Evaluation of the contribution of ESIF to PhD graduates

Cohesion and Development Agency

MAIN FINDINGS

In 8 years (2007-2015) almost 17,000 people had achieved a PhD education level (compared to 14,000 between 1960 and 2006). This way, ESI Funds have had a crucial contribution to the implementation of doctoral and postdoctoral training strategy in Portugal. It had allowed to increase the access to and the frequency of doctoral and postdoctoral training and to encourage students to complete their PhD.

The main impacts were:

• **Micro level**: the doctoral training contributed to the employability of doctoral graduates since 90% of the ESI Funds grant holders are employed or in postdoctoral training. Also there is a strong matching between the competences acquired and the professional activity performed, with more than 80% of the ESI Funds grant holders to carry out teaching and/or research activities in higher education.

In general, improvements were reflected in salary increase, although under a precarious contractual bond.

• **Organizational level**: the reinforcement of the participation of employers in networks of production, sharing and application of knowledge, as well as reinforcement of technological and/or knowledge intensity of employer’s activity.

• **Systemic level**: the main contribution was the increased of internationally recognized scientific production and consequent improvement of SNI&I performance indicators.

CONCLUSIONS

Notwithstanding the pertinence, relevance and impacts achieved by the strategy defined for doctoral and postdoctoral training, its main fragility is related to the weak ability to induce the transfer of knowledge produced in doctoral and postdoctoral training to economy and society.

PROBLEM SETTING

• Evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of ESI Funds’ support to doctoral and postdoctoral training, to explain the logic of effects associated and to assess to what extent the strategy implemented in the Portugal 2020 is adequate considering the impacts achieved.

• Based on Theory of Change methodology, the data sources were: interviews, case studies, focus groups, inquiries of supported PhD and Postdoc students and holders and of potential employers, DGEEC and the ESI Funds databases.

Incentives for Doctoral and Postdoctoral training [2007-2013]: Individual PhD Grants, PhD Programmes’ Funding

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Shortage of highly qualified human resources (specially in the S&T National System)

Insufficient incorporation of highly qualified human resources in the business sector

S&T backwarkness

Market orientation deficit in the S&T effort