European Social Fund 2028–2034

2025/0239(COD) - 16/07/2025 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to establish the European Social Fund as part of the National and Regional Partnership Plan set out in the Regulation establishing the National and Regional Partnership Fund (NRP) establishing conditions for the implementation of the Union support to quality employment, skills and social inclusion for the period from 2028 to 2034.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: on 16 July 2025, the Commission adopted a proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034 (MFF) for the period 2028-2034. This proposal concerns, in particular, the European Social Fund (ESF).

Despite progress, tackling unemployment, skills gaps, labour shortages and persistently high poverty rates remain a priority across the EU. Targeted action to address these challenges is increasingly needed.

The ESF supports policies and priorities aimed at contributing to the creation of full employment, improving the quality and productivity of work, increasing the geographical and occupational mobility of workers within the Union, improving education and training systems and promoting intergenerational fairness, social inclusion and health. The ESF, within the framework of cohesion policy, will be operating within the **national and regional partnership plan** and its single rulebook.

CONTENT: the proposed regulation establishes **specific conditions for the implementation of the European Social Fund for the 2028-2034 programming period** as part of Union support, in accordance with the general objectives set out in the Regulation establishing the National and Regional Partnership Fund (NRP). Its objective is to enhance the effectiveness of labour markets and promote access to quality employment, improve access to education and training, promote social inclusion and health, and reduce poverty.

The ESF should:

- contribute to progression in **education and training** and the transition to the world of work, support lifelong learning, including formal, non-formal and informal learning, and contribute to societal and economic competitiveness and innovation;

- facilitate **access to services**, including strengthening the modernisation, digitalisation and resilience of health care and long-term care services;

- assist Member States in implementing measures to eliminate all forms of **discrimination** and ensure equal opportunities for all, particularly for groups under-represented in the labour market;

- ensure that everyone, including children in accordance with the European Child Guarantee, has access to **quality essential services**;

- contribute to the modernisation of **social protection systems**, in particular with a view to promoting their accessibility;

- support **children in poverty** and address measures under the Child Guarantee;

- contribute to **poverty reduction** by supporting national schemes aimed at alleviating food and material deprivation and promoting the social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion and the most deprived;

- allocate resources to support **the employability of young people**, in particular young people who are neither in employment, education nor training, and promote youth employment, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

Member States should also be encouraged to use the ESF to supports targeted actions to promote horizontal principles such as the promotion of **gender equality** and ensuring the accessibility of services for people with disabilities and to enable **people with disabilities** to actively participate.