



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION

Annual work programme for the operational technical assistance at the initiative of the Commission in the framework of the European Social Fund Plus strand under shared management, for 2021

[Commission Decision C(2021)4289 of 18 June 2021]

EN
ANNEX

**2021 annual work programme for the operational technical assistance at the initiative of
the Commission in the framework of the European Social Fund Plus strand under
shared management**

Grants, Procurements, Indirect Management and other actions

1. Introduction

On the basis of the objectives given in the future Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) that has received the political agreement of the European Parliament and the Council on 28 January 2021, this work programme contains the actions to be financed and the budget breakdown for year 2021 as follows:

1.1. Budget breakdown

Budget Line	Amount
07.020200 - ESF+ shared management strand - Operational technical assistance	EUR 25 000 000
TOTAL	EUR 25 000 000

LEGAL BASIS

The future Regulation (EU) of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013, and in particular Article 39 thereof

1.2. Type of actions to be financed:

- for grants (implemented under direct management) (point 2): EUR 2 250 000
- for prizes (implemented under direct management) (point 3): N/A
- for procurement (implemented under direct management) (point 4): EUR 22 550 000
- for actions implemented under indirect management (point 5): N/A
- for contributions to trust funds (point 6): N/A
- for financial instruments (point 7): N/A
- for contributions to blending facilities (point 8): N/A
- for other actions or expenditure (point 9): EUR 200 000

2. Grants

The indicative global budgetary envelope reserved for grants under this work programme amounts to EUR 2 250 000.

2.1. Direct grants

2.1.1. Grants for events organised by the Presidency of the Council of the EU (2021)

Priorities of the year, objectives pursued and expected results

The ESF+ technical assistance will support the deepening of the EU employment and social agenda during the two terms of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU with a high level event to be organised by presidencies. The ESF+ Presidency conferences are meant to support ESF+ stakeholders on specific challenges of programme implementation.

Description of the activities to be funded

The Commission will co-fund conferences to provide a platform for Member States and relevant stakeholders to exchange information and good practices notably on topics related to policy areas covered by the ESF+ such as employment, education or social inclusion.

Types of applicants targeted by the call

The Member State holding the Council Presidency is the beneficiary of the grant to be awarded without a call for proposals on the basis of Article 195(c) of Financial Regulation. The form, topic and expected results are established by the Presidency in agreement with the Commission. These events, which are highly political in nature and which need representation at the highest level both from national authorities and European representatives, are to be organised exclusively by the Member State holding the Presidency. Given the unique role of the Presidency in the framework of EU activities, the Member State responsible for the organisation of the event is considered as a de jure monopoly.

Implementation

Directly by DG EMPL

2.1.2. Direct grant to Euronews for reporting on ESF/ESF+ implementation

Priorities of the year, objectives pursued and expected results

The objective is to produce three "Real Economy" episodes on ESF/ESF+ implementation with Euronews. It will contribute to disseminating information about what can be achieved under the ESF+. Euronews is free to adapt the topics provided by the Commission (to be determined) to the editorial concept of the Real Economy Magazine.

Description of the activities to be funded

Euronews will be asked to produce and broadcast three episodes in 2021 on ESF/ESF+ implementation, raising awareness among the general public on the impact of ESF funding on the ground. The episodes are part of the established TV magazine "Real Economy", which is distributed on air, online and via social media. Euronews is specialised in reporting on EU affairs from a European perspective on a multilingual basis and contributes to a sense of European identity. Its magazine Real Economy is specialised in economic, social and employment related matters. The action will allow the Commission to reach out to new audiences strengthening the visibility of the ESF. Between 2 December 2019 and 14

September 2020, 1,015 broadcasts and their promos have been recorded over 36 weeks, a total of 49 hours and 36 minutes of content. Real Economy Season 7 is estimated to have reached an audience of 10.2 million viewers (mainly affluent Europeans), compared to an estimated 9.5 million for Season 6. The planning of the episodes to be produced will be done in close cooperation with Euronews and DG ECFIN. The latter is the Commission's coordinator of the cooperation with Euronews Real Economy. Due to its editorial independence, Euronews is free to adapt these objectives and target groups to the editorial concept of the Real Economy Magazine.

Types of applicants targeted by the call

A direct grant will be awarded to Euronews, in accordance with article 195 (f) of the Financial Regulation, to cover the production of episodes for the "Real Economy" magazine. These episodes will illustrate a series of topical issues and the impact of EU policies and funding on employment and social affairs. The justification for selecting Euronews, in view of its technical competence and high degree of specialisation in relation to the objective pursued, will be elaborated in the award decision.

Implementation

Through a co-delegation to ECFIN

2.2. Calls for proposals

2.2.1. Call for proposals: Establishment of Help desk on social services

Priorities of the year, objectives pursued and expected results

Social services are key for the implementation of economic, social and human rights and related policies, including the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The COVID-19 pandemic is making it far harder and more expensive to deliver social services. EU funding, in particular the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), has a fundamental role to play in addressing the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak in social services across the EU and the more structural challenges faced by social services. On top of ESF+, other important EU funding programmes relevant to social services delivery include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (REACT-EU) and the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

EU funds are underused to support social services for a variety of reasons, among them :

- The difficult COVID-19 context has put pressure on National Managing Authorities to draw from ESF+ instruments for social services at the same time as for employment measures;
- Need for simplifying procedures on the ground to allow better access to funding allocation by social services;
- Lack of grass roots demand on Managing Authorities, due to the absence of information and understanding of EU funding opportunities.

The aforementioned arguments demonstrate the need for a more permanent support centre which will facilitate the uptake of the available EU funds to help social services address the impact and to recover from the crisis, and support the implementation of EU social policy

frameworks, in particular the European Pillar of Social Rights and its action plan and resulting policy initiatives.

Description of the activities to be funded

The objective of the call is to finance a “Social Services Helpdesk” that will help Managing Authorities use ESF+, REACT-EU, ERDF and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (and other relevant EU funds) for evidence-based social services interventions and help social services access said funds. To achieve this, the Helpdesk will raise awareness and understanding about ESF+ and REACT-EU (and other relevant EU funds) about how funding can better support social services, facilitate use of and access to EU funds for social services and facilitate exchange and co-operation between Managing Authorities, social services and the European Commission to ensure that funding priorities are based on an assessment of social needs and on effective evidence-based interventions, including through the development of simplification measures at national level (Article 67 of the Common Provision Regulation).

Types of applicants targeted by the call

a) Place of establishment

Legal entities properly established and registered in the EU Member States are eligible as lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entities and associated organisations.

b) Type of entities

The lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entities and associated organisations must be legal entities

c) Consortia

Only consortia are eligible.

To be eligible the consortium must be composed of civil society organisations in the area of social services and of social partners organisations in at least 20 EU Member States.

Implementation

Directly by DG EMPL

3. Prizes

N/A

4. Procurement

The indicative global budgetary envelope reserved for procurement contracts under this work programme amounts to EUR 22 550 000.

The Commission intends to launch an open procedure for a Framework Contract (FWC) for the purchase of licences, maintenance and support, development of enhancements and change requests of the IT Risk Scoring Tool ARACHNE, for a duration of four years (20 000 000 EUR).

The Commission also intends to launch an open procedure for a FWC for the provision of services related to capacity building activities, support to DG EMPL geographical desks,

ESF+/ESF/FEAD Managing Authorities and relevant stakeholders in areas covered by the ESF+ specific objectives, for a duration of seven years (12 000 000 EUR).

Subject matter of the contracts envisaged

In 2021, the Commission intends to undertake actions through contracts following public procurement (call for tenders and framework contracts) or administrative arrangements in the following areas:

4.1. Support to capacity building activities for better ESF+ implementation

General description of the contracts envisaged

Assist the Commission, Member States and stakeholders in programming, implementing and evaluating ESF+ including through conferences, meetings, events, trainings, mutual learning, an advisory platform for using financial instruments, audits, and other actions.

Implementation

Directly by the DG and co-delegation to DG REGIO

4.2. Support services and communication in the area of skills

General description of the contracts envisaged

Support/secretariat services for the Pact for Skills at EU level, covering all logistical and communication activities, advisory/capacity building support for the blueprints, as well as assistance for developing partnerships on upskilling and reskilling. These activities will also support the implementation of the VET Recommendation through the European Vocational Skills Week and the VET excellence awards.

Implementation

Directly by DG EMPL

4.3. Development and maintenance of IT tools

General description of the contracts envisaged

These procurement actions will include the development and maintenance of various IT tools supporting the ESF+ implementation, such as a risk scoring tool ARACHNE for data mining and data enrichment, as well as MAPAR (field audit management tool), SFC and RDIS2 (support for financial management) to ensure appropriate management of the funds. It will also contribute to corporate IT and support the development of corporate IT tools such as Corporate Compass.

Implementation

Directly by DG EMPL and co-delegation to DG DIGIT

4.4. Communication

General description of the contracts envisaged

DG EMPL will support communication activities (website, publications, campaigns) and contribute to the corporate communication campaigns. The latter includes, as set out in Communication C(2020)9390, in the period 2021-23, enhanced and strengthened corporate communication campaigns launched on European Green Deal and Digital transition. Corporate communication will inform and engage with citizens about EU values and actions

and how the EU impacts daily lives. This action will cover the production of content; provision of corporate technical services; dissemination of information through integrated communication actions; organisation of and participation in events; studies and evaluations, where relevant.

Implementation

Directly by DG EMPL and co-delegation to DG COMM

4.5. Analysis, reports, evaluation and impact assessments

General description of the contracts envisaged

The procurement actions will include support for thematic analysis and studies to enhance results and improve the evidence-based management of ESF+ and for developing data collection systems, including in relation to Member States' reform efforts.

These actions also cover help in assessing the quality of the Member States' evaluation plans and evaluations and joint support to Commission services and Member States on the assessment and improvement of evaluations for ESF+, ERDF and Cohesion fund. These actions also include activities related to the promotion and implementation of impact evaluations and guidance.

Implementation

Directly by DG EMPL and co-delegation to DG REGIO

5. *Actions implemented under indirect management*

N/A

6. *Contributions to trust funds*

N/A

7. *Financial instruments*

N/A

8. *Contributions to blending facilities*

N/A

9. *Other actions or expenditure*

The indicative global budgetary envelope reserved for other actions or expenditure under this work programme amounts to EUR 200 000.

9.1. Analysis and evaluation

Amount

EUR 200 000

Description and objective of the implementing measure

Further development of scientific expertise, methodological support and contribution to ESF+ thematic evaluations. For instance, support to the Centre for Research on impact evaluations (CRIE) within the JRC will provide scientific expertise and methodological support to the Commission and Member States for the evaluation of the impact of ESF+ funded interventions. This involves mostly promoting the use of counterfactual impact evaluation methods through community of practice meetings with the Member States and, on request, Quality Assurance Support.

Implementation

Service level agreement with JRC