for ESF.

Initiative implemented

‘DigIT’ is an ESF-funded project that aims to develop the digital skills of staff working within the elderly care system and the system of care for disabled in the Stockholm region. A total of 3,000 staff employed by the city of Stockholm and 11 surrounding municipalities participate in the project. This three-year project started in December 2015 and will run until November 2018. The project is coordinated by the Elderly Care Administration in the city of Stockholm. The total budget for the project is €4,7 million out of which €2.1 million (47%) comes from ESF.

The objective of the project is to ensure good quality and increased efficiency in the social care sector by providing staff with the necessary skills for using ICT, including welfare technology. The project ultimately aims to make the social care sector more attractive for workforce, which in turn can contribute to developing the labour supply.

The main learning activities are teacher-led courses, seminars, network meetings and web-based courses, which are all designed as work-based learning. Participating care units get support to develop work-based learning and are provided with the know-how for using ICT. The model for work-based learning provides:

- support to the managers to enable them to lead the digital development process
- preparing ‘digital trainers’ who can support colleagues with ICT and digital matters
- training of trainers to lead ‘study circles’ on how to use an iPad
- prepare language facilitators to encourage a better communication in the workplace

The unique feature of the project is that it combines support for work-based learning with regular instruction in adult education and web-based courses for ICT competence development.

Results and impact

The project is expected to lead to better digital competences among staff in the social care system and a better awareness for the need for digital solutions in the workplace. So far, 6 000 employees and managers in the social care system have been involved in the needs analysis phase, where a self-assessment of digital competences was carried out as well as a survey about the conditions for creating a learning environment in their workplace. Until November 2018, about 3 000 staff will have been trained from Stockholm and 11 other municipalities.

Added value

The ESF support enabled Stockholm to develop an innovative approach to up-skilling staff within the social care system in digital ICT competences. The novel approach to workplace learning is believed to ensure the sustainability of the digital competence development. ESF was a catalyst that also strengthened synergies between the different branches of social care - elderly care, care for disabled and care for persons with psychiatric diagnoses.

Website: www.stockholmdigit.se

ESF in Stuttgart: vocational training for the unemployed and low-qualified adults

Approach to ESF

Stuttgart is part of the regional working group ‘ESF Pakt S’ which is managing nine projects with support from ESF 2014-2020 with a total budget of €990.000 per year.

Implemented initiative

The project ‘Spätstarter gesucht’ addresses (long-term) unemployed and low-qualified people over 25, who make up to 70% of the total recipients of unemployment benefits. The project aims to support them in acquiring a dual vocational training qualification. The project seeks to identify people who are on unemployment benefits and show readiness for vocational training and support them to complete a dual vocational training programme.

The project includes two phases. During the first phase (6 weeks), the participants undergo a screening of their competences and motivation for pursuing vocational training while their individual situations are also taken into careful consideration. During the second phase (over a maximum of 5 months), participants are first guided to find an apprenticeship placement within a company and then coached towards completing the training successfully. The coaching continues also after the apprenticeship if the participants obtain a job in the same company. The project can support annually up to 100 participants at first stage and 50 at second stage.

The project is managed by the private company METIS GmbH that receives an annual grant from the local employment authority. The total budget for implementing this project in 2018 is €158,000 of which €118.000 is from ESF and the rest is from the municipal budget. An additional €154,000 count as co-financing from the unemployment benefits of the participants. The implementation of the project gathers many partners like the local chambers of commerce, employers’ associations and the companies which provide the apprenticeships.

Results and impact

Since 2015, the ‘Spätstarter gesucht’ project involved 300 people in the screening phase, half of which were accepted in vocational training and were supported in finding apprenticeships. By the end of 2017, 76 beneficiaries were successful in completing the project, of which 53 people started an apprenticeship in a company and 23 people started a job.

Added value

ESF enabled Stuttgart to pilot an innovative approach to supporting long-term unemployed people to return to work. It allowed the city to develop objectives and adequate measures over a longer period of time. A valuable outcome of the project financed by ESF is the development of a stable network of employers committed to work with the city for training unemployed people. The city has also developed an innovative modular concept of counselling, coaching and support that provides tailored guidance for unemployed people.

The ESF support came to complement the resources from national and municipal level by enabling the city to focus on targeted and tailored support for the unemployed, who are usually difficult to reach and assist through mainstream services.

Website: <https://www.metisag.de/spaetstarter-stuttgart-metis-gmbh>

ESF in Terrassa: labour market insertion for people over 40 years old

Approach

Terrassa deploys the financial support from the ESF to provide local measures for job placement. Its four priorities are to help people find better jobs, give active support to women and senior citizens to find employment and improve the qualifications and skills of people from vulnerable groups. These actions are part of Terrassa's inclusive growth agenda to benefit all people, leave no one behind and address the negative social impacts of austerity. For that matter, the ESF projects are important for the local communities in Catalonia and Spain.

Initiative implemented

In 2013, the Local Pact for Employment in Terrassa was signed between the employers' organisation (CECOT), the trade unions (UGT and CCOO) and the city council of Terrassa, with the objective to coordinate efforts for economic reactivation for the recovery of the local labour market. As a follow-up, an employment programme was designed within the Pact by the four entities labelled as 'Terrassa aposta per l'ocupació' (Terrassa promotes employment) directed to the most vulnerable groups and people at the highest risk of social exclusion.

The programme gives support to unemployed people over 40 years of age, who have low qualifications, to improve their employability. It offers them tutoring and integrated, personalised follow-up according to their economic, psychological and occupational situation. The programme provides to participants the tools they need to improve their psychosocial wellbeing and their resilience. The project offers tools for career guidance adapted to new ICT environments, vocational training in emerging sectors and advice about self-employment and entrepreneurship. The target group are unemployed people over 40 years old who want to return to work and those who have been affected by changes in labour regulations or working in sectors that were affected by the economic crisis. The programme also helps young adults who may or may not have a formal qualification, entrepreneurs and groups at risk of social exclusion like victims of gender violence and people with disabilities.

Participants can enter the programme through any of the 'four windows' (from city's services, the two trade unions or the employers' organisation) given that all four are service points of the programme. Participants are attended using the same methodology regardless of the entity that services them and they are included in a [joint database](#) so that duplication can be avoided.

The programme includes several activities:

- training in new competences and skills development
- career guidance and job counselling
- personalised counselling and support for entrepreneurship

The total budget is €8 million, of which 11.6% (€937,240) comes from the ESF funding that is managed by the regional authority of the Government of Catalonia, 10.6% comes from the Employment Service of Catalonia and the rest comes from own municipal funds of Terrassa.

Results and impact

By the end of 2017, the programme had so far 1,246 direct recipients (and other 11,242 indirect recipients) who received support through training, career counselling and competence development activities. About 45% of them (560 beneficiaries) were successful in finding work.

Added value

The added value of the ESF support is that it enabled combatting social exclusion and poverty in the city. Thanks to support from ESF, participants benefited from a personalised support to integrate into society and return to work. ESF also offered an excellent opportunity for the association and creation of networks between all relevant stakeholders at local level, led by the local employment service of the city. For the first time, all the key social agents (members of the project) have coordinated their services for the benefit of people in need for work.

Website: <http://www.terrassa.cat/es/terrassa-aposta-per-l-ocupacio>

ESF in Vienna: subsidising vocational qualification courses for the low-qualified

Approach to ESF

Vienna is managing a big ESF allocation of €53 million during 2014-2020. The city is re-directing part of this ESF allocation to support local projects through targeted calls for proposals. The other part of the ESF allocation is used directly by the city to provide subsidies for vocational training qualifications for its residents, through the 'Chancen Scheck' initiative.

Implemented initiative

'Chancen Scheck' enables low-qualified workers to improve their skills and qualifications in order to get better and more sustainable jobs. The project offers subsidised vocational qualification courses to employed people who have low or no formal qualifications and wish to improve their position in the labour market. A specific emphasis is placed on apprenticeship training according to the Austrian dual education system that requires passing a final apprenticeship training exam. All project participants are people in employment residing in Vienna. There are two specific target groups:

- people without any formal qualifications beyond compulsory schooling
- people who acquired higher or vocational qualifications but do not use them in their current jobs (they are over-qualified or under-employed)

The project helps participants complete a qualification equivalent to an apprenticeship or high school by taking additional courses to complement their existing skills and German language classes. Participants receive free counselling to plan their educational pathway and tailored support to complete the vocational qualification courses. The project subsidises 90% of the training costs (the costs vary according to three qualification levels from €1,000 to €3,000). The city pays a subsidy directly to vocational institutions that are recognised for providing courses for vocational qualifications. Participants only pay a contribution to the overall cost of training, with the providers billing the city directly for the subsidised share of training. The city's Counselling Centre for Career and Further Education offers a one-stop-shop of services including information, counselling and grants available as part of this project.

'Chancen Scheck' is embedded in Vienna's provincial strategy 'Vienna 2020 qualification plan', which aims to reduce the number and share of people with a low formal education in Vienna. The initiative is implemented during 2015-2021 with a total budget of €9.48 million, of which €4.74 million (50%) comes from ESF.

Results and impact

People from vulnerable groups, such as low qualified residents or migrants who are over-skilled for the jobs they have, have been guided to reach better employment. By early 2018, the project had reached 5,200 beneficiaries. All participants were in employment when they started the project. After having completed the project's educational activities, most of them had the same job or were able to move into a more stable and/or higher paying job.

Added value

The ESF support enables Vienna to offer better opportunities for further education and training to a large number of people. In particular, the ESF funding was used to support vulnerable workers to improve their qualifications and access better employment opportunities.

Website: <http://chancen.spo.e.wien/>

ESF in Warsaw: using ESF to improve the quality of public services for citizens

Approach

Warsaw is running 35 projects with support from the ESF 2014-2020 (leading 30 and partnering in 5) with a total budget of just under €15 million (€14,946,505) and co-financing €13,2 million. In practice, the ESF is a means for the city to make residents lives easier, demonstrate the visible economic growth of the city and increase vulnerable people's chances on the labour market. Warsaw is using ESF funding to counteract social exclusion through occupational development and active inclusion, financing activities for children and young people at risk of poverty, supporting mentally and physically disabled people, deinstitutionalisation of elderly care services and undertaking activities to improve the municipality's institutional capacity.

Implementation

With support from ESF, the project 'Metropolis' was implemented between March 2012 and February 2014 to support the development of local government administration of the metropolitan area of Warsaw. The main objective was to improve the quality of public services of the administration of the city of Warsaw and Pruszkow county. This was done in four tasks:

- implementing a new risk management system to modernise the management processes,
- simplifying and improving citizens' contact with the municipal administration through a new Communication Centre with Residents,
- improving cooperation between the city administration and third sector entities when it comes to contracting,
- improving the skills and qualifications of 520 employees in public administration.

The target group of this project were municipal staff of the city of Warsaw and Pruszkow county. To ensure an effective and efficient risk management, the city mapped processes in selected areas, ran risk management workshops and prepared a risk management manual. The city also launched a promotional campaign for the new Communication Centre with Residents (CCwR) to help obtain information from residents about the handling of administrative matters. A grant application generator was created to help improve procedures for contracting some services from third sector entities and an activity map of Pruszkow County was also created. Finally, the city provided training to municipal workers in areas such as language trainings, general computer skills, customer service, human resource management, legal and administrative training, project management and training in cooperation management between public administrations and NGOs. The total budget for the project was nearly €900,000 with co-financing from the ESF accounting for 85% (€750,125).

Results and impact

The main results of the project were:

- the implementation of management control
- the creation of the Communication Centre with Residents
- the set up of NGOs' activity map and a generator of grant applications for public tenders

The streamlining of procedures led to an increase in the number of public services carried out by third sector entities (over 5%). The project resulted in 3,064 hours of trainings for 520 municipal employees, 50 manuals of procedures and processes, seven tools to promote the Communication Centre with Residents, two evaluation reports and two press conferences.

Added value

The long-term effect of this project is the improvement of the quality of public services provided by the city administration of Warsaw and the county of Pruszkow. Another added value was the possibility to organise trainings for the staff at the Centre of Communication with Residents, which without ESF would not have been possible. Thanks to this project, the functional links between different municipalities in the metropolitan area were strengthened.

Website: <http://europa.um.warszawa.pl/projekty-miejskie/metropolis-wsparcie-rozwoju-administracji-samorzadowej-obszaru-metropolitalnego-wa>



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For further information please consult: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>

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