European Social Fund (ESF) 2014-2020

2011/0268(COD) - 20/08/2012 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted the report by Elisabeth MORIN-CHARTIER (EPP, FR) on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006.

The committee recommends that the position of the European Parliament adopted in first reading, following the ordinary legislative procedure, should amend the Commission proposal as follows:

ESF Missions: Members are of the opinion that the ESF must provide the support required for policies to promote and improve employment opportunities based on related rights, playing a major role in **strengthening social inclusion**, **fighting poverty, supporting the creation of sustainable and quality jobs**. In particular, it shall:

- promote **high levels of employment**, job creation, adaptation and preservation and job quality;
- support the voluntary geographical and occupational mobility of workers;
- encourage a high level of education and training that is available to all age groups;
- enhance the transition between education and employment for young people, and facilitate workers' adaptation to change in companies and production systems needed for sustainable development;
- contribute to enhancing economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Union, to combating poverty and social exclusion, to promoting gender equality and equal opportunities and to fighting against discrimination.

The ESF shall provide support:

- **to individuals and groups systematically excluded from the labour market and from education and training**, being at risk of poverty, such as the long-term unemployed, young people who have left school without acquiring any qualifications or young people who have been unemployed longer than four months, children living in poverty, people with disabilities, migrants and asylum-seekers, refugees, minorities, marginalised communities and people of all ages facing social exclusion and poverty;
- **to workers, enterprises**, including actors in the **social economy**, with a view to facilitating their adaptation to new challenges, including growing skill mismatches.

In order to improve the matching of the needs of the labour market to education and training systems, Members propose developing tools for anticipating required skills, the reaction capacity of education and training systems and education and career guidance.

Thematic concentration: Member States shall ensure that the strategy and actions set out in the Operational Programmes are **consistent** and respond to the challenges identified in their national strategies that aim to fight unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, such as their National Reform Programmes, National Social Reports, National Roma Strategies, National Employment Strategies, National Disability Strategies.

For more developed regions, Member States shall concentrate 80% of the ESF allocation to each operational programme on up to four of the investment priorities or, in response to specific needs, on **up to six** thereof provided that investment priorities are identified after consulting the partners concerned.

The report calls for part of the 20% of the ESF budget allocated to ‘promoting social inclusion and combating poverty’ shall be used to fund exchanges concerning transnational social inclusion experiments aimed at excluded groups in society.

Social partner participation: efficient and effective implementation of actions supported by the ESF depends on good governance and partnership between all relevant territorial and socioeconomic actors, taking into account those who act at the **regional and local levels, in particular the umbrella associations representing local and regional authorities, organised civil society, economic and social partners** by granting them a defined part of allocation (**2%**) which may take the form of a global grant.

Sound financial management: the report stresses the importance to ensure the sound financial management of the programme and its implementation in the most effective and user-friendly manner possible, while also ensuring **legal certainty and the accessibility of the instrument** to all participants. It recalls that **close synergies** should be developed between the ESF, other Union programmes and the Structural Funds, in particular the Programme for Social Change and Innovation.

Social innovation: the Commission shall disseminate and promote good practices and methodologies, including as regards **common criteria for the award of social labels** to enterprises on a voluntary basis.

Territorial differences: to ensure complementarity with the ERDF and to facilitate access to Structural Funds for small NGOs, Members ask for the ESF to be used as lead fund for integrated social inclusion projects combining social infrastructures and accompanying services in **deprived areas**.

Indicators: as monitoring and evaluation are vitally important for the ESF, an extended and well-founded set of indicators is needed which clearly show where progress has been achieved and which also demonstrate areas where the use of funds has not contributed to the achievement of the goals and objectives.