

THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND



Support to Education and Training: 2014-2018

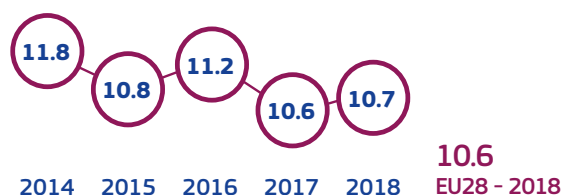
UNITED KINGDOM

SUMMARY

ESF Thematic Objective 10 funding is used to support education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning. Over 3 billion euro has been allocated to such operations in the United Kingdom, with 331 369 participations having taken place by the end of 2018. This factsheet summarises the main actions, outputs, results and lessons learned so far in the use of this funding in the United Kingdom.

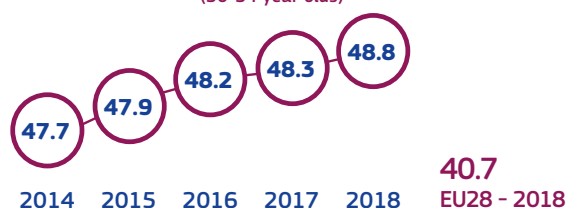
SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Early school leaving (ESL) rate (%)



- ▶ The UK was one of the major **economies in the EU worst hit by the economic crisis** in 2008. However, by 2014, the economy was **recovering and growing** at 2.4% due to strong domestic demand.
- ▶ **Unemployment and inactivity** is highest in inner city areas, some former industrial areas and some coastal towns, and amongst certain population groups, for example, those with low/no qualifications and people with disabilities.

Tertiary educational attainment rate (%)
(30-34 year olds)



- ▶ A significant minority of young people do not have the **skills and qualifications** necessary to compete successfully in the labour market. West Wales and the Valleys, parts of Scotland and North East England have higher NEET rates than the UK average (13.8% in 2018).
- ▶ The UK is **focussing on national targets** and has not adopted some EU2020 targets, for example, in tackling ESL. Nevertheless, the **ESL rate** of 10.7% in 2018 does not meet the ET2020 target of 10%, but the percentage of the population aged 30-34 educated to **tertiary level** exceeds the ET2020 target of 40% with a rate of 48.8%.

Participation rate in education and training by adults
aged 25-64 (%) (last 4 weeks)



- ▶ The participation rate of adults in **lifelong learning** has decreased slightly in recent years, but it remains higher than the EU28 average.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

ESF European Social Fund

TO10 Thematic Objective 10

OP Operational Programme

IP Investment Priority

* Figures present the situation for ESF operations under Thematic Objective 10 and its four Investment Priorities (IPs) for the programming period 2014-2020 implemented up to the end of 2018, as reported on 1 October 2019. In many instances, operations are not yet complete at this stage, or have only recently started.

* As one person could participate more than once in ESF operations over time, the number of participations is reported. These figures exclude Technical Assistance.

* Where the breakdown of participants according to employment status, age, and level of education does not add up to 100%, it means that it was not possible to include characteristics of a number of participants in some OPs.

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ESF PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS IN UNITED KINGDOM

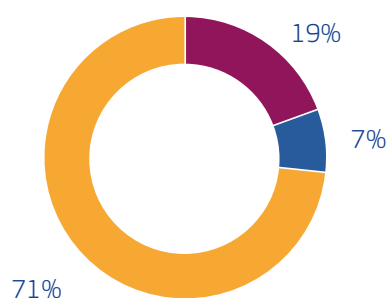
- ▶ There are **six** Operational Programmes (OPs) in the UK: **one each** in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Gibraltar, and **two** in Wales. All OPs fund projects related to T010.
- ▶ T010 funds are used primarily to **increase the productivity of those in work** by funding the development and delivery of vocational short courses designed to enable progress onto advanced courses, or to access better quality employment. T010 funds are also used to **help disadvantaged people to find employment**, with a particular focus on NEETs.
- ▶ There are **regional differences in emphasis**. In Scotland, for example, ESF T010 funding is used to address skills shortages and gaps in the oil and gas sectors, while in Northern Ireland, it is used to help farmers adapt to the changing requirements of the industry.
- ▶ The OP in England was changed in 2018 to reflect an improved economic situation and a stronger labour market

39% of total ESF funding¹...

€3 431 549 124

...is allocated to the following T010 investment priorities: **reducing early school leaving (7%), access to lifelong learning (71%), and improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems (22%).**

Allocation of ESF T010 funds



- Reducing early school leaving - IP10.i
- Enhancing access to lifelong learning - IP10.iii
- Improving the labour market relevance of education and training - IP10.iv

STATE OF PLAY

The rate of allocation of the ESF T010 budget is improving (up from 48% in 2016 to 58% in 2018), but the level of actual spending is among the lowest in the EU.

Number of overall participations in T010 programmes by the end of 2018:

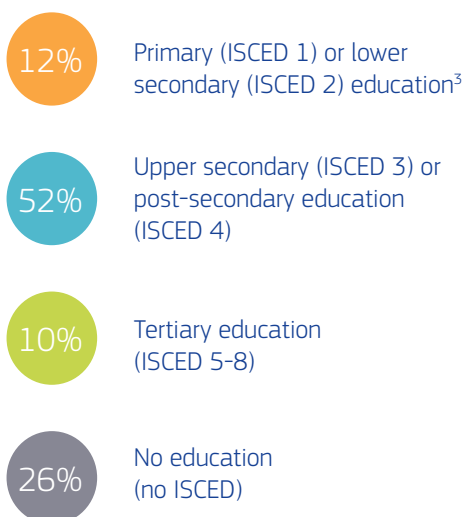
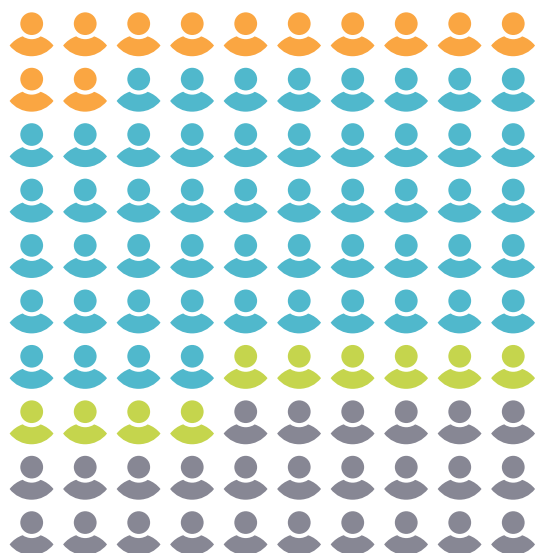
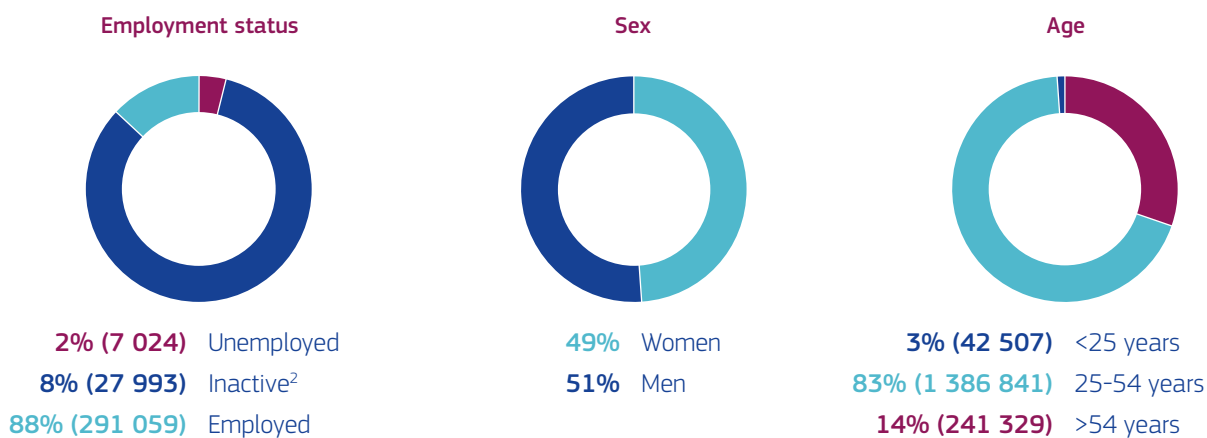
331 369

- ▶ **23 391** participations in operations to reduce early school leaving
- ▶ **262 839** participations in operations to improve access to lifelong learning
- ▶ **288 110** participations in operations to improve the labour market relevance of education and training.

¹ This includes EU-only funding and co-financing from the Member State.

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PARTICIPANT PROFILES WHEN RECEIVING SUPPORT

5 697
Migrants104 157
Other disadvantaged19 852
Participants with disabilities395
HomelessKey achievements to date in ESF T010 operations in the United Kingdom include⁴:

- ▶ **160 996** successful results have been achieved to date following participation in an activity funded by ESF T010, of which:
 - ▶ **26** inactive participants went on to engage in job searching
 - ▶ **20 704** participants went into education or training
 - ▶ **154 948** participants gained a qualification
 - ▶ **3 107** participants moved into employment upon leaving
- ▶ Nearly 90% of state schools participated in the call financed by the National Operational Programme on education. School participation was particularly high in less developed regions and in territories in greater need for support.
- ▶ According to the monitoring and analytical work carried out by INDIRE, the Ministry of Education institute for educational research, ESF financed operations have been found to be quite successful due to the improved performance of students in most participating schools. Furthermore, it was found that the participation in ESF T010 projects outside ordinary school times fosters students' motivation, facilitates participations of families, and strengthens the role of schools in local communities and their inclusiveness.

² The inactive population can include pre-school children, school children, students, pensioners and housewives or -men, for example, provided that they are not working and not available or looking for work.

³ ISCED is the UN reference classification for organising education programmes and related qualifications by education levels and fields.

⁴ Participants' data are collected when starting an operation. Data on results are collected at the end of an operation or even later. Because of this time lag the two sets of data (participations and results) should not be directly compared.

LESSONS LEARNED SO FAR

► Relevance to the needs of target groups

While the overall employment rate in the UK has increased, there are still pockets of society with multiple needs and for whom the ESF still plays an important role. There is also concern about people graduating from ESF operations into precarious employment, leading to “poverty in work/in work poverty”.

► Community involvement

In England, it was noted that the most effective interventions are often carried out by grass roots organisations: “for the community, by the community”.

► ‘Localism’ in decision-making

ESF funding in England is allocated to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) – voluntary local partnerships between the public and private sector which aim to use localised priorities to lead economic growth and job creation. This ‘localised’ approach led to some difficulties early in the programming period due to a lack of experience in managing ESF funds. However, the local approach in England, along with the devolution of decision-making on ESF in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Gibraltar is seen as key to maximising the effectiveness of ESF funding in the UK.

► Outreach challenges

There have been challenges identified in England in engaging certain target groups in ESF funded activities. These groups include so-called ‘hidden NEETs’ such as economically inactive NEETs and lone parents. A particular challenge was noted in terms of convincing marginalised young people to participate in activities on offer.

► Employers and training

Due to the structure of previous ESF funding rounds, employers had come to expect that training for their staff would be heavily subsidised or provided ‘free of charge’ by the ESF. New requirements for employers to pay a contribution together with ESF funding for employee training mean that training is being taken more seriously, and with a greater onus on training providers to match employers’ needs.

PROJECT EXAMPLES

► Apprenticeships NI

Participants are in paid employment from day one and work towards achieving an industry-approved and nationally recognised qualification at Level 2/3. A total of 25 997 participants have received ESF support, well in excess (165%) of the 2018 milestone of 15 750.

► Developing Scotland’s Workforce (DSW)

DSW was developed to address regional skill gaps and shortages associated with key employment sectors, and to provide higher level skills to support the development of emerging growth areas. While there is a lot of interest in this programme, more projects need to become operational.

► North East Ambition project

The goal of the operation is for all schools and colleges in the north east of England to achieve the Good Career Guidance Benchmarks by 2024. By doing this, every young person should be able to identify routes to a successful working life, make more informed decisions about their future and be better prepared for the workplace. The operation aims to support 341 SMEs and to benefit 703 participants.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

London ESF 2014-2020 ‘Phase 1’ Programme Evaluation, <https://lep.london/file/london-esf-phase-1-programme-evaluation-final-reportpdf>

European Commission, Study Supporting the Evaluation of ESF support to education and training (Thematic Objective 10

The ESF in the UK: <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=381&langId=en>

Website of the ESF in the UK: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/european-social-fund-esf-after-brexite>

