

ESF EVALUATIONS 2014-2018

MAIN FINDINGS

The European Social Fund makes clear **positive contributions** to employment, social inclusion and education. These benefits are at the individual, regional and European level:



From 2014-2018, approximately **23 million** persons participated in ESF actions; 52% of participants were women. Of those participating, nearly 3.2 million persons have already found employment and 3.9 million **successfully gained** a qualification;



A number of regions with fewer employment and educational opportunities have made progress in the development of their **labour markets**;



ESF-funded operations could result in an additional **0.33%** GDP growth through a renewed focus on improving the skills of workers and increasing overall labour productivity.

OVERVIEW

The European Social Fund (ESF) is Europe's **main instrument** to invest with Member States in Europe's human capital. The ESF's focus on **employment, social inclusion and education** provides funding for a wide array of projects in these areas.

Projects may differ in size, duration and topic, with some projects aiming to improve employment opportunities and skillsets of specific groups – such as **young workers** and **disadvantaged people**. Other projects create systemic change by improving labour markets and educational institutions. The total 2014-2020 budget for ESF and YEI operations is **EUR 131 billion**, with the EU contribution representing EUR 95.94 billion.

To review the quality of the investments done, the European Commission conducts evaluations. The ESF evaluation for 2014-2018 used multiple research methods – including the analysis of statistical data sets, interviews with experts and project organisers and public consultations. The knowledge generated by the evaluation is used to answer pressing strategic questions such as:



Is European money spent wisely – does the quality of results correspond to the amount of resources invested in the projects?



What are the improvements we need to make to the ESF+ for its next planning period from 2021 to 2027?



Innovative projects and changes to systems funded by the ESF have long-term, **positive impacts**. Some elements that could increase the quality of results are:

- **Active involvement** of stakeholders and their representatives in all stages of projects – from planning to final delivery;
- Sufficient financial and staffing resources to deliver operations;
- ESF operations designed to contribute towards **regional and national priorities**.

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

[Link to the Staff Working Document](#)

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