

ESF InfoReview

N°2 / June 1997 - Newsletter of the European Social Fund

Special insert
Flynn speaks on
the future of the ESF

Europe, jobs and the ESF

What is the EU's strategy for stability, growth and employment, and how well is it working?

The present strategy, a combination of macro-economic and structural measures, has been successful in achieving price and exchange rate stability. It has not been so successful in achieving economic growth, and addressing the structural obstacles which remain in the way of meeting our employment objectives. The conditions for investment and growth are better than for 10-20 years. However, the most important challenge facing Member States, in terms of employment, is to show greater determination in rebalancing labour market measures and resources from passive to active policies. The main weakness today, we must recognise, is not on the incentive side, but on the opportunity side.

What can be done to tackle these problems, first, in the short term?

In the short term, to apply successfully the macroeconomic strategy, we must create consumer and investor confidence, by emphasising the growth potential of the whole labour force and of the Single Market, and by focusing on the productive potential of Europe as an economic entity. Secondly, public expenditures must be restructured, in line with the Florence Summit agreement, to make labour market policies more active. Unemployment insurance should be reformed and be given a new dimension, in order to function positively, as employability insurance.

And in the longer term?

In the longer term, much more emphasis must be placed on two important patterns of change. Firstly, on policies to provide positive frameworks for the emerging new forms of organisation of work and the human resource investment which we will, increasingly, require to ensure competitiveness, and

maximise the benefits of Europe as an economic entity. Secondly, on policies which address the new challenges of demographic change: to ensure our employment policies enable us to meet our obligations to an increasingly ageing population, with a smaller active population.

These policy orientations should be coupled with measures focused on facilitating a better gender balance, in work and society, and on labour mobility - in and between Member States - to give young people, particularly, new opportunities to find jobs and gain marketable experience.

Where does the European Social Fund fit into this strategy?

The ESF is the Structural Funds' only instrument specifically for, and about, people. Through its support to local partnerships, capacity building projects, training and labour market support activities, it provides a direct link to the citizens of the Union, reaching out in a tangible way to individuals in their communities. ▶



Allan Larsson, Director-General of DGV, was interviewed by ESF InfoReview on the role of the European Social Fund in Europe's employment strategy.

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Such activities play a vital role in bringing the European Union to life as a positive force.

As well as the obvious financial support the ESF offers to help people into the labour market, it represents a further resource. It is a catalyst and a force for change within Member States' human resource and labour market policies. The networks, the exchange of good practice and experience, the transnational cooperation, which are triggered by the ESF, represent a dynamic tool for revitalisation and modernisation of human resource policies across Europe.

And the future contribution of the ESF to European policy objectives?

The future of the Structural Funds, overall, has to be seen in the light of new perspectives and trends; those of technological advance, of patterns of work and family life, of demographic change, and of Europe beginning to understand itself as an economic entity.

These new perspectives have special relevance for the ESF, in all its manifestations, from Union-wide Objective 3 action, to its strong contribution to regional and social cohesion in Objective 1 and 2 areas, to the special role of the Community Initiatives. Based on its Treaty responsibilities, the ESF must now be further developed, to provide leading edge support to Member States' efforts to transform their education, training and employment systems, in order to build the workforce - and the society - which will keep Europe competitive in the 21st century. This role will grow in importance, as human resource policies become fully recognised as integral to economic progress. The introduction of a single currency, too, calls for a more effective adjustment of labour markets, in response to the fact that currency rate adjustment will be excluded from policy options. The ESF must be equal to this challenge, in terms of flexibility, relevance and ease of use.

'A much simpler design of the Structural Funds, overall, is needed, as well as a new approach to partnership, within and between Member States.'

How can this be achieved?

To meet that challenge, to be able to offer the optimum strength and quality in its contribution to modernisation of national policies, the ESF needs to be radically reformed. A much simpler design of the Structural Funds, overall, is needed, as well as a new approach to partnership, within and between Member States.

We must both reduce the number of Structural Fund objectives to a more manageable level, and streamline procedures. The ESF would have a major role, both in developing human resources across the territory of the Union as a whole, and in making a central and distinctive contribution to the development of those regions which are lagging behind, or which face particular problems of industrial adaptation or rural development.

How do you balance partnership and paperwork?

The success of the kind of reform I have described can only be guaranteed if we find this balance. That means we must undertake a radical streamlining of procedures (reducing number of monitoring committees; harmonising eligibility criteria, increasing possibilities of multi-fund interventions etc.). And we must find a new model of partnership, based on the integrated employment strategy laid down in the White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment and the Essen strategy, and now reflected in the development of the employment strategy through successive European Councils. In short, the recipe is political will and consistency of strategy, coupled with access, transparency and relevance on the ground, and underpinned by a simpler set of implementation arrangements overall. ■

Note from the editor

The first edition of ESF InfoReview was well-received across the whole spectrum of those interested in the European Social Fund. Thank you to all our readers. We plan to step up our coverage, by increasing both the print run and the number of languages in which our newsletter will be available. Starting from this edition, N° 2, you will find new items, such as the Focus section on a Member State. We are also attaching greater importance to the presentation of concrete exam-

ples of the Fund in action on the ground, while keeping the articles which present more global analysis. We now have to ensure there is room for regular debate on the issues - both large-scale and smaller-scale - affecting today's and tomorrow's ESF. We would welcome any comments or suggestions you might have. Over to you.

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Reviewing ESF action on the ground



Many of you will be involved in the day-to-day management of ESF projects and programmes, and may well have taken part in the mid-term evaluation exercise currently underway.

ESF InfoReview spoke to Lluís Riera, Director of DG V/C (ESF operations) about the task in hand and its significance.

One of the key aims for 1997 is to ensure the effective operational implementation of the European Social Fund. What does this mean, and why is this such an important time to be carrying out the exercise?

Making sure that the ESF is implemented effectively means ensuring that projects and actions are of good quality, that resources are fully utilised, and that we therefore get the best value for money. In terms of budgetary execution, 1996 was the first year in which we achieved a 100% execution rate for the ESF budget, up from 76% in 1995. Central to this success was a 'Budget Execution Action Plan', which we put into practice in close co-operation with the Member States. We plan to build on the success of this approach in 1997, in order to ensure the required monitoring of budget execution. The other fundamental issue for the ESF is to ensure the quality of implementation in operational terms. Our strength relies in particular on the knowledge and the experience we gather from the ongoing and direct contacts maintained with the various partners involved in the management and implementation of programmes in the Member States. That is why internal networks have been created within Directorate C of DG V, with the aim of promoting dialogue, and the exchange of information and experience between the different Units in order to reinforce the global coherence of our work throughout the 15 Member States. Obviously, the reinforcement of partnership with all the Member States and the Social Partners is also necessary to improve co-operation, implementation and the policy debate.

Halfway through the current period

1997 is an important year - after three years of the current Structural Fund programmes, this year sees the mid-term evaluation exercise taking place. Each programme is being assessed by independent evaluators, who are charged with the task of analysing the structure of the programmes, the environment they are operating in, the way in which they are being managed, and the results they are delivering.

This mid-term evaluation provides us with the first systematic feedback on the Structural Funds in action since the 1993 reform. We will be looking most closely of all at the new elements in the 1993 reform - Objective 4, combating social exclusion, the concentration of resources, reinforced partnership and an extension of the programming period.

Will this feedback lead to changes?

You will be aware that this year the Commission will be drafting its proposals for the Funds post-1999. Clearly, information gathered during the evaluation exercise will be of great importance when setting the priorities for the 2000 - 2005 period. Concerning the current period, the 1993 Regulations allow for certain adjustments to be made to the programmes after three years, if this is felt to be necessary. The aim is not to undertake a wholesale revision, but more a fine-tuning operation, concentrating on policy adjustments and greater effectiveness rather than a fundamental reallocation of resources.

Which issues will be at the top of the review agenda?

It is important to bear in mind that evaluations carried out at programme level will constitute the basis for the review. The exercise currently underway is paying particular attention to a number of policy areas within the different Objectives, where experience up to now suggests there is scope for change.

Under Objective 3, where we deal with a wide range of target groups, we are investigating the way assistance is concentrated on those sub-target groups which need it most. We want to look at ways of building on the successful pathways approach to employment, where an individualised package of training and guidance meets the requirements of job-seekers at all stages.

Objective 4 provides a new focus for Structural Funding. The new Objective only really took off towards the end of 1995. Already, though, we are beginning to see signs of structured improvements in the links between centres of research, SMEs and training providers. The key points for the evaluation

of this Objective are: the notion of anticipation and the way in which companies utilise the results of anticipation as a basis for their training policy and practice; appropriate concentration on SMEs; and concentration on the priority target group of workers threatened with unemployment.

In close collaboration with DG XVI, we will also be considering the key elements of ESF actions in Objective 1 regions: the links between education or training and the labour market; the improvement of education and training systems; and the need to cater for those who fall through the education and training net.

The mid-term review will not apply to Objective 2, as the programmes are just being renegotiated for the coming three years 1997-1999. We are now at the final stage of the negotiations and we can learn from this experience for the mid-term review. We have been very pleased with the extra weight given to human resources investment in the new programmes. Investing in skills and training is of course important in itself, but we are also seeing greater acknowledgement of the need for investment in human resources to go hand-in-hand with other structural investment.

To what extent is the EU Employment Strategy being supported through the implementation of the ESF?

The main criterion for ESF intervention is the explicit link between the programmes and actions supported and the needs of the labour market.

Evaluation will provide a first indication of the contribution the ESF is making to the post-Essen European employment strategy. As far as complementarity between ESF and national employment and labour market policies are concerned, the Member States' Multi-Annual Employment Programmes (MAPs), have a key role to play. A clear understanding of the interplay between the MAPs and the ESF will allow for a better-informed dialogue and partnership to take place between Member States and the European Commission in policy formulation.

An Idea Of Scale

We are perhaps familiar with the size of the European Social Fund budget: at ECU 47 billion for the period 1994 - 1999, the ESF represents some 9% of the European Union's total budget. As to the scale of the ESF management task, implementing the ESF during 1997 involves effectively managing over 750 operational programmes (350 of these are for the Community Initiatives). 1996 involved around 4,300 financial transactions, amounting to ECU 15 billion in budget payments and commitments. Over one thousand Monitoring Committee meetings take place each year. ■

Euro 15 News

In this section, we hear from a number of Member States about the projects they are putting into practice with ESF assistance.

If you are working in a partnership on a project co-funded by the ESF, we would like to hear from you, to share your experiences of good practice and success with others, as well as any problems you may have encountered, and the steps taken to overcome them.

If you would like to share your experience of putting ESF objectives into action, please contact the ESF Editorial Board on (+32 2) 295 44 90 (tel), or (+32 2) 295 49 18 (fax) or by e-mail at esfinfo@bxl.dg5.cec.be

The Netherlands

Painting a rosier future

New quality, environmental and technological standards in the painting and decorating industry mean that many workers with low qualifications may be forced out of their jobs as workers with superior skills and training enter the sector. Increasingly, prospective employers expect and demand that their employees are well trained and hold a specialised diploma.

The SVS training centre near Leiden, in The Netherlands, trains experienced workers in this sector and offers this much coveted diploma. Although many of the trainees are over 30 with little or no formal

education, they have worked in the sector for a number of years, are aware of the strong competition and want to keep their jobs. Mrs Oudejans, a manager at the training centre, commented, "The trainees are very motivated - the trainers maintain that these experienced workers are more focused on obtaining their diploma than the training centre's younger students."



Experienced workers need qualifications too

Trainees are expected to have at least five years' relevant work experience and must be over 22 years old to qualify for a place on the course. The project also organises a number of information sessions, company visits and meetings with project promoters and beneficiaries to increase awareness about the training it provides; the sessions also serve to advertise the skills of the trainees to prospective employees. Mrs Oudejans comments, "Employers are pleased with the programme because it results in better trained and more highly skilled employees who are able to turn their hands to a number of different things."

Trainees also feel that they benefit from the tuition; "I was especially pleased when I heard that I would be trained with other trainees of my age and experience. We are all learning a lot from each other."

More than 300 painters will be trained. According to Mrs Oudejans, "The ESF's funding (approximately ECU 430,000) is essential to the project because it helps to pay for books and tuition, without which a number of students would be unable to participate. The funding also pays for painting materials used during training, company demonstrations and information meetings to inform the employers about the project".

Italy

Organisational change - full steam ahead

Like its competitors, Breda Railways Constructions, a major Italian company, is operating in a tough commercial environment. The company must become more streamlined and efficient in order to maintain its competitive edge. It also requires a more flexible workforce. In addition, the company wants to encourage individual staff development and to allow people to take a more active role in the organisational development of the company.

The project, co-funded by the ESF, first established the company's specific training requirements by assessing available resources and skills, existing work practices and operational procedures. Products and the geographical distribution of the clients were also examined.

Seven hundred and fifteen operators, technicians and managers are currently participating in the project. An ongoing training programme has been developed to enhance the skills of the workforce as a whole and to improve the overall productivity of the company. The training also aims to reduce the hierarchical complexity of the organisation by abandoning functions or activities which are not strictly necessary for the successful operation of the company, as well as by retraining personnel for other roles.

Sweden

A brighter future for the brass industry

Skultuna Brassworks, based in the small town of Skultuna near Stockholm, was founded in 1607. It is the oldest brass manufacturer in Sweden, producing both decorative ornaments and everyday utensils.

The factory is also a prime tourist attraction with over 200,000 visitors per year: it has proved so successful that half the company's turnover is generated through tourism.

Last autumn, in response to the growth in demand for its products, the company developed a plan to restructure itself and to enhance staff education. This plan, which aims to preserve local jobs and prepare the company for a changing international environment, is currently under way. The education plan encompasses quality control, personal development, language training for tourist guides, computer training, and the development of marketing skills.



The brass industry - adapting products for today's market

Anita Erikson, Director of Finance, commented, "As a result of the training, the company has successfully adapted its product range to meet changing market demands and our staff have become more customer focused, both of which have improved our business."

United Kingdom

Rebuilding self esteem

Training and Guidance (TAG) is a project based in the Scottish Highlands. It provides support and assistance to unemployed adults who have suffered from mental health problems. TAG helps to build up the confidence and self-esteem of trainees by developing social and occupational skills. All TAG beneficiaries receive a vocational qualification at the end of the course and the scheme also helps trainees accustom themselves to normal working hours and routine.



Gaining confidence in the workplace

Jacqui Hepburn, Manager of the TAG project, told InfoReview that the development of occupational skills in the workplace has proved to be a key route to employment, "The supported placement is new way of helping people get back into the community.

The placements are designed to develop into job opportunities. In addition to training and advising those on TAG courses, re-educating employers is a key part of our work. There is still a stigma attached to mental health problems, and media images are not always helpful."

Two hundred and fifteen people benefited from TAG assistance in 1996. On average, some 33% of participants find a job as a result of the training and 30% move on to further education or training.

The project received 50% of its total budget for 1996 from the ESF (ECU 267,400) and forms part of the Objective 1 programme for the Highlands and Islands.

TAG Trading is a group of enterprises or 'social firms' involved in different areas such as picture-framing, printing and the provision of catering services. TAG is also involved in a Horizon project, bringing together partners from Germany, Finland, Spain, Belgium, and Italy. Jacqui Hepburn comments: "Working with partners throughout Europe has enabled us to see how we are all dealing with the same problems - such as escaping the benefit trap - in different ways."

Partners sought! Systems for labour market assessment

If your work involves studying the labour market in your region and evolving systems to do this, you may be interested in a system developed by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE). HIE has worked closely with the Highlands and Islands Objective 1 Partnership to produce a labour market assessment of the region, launched in January 1996, and is looking for partners in other Member States.

The system uses the latest geographical information technology to link data from existing data sets, such as the census and information held by key partners including the Scottish Qualifications Authority, the Scottish Office, local authorities, local enterprise companies, careers services, and businesses. The system allows easy access to data for the purposes of programme and project planning, development, monitoring and evaluation.

In addition to the technological aspects of the project, an interesting methodology engendering partnership between the various agencies contributing information was also developed. If you have any enquiries, please contact Jonathan Clark at:

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Austria

Class glass act

The VFQ, an Austrian association with nine years' experience of developing women's qualifications through vocational training, runs a project in Linz to train women in the art of glass-making. Via Vista,



Putting new found skills into action

which benefits from ESF funding under Austria's Objective 3 Programme, is aimed at unemployed women, particularly those wishing to return to work after looking after their family, or following a career break.

The project is run in conjunction with a 'social firm' which has a fully equipped glass workshop. The training combines practical and technical skills and is backed up by theoretical study. The guidance emphasises the importance and therapeutic value of work - through combating the problems associated with being unemployed (such as poverty) and by increasing the self-esteem and self-confidence of participants.

Above all, the training stresses how the skills acquired by trainees can be used in practical terms and gives them the opportunity to meet prospective employers in the glass making industry. Communications skills also form an important part of the training.

The project provides ten places for training, and five temporary jobs in the glass workshop itself for the duration of the project (from September 1996 to August 1997).

What the regional papers say

- ① "Employment integration: a plan to counter exclusion" *Paris Normandie (FR)*
- ② "Three million kroner from the EU to combat long-term employment" *Finnveden Fredag (SF)*
- ③ "£30 million to help county jobless" *Lancashire Evening Telegraph (UK)*
- ④ "Project on course to help women return to work" *Hexham Courant (UK)*
- ⑤ "Unemployed get a million kroner from EU" *Horsens Folkeblad (DK)*
- ⑥ "The European Union will finance employment initiatives worth 25 million PTS" *Ideal Granada (E)*
- ⑦ "The European Union will help women set up companies" *5 Cinco Dias (E)*

Emploi-insertion : un plan pour lutter contre l'exclusion

La ville met en place un plan local d'insertion économique. Il vise à aider (emploi, formation...) une population désocialisée. Cible estimée : 250 personnes.

A l'annonce, en décembre, d'un nouveau plan pour lutter contre l'exclusion et l'isolement l'insertion de personnes en difficulté, les élus du conseil municipal ont voulu quelques jours de réflexion. « L'insertion est un droit », lance une conseillère de la majorité, « mais aussi un devoir de la municipalité ». C'est le directeur de l'insertion économique et sociale, Jean-Louis Lecomte, qui a été chargé de monter ce projet. « Le projet de dossier de vote pour le conseil municipal est prêt », annonce le directeur de l'insertion économique et sociale, Jean-Louis Lecomte, « mais il reste à valider les modalités de mise en œuvre ».



£30m to help county jobless

THE North West is to get more than £30 million under a new regional carve up of Euro-cash to help get long-term unemployed back to work. Education and Employment Minister Lord Holford announced the cash boost when he unveiled a new system for distributing money from a

Tre miljoner EU-kronor mot långtidsarbetslöshet

I de fyra GGV-kommuner som utgör området för projektet avdelas 14,5 miljoner kronor till projektet. De resterande 5,5 miljoner kronor ska användas till utbildning och andra åtgärder.

Målet är att sex månader efter projektets avslutning skall 50 procent av deltagarna (4000 personer) vara anställda i arbetslivet. Tanken är att stimulera till ökat engagemang för in- och utvandring. Projektet, som pågår i oktober 1997, är uppdelat i tre block med grundläggande projektarbete, utbildning och arbetsmarknad.

Project on course to help women return to work

A PROJECT set up in September to help Yorkshire women get into the job market has already got members of the public to suggest that they should be given a special award for their efforts. The VFQ, which is a not-for-profit organisation, has been set up to help women who have been out of work for a long time to get back into the job market. The project is run in conjunction with a 'social firm' which has a fully equipped glass workshop. The training combines practical and technical skills and is backed up by theoretical study. The guidance emphasises the importance and therapeutic value of work - through combating the problems associated with being unemployed (such as poverty) and by increasing the self-esteem and self-confidence of participants.

La Unión Europea ayudará a las mujeres a crear empresas

El Programa Now, aplicado con carácter piloto por la Unión Europea en Zaragoza, ha supuesto la creación de 22 empresas. La iniciativa, en la que participan también el Gobierno de Aragón y el Instituto de la Mujer, tiene por objetivo transformar las ideas aportadas por la población femenina en emprendimientos reales, contribuyendo a su realización a través de itinerarios de gestiones apoyadas exclusivamente por mujeres, aportando sus innovaciones en cuanto al servicio y fomentando la creación de nuevos puestos de trabajo. El otro número de propuestas ofertadas y el éxito que ha alcanzado en realidad al año de su creación - han contribuido decisivamente a la prolongación del Programa, que espera alcanzar la cifra de 45 nuevas empresas en 1997.

Fomentar la vocación El capital de las nuevas empresas promovidas por el Now va desde la aportación económica hasta los 15 millones de pesetas. Las promotoras ofrecen asesoramiento respecto a su nivel social y educativo, circunstancias que no han influido en los niveles de rentabilidad de las nuevas empresas. Con esta iniciativa, que la U



Ledige får en million fra EU

Arbejdsløse med hjælp fra håndsrækning

Arbejdsløse med hjælp fra håndsrækning

La Unión Europea financia una iniciativa de empleo con 25 millones

El Ayuntamiento de Albaladea, a través del organismo autónomo local de promoción económica y empleo de la localidad, ha puesto en marcha un proyecto dotado con 25.500.000 pesetas, como generación y mantenimiento de empleo, centrado en la iniciativa comunitaria.

Las acciones comunitarias que se van a desarrollar en Albaladea, dentro del proyecto, consisten en la creación de un centro de formación para el empleo, una duración de un año lectivo, y de 1997.

Esta iniciativa con ámbito de actuación en Albaladea, forma parte de un proyecto conjunto con el Ayuntamiento de Albaladea, Albaladea y Linares, Diputación Provincial de Córdoba y Junta de Andalucía, a través del C.O.C.I.N. de Almería, Córdoba, Sevilla y Huelva, y del Fondo de Promoción de Empleo.

Este proyecto, ha sido aprobado por el Ayuntamiento de Albaladea, con una dotación del 75% por parte del Fondo Social Europeo, el 15% por la Compañía de Trabajo e Industria, y el 10% restante que corresponde a la cofinanciación aportada por el Ayuntamiento de



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The ESF Committee explained

The ESF itself was set up under Article 123 of the Treaty of Rome, "... to improve employment opportunities for workers in the internal market and to contribute thereby to raising the standard of living." The Committee's roots go back just as far - Article 124 of the Treaty states that the Fund shall be administered by the European Commission, assisted by a Committee representing governments, trade unions and employers organisations. Committee members are suggested to the Commission by governments and appointed to the Committee by the Council after a Commission proposal.

A forum for debate

The European Social Fund Committee fulfils two important roles: firstly, it provides an opportunity for its members to advise the European Commission on draft decisions relating to the organisation and aims of the ESF. Secondly, it provides a valuable forum for discussion and feedback on a wide range of issues arising in the context of implementing the ESF.

The Structural Fund Regulations assign to the Committee a specific role in assisting the Commission with the implementation of Objectives 3 and 4.

A total of about 100 attendees meet some four times a year in order to support and advise the Commission on what the ESF is doing now, and what it should be doing in future. The Committee's meetings are chaired by a senior official from DGV.

Developing the Committee as a forum for policy dialogue

The last meeting of the ESF Committee took place in Brussels at the end of February. It was chaired by David O'Sullivan, who took over as Director of DGV/B in December 1996.

The recently published Cohesion Report* was top of the agenda. "The issues arising from the Cohesion

Report are of key importance to the ESF, and I was glad we could have the Committee's input on a range of questions centred on the future of the funds", explained Mr O'Sullivan. "In February, we planned a half-day discussion on the Cohesion Report the day before the formal Committee session. I was pleased with the result. Opening the floor in this way allows people to speak their mind, and creates a more spontaneous exchange of views than one might expect in a traditional committee context." explained Mr O'Sullivan.

The formula for more policy-oriented debate has proved so promising that there are plans to develop further this method of working together. "We would like to make discussions of this sort a regular feature: we may go for the idea of a residential session, which would give us the chance to get to know each other a bit better, and perhaps build something of an 'esprit de corps'".

Mr O'Sullivan believes that more can be done to draw from the knowledge and experience of those attending the Committee meetings. "What has struck me most about the Committee is the members' impressive range of knowledge and experience. You are dealing in effect with a microcosm of each Member State, with representatives of government and the two sides of industry, where issues are often viewed from a different perspective.

The European Commission has a responsibility to tap these vast resources of expertise in order to be sure that its proposals are based on a clear understanding of what is actually happening 'on the ground'".

Yet, as Mr O'Sullivan points out, chairing such a large meeting presents its own challenges: "Chairing such a large Committee from the top table is not always easy in terms of identifying who wishes to speak, and which delegation they are from. This is compounded by my being new to the job: I did sometimes feel I was coming across somewhat like a talk-show host, asking for a comment "from the lady in the red blouse, next to the gentleman with the glasses...!"



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David O'Sullivan, Director of DGV/B

* First report on Economic and Social Cohesion - 1996, Ref.: CM-97-96-928-EN-C, ISBN 92-827-8877-6

Finland



In this new regular section we turn our attention to one specific Member State, reporting on the employment situation, labour market policy, and on the management and impact of the ESF. In this way InfoReview will provide readers with an insight into ESF experience and best practice from elsewhere in the Union. In this issue, we focus on Finland, one of the newest members of the European Union.

Finland - facing the future with hope

Economic background

The economic boom in the late 1980s was followed by the deepest recession Finland has ever experienced. Between 1990 and 1993, unemployment increased from 3.5% to over 18%. The electorate demanded that something be done to combat this problem and the government took the unprecedented step of pledging to halve the jobless figures by the year 2000. National employment-generation programmes were stepped up to help meet this tough challenge.

Finland joins the EU; ESF activities begin

When Finland joined the European Union in 1995, the government decided to organise the administration of the ESF so that ESF activities and national labour policy were integrated. Consequently, all ESF assistance in Finland is routed through the Ministry of Labour which coordinates the horizontal Objective 3 and 4 programmes as well as the Community Initiatives Adapt and Employment. Regional programmes are coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior. The Ministries of Trade and Industry and Education also play a central role in implementing the programmes.

After a challenging initial phase, the implementation of the programmes is now proceeding well: 42% of the total financing for the five year programming period had already been committed by the end of 1996. About 1,400 ESF assisted projects are now well under way, helping a total of around 90,000 people

The challenges ahead

According to Mrs Jaakonsaari, the recession has significantly altered the dynamics of the labour market,

while changes in the workplace have meant that companies now have new and different skill requirements.

Mrs Jaakonsaari believes that, "The recruitment needs of companies in Finland today do not necessarily meet the existing skills of those looking for work; this is particularly the case among the long-term unemployed. To get these people back into work we need to upgrade courses to equip the unemployed with the specific skills required by modern companies."

Minister Jaakonsaari also believes that the steps being taken by the government to improve the skills base of the unemployed, and to make it easier and less costly for employers to recruit people, are fundamental to the generation of new jobs.

Mrs Jaakonsaari stresses the importance of using funding wisely to finance training which is specific, recognised and of value to potential employers. She added, "We are paying more attention to the quality and effectiveness of retraining."

The point is not simply to throw money at training schemes for the unemployed, but to ensure the schemes fulfil a role in increasing the employment potential of the individual and that they help to restore self confidence, motivation and hope."

Jaakonsaari speaks positively about the contribution of the European Social Fund. Many of the projects which are up and running with the help of the ESF funding are innovative in their approach and add a new dimension to existing employment policy.

In Minister Jaakonsaari's view, one important aspect of ESF activities is the impetus they provide for forging new partnerships, "Working in partnership with authorities, educational institutes and companies, and also at an international level, has added an exciting new dimension to our work. Sharing experiences with other Member States has been very constructive."

The first mid-term evaluation of the effects of these ESF funded projects will take place in autumn 1997. According to Minister Jaakonsaari, this will provide the ideal opportunity to take stock of the overall impact of the projects and to see what is working; the experience and results of these projects will be shared and used when reviewing national policy.



InfoReview interviewed the Finnish Minister of Labour, Mrs Liisa Jaakonsaari (pictured above), and the Head of the ESF Mission in the Ministry of Labour, Mr Anssi Paasivirta, during his recent visit to Brussels. We asked them about labour market policy in Finland and how they view progress of the ESF since the start of its support in 1995.

The ESF in action

ESF - helping to improve employment policy

Mr Paasivirta strongly believes that the impact of the ESF is very positive for Finland. "The projects selected under ESF programmes are strong idea-generators, ensuring continuous improvement of employment policy."

"Whereas the innovative component of our programmes was previously financed by approximately MECU 35 of national funding per year, that amount has now increased to around MECU 350. I am sure that this would not have been achieved without assistance from the ESF."

The ESF dimension in Finland's employment-generation efforts has wrought a fundamental change in administrative thinking in Finland, according to Mr Paasivirta. "Cooperation between the authorities has significantly improved. The process of administering the ESF brings together not only the various ministries and their regional administrations, but also local authorities, companies, NGOs and educational institutions."

Mr Paasivirta cites the creation of individual pathways to employment under Objective 3 as a good example of this new way of thinking and working together. "An individual pathway to working life can now be mapped out for a long-term unemployed person where the upgrading of their vocational skills together with the provision of subsidised work or training at work, form an effective combination. With a strictly sectoral administration the risk would have been that the authorities responsible for training would not know what the employment authorities were doing and vice versa, with the result that key steps might have been omitted."

In Mr Paasivirta's view, there are three keys to the success of ESF support: first, making the eligibility criteria and administration easier to understand; second, the careful monitoring of the ESF projects; and finally the simplification of the bureaucracy and the administration systems designed to manage the ESF in Finland.

Creating the conditions for project success

The project decisions themselves are made by the regional offices of the implementing authorities. "If the projects are to succeed, local conditions must be taken into consideration at the implementation stage. Close cooperation between authorities on the ground is also necessary. Our principle is that a single partner cannot start implementing a project without consulting the others."

Careful monitoring - ensuring the best projects are supported

The flexible criteria and cooperation between authorities ensure that good projects are continued and unproductive ones stopped, where necessary. The availability of monitoring information is vital,

"We are quite prepared to stop financing a project if we do not receive the necessary monitoring information. Project providers must produce a progress report three times a year."

Administrative reform - helping to speed up results

ESF co-financed projects are selected by a call for proposals. The actual financial commitment is made at regional level. Regional government administration in Finland will be reformed and streamlined from the beginning of September 1997 by grouping together the regional administrations of Labour, Trade and Industry as well as Agriculture Ministries under 15 Labour and Business Districts. The increased cooperation between the administrations will facilitate the implementation of the programmes.



WHO CAN GET MY LIFE MOVING? I CAN.

Imaginative publicity for the ESF in Finland

The ESF - opening up international connections

The officials at the Ministry of Labour analysed the experiences of other Member States before starting programming work. "Nothing was copied as such, we had to create a model to fit the situation in Finland. Our conclusions were that decisions should be made at regional level and that no new organisations should be established."

However, Mr Paasivirta is currently rather sceptical about the Community Initiatives. "We do not really have an international mechanism for the transfer of experience from large national programmes. In my view, we could probably defer the Community Initiatives projects and use the money to link national programmes. This way large and urgent themes, such as the employment implications of the information society, could be highlighted."

The ESF - providing hard evidence of the benefits of EU membership

To ensure that the people in Finland quickly understood the benefits of the ESF's new presence in the country, the Finnish Government planned and implemented an information campaign. "An awareness campaign was carried out to inform potential participants and project promoters about the ESF."



Flynn speaks on the future of the ESF

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to have this opportunity today to present to you over lunch my own personal thoughts concerning the future direction of the Structural Funds generally and the European Social Fund, for which I have direct responsibility, in particular.

The European Social Fund - past and present

The European Social Fund, which celebrates its 40th birthday this year, has served three main functions:

- within the less developed regions, it has been a major driving force for the improvement of education, training and re-training systems;
- elsewhere in the Union, it has played an important role in helping Member States better to match their labour supply to the ever-changing needs of the economy;
- last, but by no means least, it has been a tangible manifestation of the Union's concern for the issues of social inclusion and equality of opportunity for all.

I have no doubt that its vocation in the future will continue to hinge around these main objectives, but it must do so in a new context. Firstly, it will have to find its place within a radical redesign of the architecture of the structural funds as a whole. Secondly, the ESF must better reflect the new challenges of investment in people which all Member States will face in the 21st century. So what should be the key features of the next generation of structural funds from the year 2000?

From my own perspective, I see two principal requirements.

- a much simpler overall structure, and

- a new partnership with, and within, the Member States.

A simpler structure

Most people who have expressed a view on this subject to date are agreed that we need to take a radical new look at how the funds operate in order to make their interventions simpler to manage and more effective.



*Speech by Mr. Pdraig Flynn
European Commissioner
with responsibility for Employment
and Social Affairs*

*"The European Social Fund:
Starting
a New Millennium" -
24 March 1997*

*Centre for European
Policy Studies, Brussels*

The simple fact is that the existence of four funds, seven Objectives, fourteen Community Initiatives and a multiplicity of operational programmes at central, regional and sectoral levels within Member States does create undue complexity and absorbs a disproportionate amount of administrative effort.

In my view we need two kinds of simplification - less bureaucracy and more focus. A key question concerns the number of funds and the number of Objectives. There are those who believe that we should put everything into a single Fund; I say that it is a delusion to

believe that such a simplistic answer will somehow rid us of the complexity of what we are about.

The creation of a single Fund would be a superficial solution to a problem with deep roots.

The complexity of the Commission's bureaucracy is often the target of criticism, but in fact our structures merely reflect the situation at Member State level - a pluralistic administrative environment catering for a wide range of sectoral policy interests. If we had a single Fund, then everyone knows that its sub-structure would immediately be divided up in the old ways!

The other serious risk is that the linkage between structural fund activity and policy development at European level would suffer. The danger would be additional layers of bureaucracy, further distancing, for example, European financial aid for employment and training activities from the policy debates on these very issues.

The real challenge is to ensure an integrated strategy which brings all the different elements together in a new way. We will certainly need continued investment in physical and productive infrastructure but we also need a better link between that investment and investment in human resources, particularly to overcome the problem of the skills gap which is at the heart of Europe's unemployment problem.

Simplification

I believe that this can be best achieved by reducing the number of Objectives to two principal activities, with the European Social Fund making a central and distinctive contribution to both:

- Activity 'A' would be geographical and would focus both on regions with a lower GDP and areas with special problems of

industrial adaptation or rural development; here we would seek to encourage the development of an integrated approach to economic and social development with a special role for local partnerships of the kind we have successfully supported in some Member States and which we are beginning to support more widely through the territorial pacts, and

- Activity 'B' which would have a horizontal human resource development function and would operate both within the regions and areas covered by activity 'A' but also across the territory of the Union as a whole.

The justification for activity 'A' seems to me self-evident. Equally, I believe that in the redesign of the Structural Funds, there must continue to be a strong and clearly identifiable human resources development component, since this is the greatest single challenge facing us in the 21st century. We absolutely need to strengthen the capacity of Member States to redesign their education, labour market and employment systems in a way which can guarantee us the quality of labour force needed to be competitive in the 21st century as well as the mechanisms of social justice and inclusion which are an integral part of the European social model. This requires an integrated approach ranging from active education and labour market policies through to improved continuous training for those in employment or at risk of redundancy.

Community Initiatives

Under this same heading, let me just add a few words about the specific role of the Community Initiatives.

The Community Initiatives are useful instruments in the search for real innovation and transnational co-operation. I have seen myself during many project visits the good work they have done, and I am proud that the human resource Initiatives in particular - Employment and Adapt - have-

made a major effort to ensure that the principles of innovation and transnationality really work at grass-roots level.

I have seen personally the value that they provide to project operators, not least through their transnationality and the learning dimensions they involve. In a European Union often criticised for remoteness, I am convinced that these Initiatives must continue, for they are a window on Europe for thousands of committed people at grass-roots level.

But everyone tells me that the present system of initiatives is administratively very complex. We should, in my view, design a further generation of Initiatives, but on a much more restricted basis, confining ourselves to a few priority themes only: for example, one related to equal opportunities and human resource development, a second with a territorial character, and a third focusing on inter-regional cooperation.

We tried such simplification before and failed: we must try harder this time round, even if this might mean a different balance within the overall budget framework. And if I am inclined to give more autonomy to the Member States in mainstream activities, I am also inclined to suggest a stronger role for the Commission in the management of such Initiatives as are agreed. And we should make more use of the 'global grant' system to streamline the financial management of the Initiatives and ensure that funding reaches project promoters in the shortest possible time.

We also need a renewed commitment from the Member States and regions to make the Initiatives work better as genuine instruments to promote real transnational partnership, innovation, and policy change.

A new form of partnership

We cannot bring about simplification if we do not also have a renewed form of partnership with

the Member States, and functioning partnership arrangements within Member States.

Strong partnership is especially necessary in the case of the Social Fund because the policies which are targeted by ESF actions are fundamentally Member State competences and because, in any event, the scale of interventions necessary to effect substantial change in these areas far outstrips the capacity of the Structural Funds.

The 1993 reform of the funds did move us towards a programme-based approach. However, in my view, the procedures still involve the Commission in too much of the detailed implementation. Our objective should be to agree an overall policy framework with each Member State and then allow considerable flexibility in the choice of specific objectives and leave the implementation of programmes to those involved in the partnership arrangements within the Member State itself - with far less Brussels involvement.

However, the discussions on the programme content would have to be real and there would have to be a serious role for the Commission in the ex ante verification of plans, in the monitoring of progress, and in the final policy assessment. It would also be essential that the use the Member State wished to make of the funds fitted into an agreed policy framework.

For example, the Social Fund must continue to make a strong contribution to underpinning the process of modernising our labour markets, promoting employment opportunities, and of combating exclusion. In this respect, the addition of an employment chapter into the new Treaty will confirm the responsibilities we have to face. The ESF must contribute to attaining the Union's employment goals and to implementation of the multiannual employment programmes as well as the work to be undertaken by the new Employment and Labour Market Committee. A successful

approach here will mean that we can kill two birds with one stone: ensure consistency of strategy and create a simpler set of implementation arrangements overall.

Additionality

Additionality has for many years been a cornerstone of the Union's cohesion policies. Its aim, at first sight no more than common sense, is to ensure that the Union does not simply pay for projects which the Member State would have undertaken anyway, but provides additional resources resulting in additional activities.

And yet in practice, as we all know, additionality is often impossible to verify outside the Objective 1 countries. If the EU is required to fund additional projects, we have to assume that the Member States have already decided on those which they themselves will do - which, logically, should be the most interesting or rewarding. It seems at least possible then, that additionality obliges the EU to fund less important or less rewarding projects, or those which the Member State itself would not necessarily have financed.

This cannot be right or sensible. We should look at the whole issue of additionality as it now works, and construct a new basis of co-operation; the funds should in my view be linked more directly with Member States' own policies, programmes and budgets in future.

We should look much more in the future at policy additionality rather than programme additionality. If we are satisfied that a Member State has a good scheme for, say, the re-integration of the long term unemployed, then why not add ESF money to theirs in order to allow a greater number of people to benefit, rather than seeking to force the Member State to design a separate programme in order to gain access to European funds?

But such an approach also raises the issue of financial partnership. A key element in this new arrangement will, of course, be that

of financial accountability. Member States cannot have it both ways. They cannot have control over the money in order to ensure that it matches better with national priorities and, at the same time, continue to insist that the European Commission is solely responsible in front of the Parliament or of the Court of Auditors for the good use of that money. In my view, an integral part of the new architecture must be a redrawing of the boundaries as to where the Commission's financial responsibilities really begin and end.

Conditionality

A new look at conditionality is also needed. We live in times of resource scarcity, of increased accountability and scrutiny of public expenditure, and of ever more intense competition for those resources. I believe that in advance of the next period of structural funds activity we should examine how we can incorporate a more pronounced performance orientation and a degree of financial incentive linked to such performance.

There are two linked but distinct issues at stake here:

- there is a question of absorption capacity which is fairly easy to measure and identify. If countries cannot absorb the money allocated a priori, should they retain an entitlement to those funds? Hopefully, if the improved partnership arrangements that I have spoken of can be put in place, such situations will seldom arise.
- but there is also a question of building into the policy framework to be agreed with each Member State tangible targets and benchmarks against which performance can be measured. If these agreed objectives are not met, the possibility of re-programming the funding towards other activities or, in extreme cases, towards other regions or countries cannot be ruled out.

I know that many will find this a threatening prospect and I cer-

tainly agree that such a system would have to avoid any suggestion of blaming the less well-off regions for their own structural inadequacies instead of trying to help them. This should not be seen as either a punitive approach or one based on a narrow accountant's view of what constitutes value for money. But I do believe that we need to move away from the present notion of automatic entitlement towards a much more open and frank partnership based on shared rights and obligations to perform.

The future role of the European Social Fund

So much for the general framework. Against that background, what really is the contribution of the European Social Fund today, on which we must build for the year 2000 and beyond? And what specific role can it play in the new architecture I have just outlined?

Let me identify four such contributions. The ESF represents the social counterpart to the Internal Market. From the earliest beginnings of the European integration process, it was understood that social policy had to support the internal market. Indeed, it is this combination of an increasingly effective Internal Market with supportive social policies which has enabled the EU to remain competitive in the world, and to stay ahead - by most objective measures of total wealth or productivity - of its major world competitors such as Japan or the USA. The twin economic and social foundations of Europe have served us well.

Second, the ESF is the only Structural Fund which is specifically for and about people. Through its support for local partnerships, capacity building projects and training activities, it provides a direct link to the citizens of the Union, reaching out in a tangible way to individuals in their commu-

nities. Such activities play a vital role in bringing the European Union to life as a reality.

When I travel around the Union, and visit these small projects often operated by voluntary organisations or by local authorities, I never cease to be amazed by the value they attach to the European funding they receive. The good it does in terms of giving people who are working in a local and often difficult context the feeling that they are not alone, and that this vast, abstract machine called Europe does have a heart and a soul, is incalculable. And we should never lose sight of the fact that we will need that kind of goodwill when it comes to ratifying the results of the IGC.

And, indeed, this point cannot be separated from another which is currently under discussion in the IGC; and that is the issue of what are called "incentive measures" in the social field. At stake here is the EU's capacity to undertake certain activities in the social area which cannot be funded by the ESF because of its focus on employability and employment. These include the networking of organisations concerned with the disadvantaged or disabled or activities relating to the elderly. These measures can at present only be based on Article 235 of the Treaty - which requires unanimity in the Council. And that unanimity has not been available in the recent past.

The Commission has already proposed a majority-voting legal base for such activities because it believes that Europe must be seen to be involved in these areas, which the majority of European citizens regard as important. If we opt out now, we will lose their support and they will see it as confirmation that Europe cares more about the haves than the have-nots.

Thirdly, over and above the sums of money involved and, in some Member States, it is true that the finan-

cial muscle of the Fund is limited - the ESF is a catalyst and a force for change within Member States' own human resource and labour market policies. Participation in a distinctly European process of debate about human resource development brings positive benefits even to the Member States with the most advanced systems. The networks, the exchange of good practice and experience, the transnational cooperation, which is triggered by the ESF, is, in my view a driving force for the revitalisation and modernisation of human resource policy right across Europe.

Finally, the principles on which the ESF operates, are desirable in themselves. The partnership system has brought a new dimension to delivery systems in a number of Member States, where such cooperation and involvement were previously unknown. The need to involve people outside public authorities in decision-making processes has been a novelty in some countries. But in these days when we are all increasingly aware of the need for, and usefulness of, transparency in public life, it is a novelty that is well worth having.

Conclusion

So, I believe that the Social Fund will continue to have a vital role to play in the architecture of the structural funds, both within a territorial context and as a horizontal fund operating across all of the Union.

The challenge to the ESF from its inception was to help people face the future of their working lives with hope.

That will remain a fundamental role for the Fund, especially in a world where the nature of work is changing daily, where the skills needed for employment are in constant flux and where more and more people feel utterly overwhelmed by the speed of change in the labour market.

The European Social Fund of the 21st century must be both a financial and a policy instrument dedicated to underpinning the Member States' efforts to ensure the employability of all our people, by designing systems which give real access to knowledge, encouraging personal development, and fostering skills relevant to the needs of employers.

In the rapidly changing environment of the Information Society, the ESF must seek to lead the way in preparing people for new living and working conditions. Whether through active labour market policies, through skill development, or lifelong learning strategies, the Fund must become the pivot of Europe's effort to transform our outdated education and training systems into real instruments of investment in people.

The Fund must be once again the EU's instrument for helping people, helping them stand up to, and overcome, the inevitable changes which will flow from the economic side of the Union - the internal market, big business, the macro-economics which will determine who goes into EMU in the first wave, and who follows later. The human side of the Union cannot be underestimated. We must understand the need everyone has for a decent job, for decent living standards, for dignity, for autonomy - in short, for independence through work.

That is not easy for many of the Union's citizens who struggle with unemployment or see its dark clouds gathering. But it is a vital role for the Union, and we need a dedicated instrument to fulfil such a role. The ESF needs to adapt and change, as must the structural funds as a whole, but it must continue to be that instrument as we enter the 21st century. ■

continued

Consequently, there is now no need to generate publicity; the regional and local media in Finland are highly interested in, and supportive of, ESF co-financed projects. Indeed, I believe that the positive attitude of the majority of Finns towards EU membership is partly due to the wide publicity gained by the ESF and other Structural Fund activities. People in general understand that EU membership has provided concrete benefits."

Mrs Luisa Pavan-Woolfe heads the Commission's Unit (VIC/I) responsible for the implementation of the ESF in Finland; she recently commented on this to InfoReview:

"The ESF assisted programmes in Finland are in line with the European Union's training and employment priorities. They are also well targeted to meet the requirements of Finnish labour market policy. One obvious example is personnel and entrepreneurial training in SMEs to support economic growth and job creation in this sector, in line with Finnish national policy.

Expenditure on research and development in Finland is among the highest in Europe. Promoting links between higher education centres, research institutes and companies, is one of the key aims of the ESF in Finland. Supporting the expansion of centres of expertise has proven to be a successful way of transferring skills and innovation to industry at regional level.

The ongoing advance of the information society is another ESF priority. With its well-developed telematic infrastructure, Finland possesses considerable potential for the implementation of new ideas in this sector.

Partnership and coordination of activities at local level are working well; this is important in view of the decentralised nature of the Finnish administration, which brings decision-making close to the local bodies.

President Santer's initiative on territorial employment pacts was received with great interest in Finland. This demonstrates the importance of the bottom-up approach which currently applies. An open call for pact proposals was arranged at the end of last year and seventy-eight partnership communities of various sizes submitted their plans.

The ESF co-funded programmes have achieved a swift rate of implementation and I have had an opportunity to see plenty of very innovative projects. Take-up under the new Objective 4 in Finland has been even faster than in most of the older Member States.

The ESF is providing new ways of combating unemployment in Finland. This is significant in a country which has one of the highest rates of unemployment in the EU."



'The ESF co-funded programmes have achieved a swift rate of implementation.'

Mrs Luisa Pavan-Woolfe

Project examples

Helping young offenders to change their lives

The future of twenty-one year old Edu is hanging in the balance. There could be a job waiting for him at a garage, but only if Edu can commit to be at work by 8am, like the other employees. "I can't manage it yet. I could wake up an hour earlier but that's still difficult for me." Edu was 15 the first time he came to the Alternative Vocational School. He has been in prison three times for theft since his fifteenth birthday, but after each offence he has undertaken to return to the school.

The ESF assisted Alternative Vocational School is part of the Objective 3 programme. The project is managed



Car mechanics courses - a popular choice

► continued on page 13

Facts and figures - Finland



● See projects examples.

Country statistics

Languages	Finnish and Swedish
Currency	5.8 Markka = 1 ECU
Finnish GDP per capita	97% of EU average
Population	5.1 million Lowest population density in EU 15 inh./km ² EU average: 89 inh./km ²
Trade with EU	imports - 59.8 % exports - 57.5 %

Employment in Finland 1990-1996

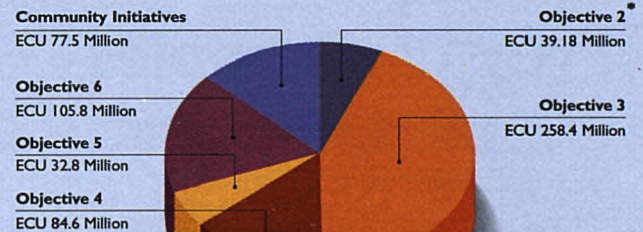


Source: Employment in Europe Report 1996

The ESF in Finland

ESF allocation per Theme	%
Integration of long-term unemployed	33
Adaptation to industrial change	22
Integration of young job-seekers	19
Support for employment growth and stability	12
Integration of people excluded from the labour market	5
Strengthen and improve education and training systems	4
Boosting human potential in research, science and technology	3
Promotion of equal opportunities	1
Technical assistance	1

Breakdown of ESF funding (1995-1999)



Total: ECU 598.29 million 1995 prices (* 1997 prices)

For more information, contact:
Ministry of Labour, ESF-Group, Box 524, FIN-00101 Helsinki

Or consult the following websites:
Finnish Government - general information: <http://virtual.Finland.fi> (also in Swedish and English)
Ministry of Labour: <http://www.mol.fi>
Statistical information Finland: <http://www.stat.fi/sf> (also in Swedish and English)

by Sovinto, an organisation which helps to rehabilitate young offenders. The Helsinki-based school offers practical training to about 200 youngsters each year who have dropped out of the mainstream educational system and consequently have difficulties with learning. Around half of the students attending the school have a criminal record.

The school's practical training is focused on reintegrating the participants back into working life.

A total of nine courses are offered, lasting from between four months to two years; the most popular being the mechanics and basic car technology courses. After a training period at a company, about 40% of the participants find a permanent job and around 30% take further courses.

The Alternative Vocational School started in the late 1980s and the ESF has assisted the project over the past two years. Mr Ahti, Managing Director of Sovinto, commented, "Assistance from the ESF has changed the nature of our work and made it more consistent. In the future we will develop our activities so that they can better respond to the overall needs of these young people."

Keeping up with technological change

The changing face of the graphics industry

One only has to compare current production processes to those of ten years ago to realise how much the face of the graphics industry has changed. New techniques, computer wizardry and faster production are taking the industry forward to the next century. These developments have spawned a new breed of professionals in the industry, at the same time reducing the level of manpower required. Despite production remaining at its previous levels, the number of industry personnel has reduced from some 40,000 to 28,000.

The Gram Project, part of the Objective 4 programme, was set up to provide retraining for 34 different companies drawn from different sectors of the graphics industry.

'People have developed more skills and feel more secure in their jobs and about their future.'

The project in action at Sanomalehti Keski-Uusimaa

Almost half of the 180-strong workforce of the graphic company Sanomalehti Keski-Uusimaa have taken part in the Gram project. Training was conducted over an eighteen-month period. The company's quality control manager, Maija Virkkula commented, "The training has been extremely useful; all of the editors are now fully acquainted with digital image processing and the latest available technology for page lay-out. We have also involved our staff in more business-related training courses to ensure they have a

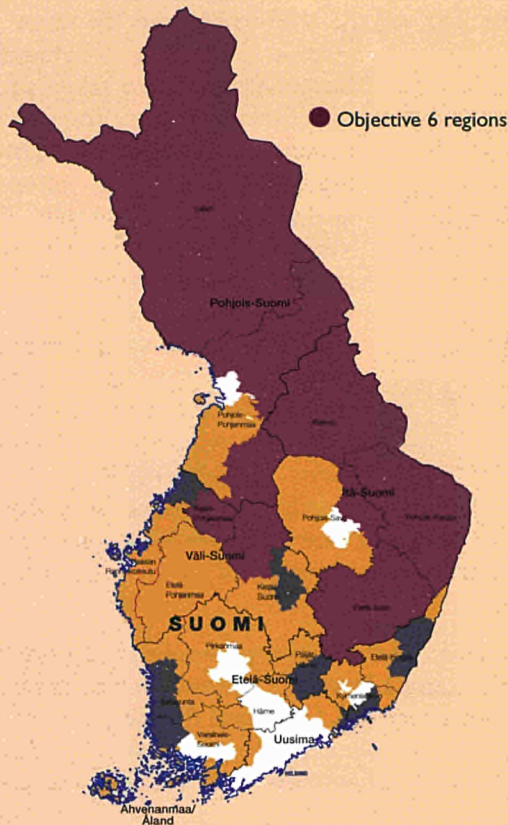
broader vision of how the company operates and understand the importance of maintaining a competitive edge."

As a result of the training, people have developed new skills and a level of job flexibility not previously seen in the industry. "Technical change has been radical in this sector; everything is now fully computerised. Multi-competence has increased and people are now able to change job functions more easily." The training has also had a positive effect on the people's motivation. Virkkula commented, "People have developed more skills and feel more secure in their jobs and about their future."



Re-training for new graphics technology

Objective 6 in Finland



Financial support from the Structural Funds under Objective 6 assists the development of sparsely populated regions. The Objective 6 regions cover 60% of



the total surface area of Finland, with an average of only four people per square kilometre. The majority of the population is concentrated in a handful of towns and villages.

The Objective 6 regions have the highest unemployment in Finland. In addition, and as a result of limited career opportunities, many educated people leave the area in search of work.

New ways of working

Finland has one of the most advanced telecommunications industries in Europe. The application of new technologies in this field to overcome the problems of long distance and cold climate leads to opportunities for new activities and jobs, particularly in the area of distance working.

Objective 6 in action - distance working brings professionals closer together

The aim of the Paideia* Plan is to support the development of the Information Highway, by providing on-the-job training and specific courses.

The ESF has part-financed the Paideia Plan by funding the sub-project 'Distance Working – Virtual Proximity'.

The test area is Kainuu in Eastern Finland, where employment opportunities are limited. The project presents opportunities for distance employment, or telework, for a wide range of companies and professionals, such as translators, planning engineers, consultants, advertising professionals and researchers. Currently 2,000 of the 32,000 employees in this region work in this way.

The Paideia Project provides training to people already working in this field and also to those interested in investing in this new way of working. By means of the network, the distance work



New technology, new hope for jobs in remote regions

research centre also helps organisations with technical projects. The interest of small companies in telematic services has grown as the existing services have become more widely known. The next step of the project will create a package solution for companies and small organisations for telematics applications. ■

* Paideia is a Greek word which means learning and the development of cultural and educational values.

European Social Fund launches communications and information drive

It is now widely accepted by business leaders that reputation and positive visibility are essential elements of a company's long-term success. But the same holds true for non-commercial structures such as the ESF.

A new survey commissioned by DG V recently has confirmed that awareness of the ESF in EU countries, amongst the public and opinion-leaders - including the editorial media and national politicians - is in general either low or, quite often, unfavourable. The fundamental contribution the ESF has made over 40 years to improving the prospects of European citizens is either poorly understood or far too infrequently acknowledged.

Partly in order to address this communications and information 'gap', in consultation with national ESF administrations the Commission has determined that a major new communications and information drive is required. There are in fact three reasons for such an impetus. First, it will help boost the ESF's positive visibility and develop a level of favourable awareness which more accurately reflects the ESF's role and achievements. Equally importantly, it will facilitate the exchange of information on ideas and best practice which can enhance the effectiveness of the Fund's activities. Lastly, better communications from the ESF in the public arena, about what the ESF does and how it does it, will help ensure a better take-up rate of funding amongst project and programme providers and thus ensure more efficient utilisation of available resources.

In order to assess the scale and the nature of the communications task the Commission's first step was to brief an international communications management consultancy, The Rowland Company, to conduct a 'communications audit' across all 15 countries. The centrepiece of this project was an opinion and awareness survey on the ESF amongst key actors and 'opinion-leaders' at both European and

Member State level. Another key aim of the study was to establish clearly the views and requirements of national ESF services regarding their own information and communications priorities.

The study's main findings were as follows:

- there is an ESF 'information deficit' - a lack of awareness and common understanding amongst key political and public opinion-formers of what the ESF is and does. In particular, there is very little understanding of the ESF as the only instrument of the EU which addresses all Structural Fund Objectives and can thus reach out to help citizens in need in all 15 Member States.
- the full potential of ESF publicity and information activities in many countries is not being achieved - promotion of ESF involvement and visibility is a legal obligation for the Member States, but is carried out inconsistently.
- main concerns centre on the ESF's perceived bureaucratic procedures, lack of transparency and disinclination to communicate.
- there is a real need for general, user-friendly basic information about ESF policy, procedures, projects and achievements.

However, the study also provided some reassuring and encouraging findings. In particular, it confirmed that both in the Commission and in the Member States, there was a clear acceptance of the need to communicate the ESF's achievements more effectively, and a substantial enthusiasm for working together to do so. Acting on these findings and on the resulting recommendations from Rowland the Commission has finalised a new strategic communications and information plan for the ESF, supported by a carefully prioritised and cost-effective 2-year programme for action at Commission and Member State level.

The Commission's own central action plan can be categorised into four main areas of activity:

- **information collection and distribution**
- **an expanded range of new publications and other information materials**
- **a planned events programme**
- **a selective editorial media information programme**

The foundation of the action plan will be the decision to devise a new, consistent and clear way of describing - in each official EU language - the policy and purpose of the ESF, encapsulating clearly its 'key messages' so as to create over time a cumulatively powerful and persuasive impact on the ESF's key audiences.

The communications strategy and action plan and the communications research findings are being presented to Member States' ESF Information Officers and to the ESF Committee.

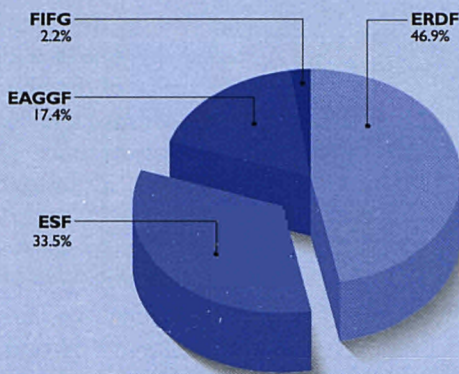
InfoReview N°3 will return to this theme in more detail. ■

Facts and figures about the ESF

Social and economic cohesion

The European Union promotes better economic and social cohesion by means of the Structural Funds. The European Social Fund is the second largest of the four Structural Funds.

Total Structural Funds allocation (1994-1999) - ECU 157 billion



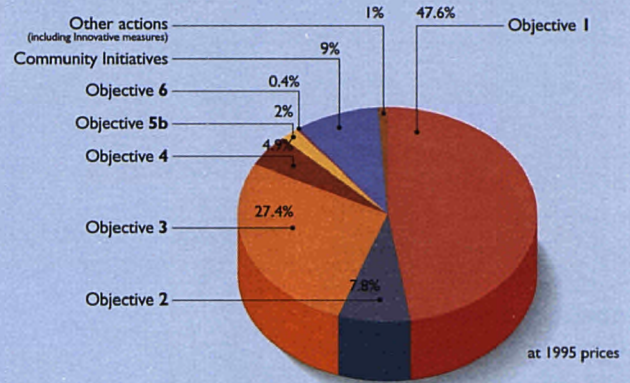
Total ESF allocation (1994-1999) - ECU 47 billion

The Structural Funds invest in achieving six Objectives. These are:

- Objective 1 - assisting areas whose development is lagging behind
- Objective 2 - adapting declining industrial areas
- Objective 3 - combating long term unemployment, facilitating the integration into working life of young people and those exposed to exclusion from the labour market, and the promotion of equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market
- Objective 4 - adapting the work-force to industrial change
- Objective 5 - (a) speeding up the restructuring of agriculture and fisheries, and (b) furthering the development of rural areas
- Objective 6 - assisting the development of sparsely populated regions

Objectives 3 and 4 are funded wholly by the ESF. The ESF also contributes towards the other Objectives. The ESF is the only Structural Fund which is specifically for and about people and operates throughout all 15 Member States.

ESF per Objective and Community Initiatives (1994-1999)



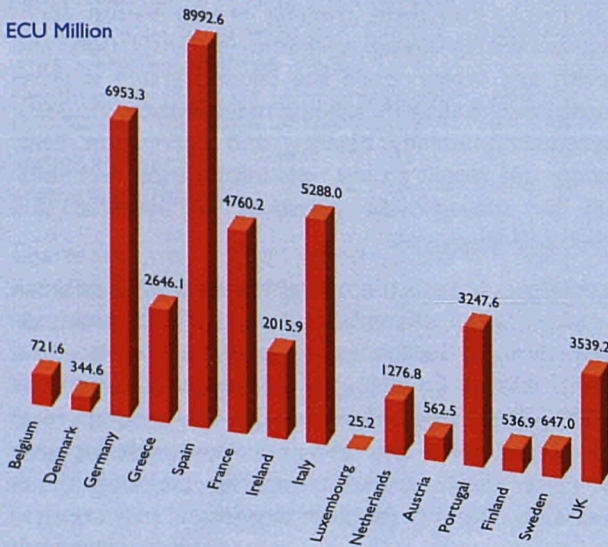
ESF funding by type of assistance (1994-1999)

ESF per Theme (1994-1999)	%
Integration of young job seekers	20.2
Support for employment growth and stability	19.0
Integration of long-term unemployed	18.8
Strengthen and improve education and training systems	12.2
Integration of people excluded from the labour market	10.8
Adaptation to industrial change	9.9
Technical assistance	3.1
Promotion of equal opportunities	3.1
Boosting human potential in research, science and technology	2.4
Training of public officials	0.5

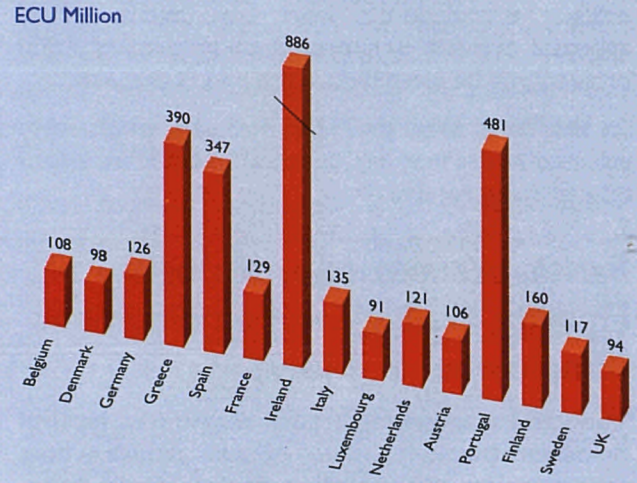
*1994 prices

Source: 7th Annual Report on the Structural Funds

ESF funding per country (1994-1999)*



ESF funding (per capita of population of working age) (1994-1999)*



Population statistics date from 1995

What is the ESF?

The European Social Fund (ESF) is the main tool through which the European Union translates its employment policy aims into action. The ESF's purpose is to improve the prospects of those who face the greatest obstacles in finding, keeping or regaining work, thereby enabling them to play a fuller role in society. In this way the ESF contributes to raising the quality of life of millions of citizens throughout the Union.

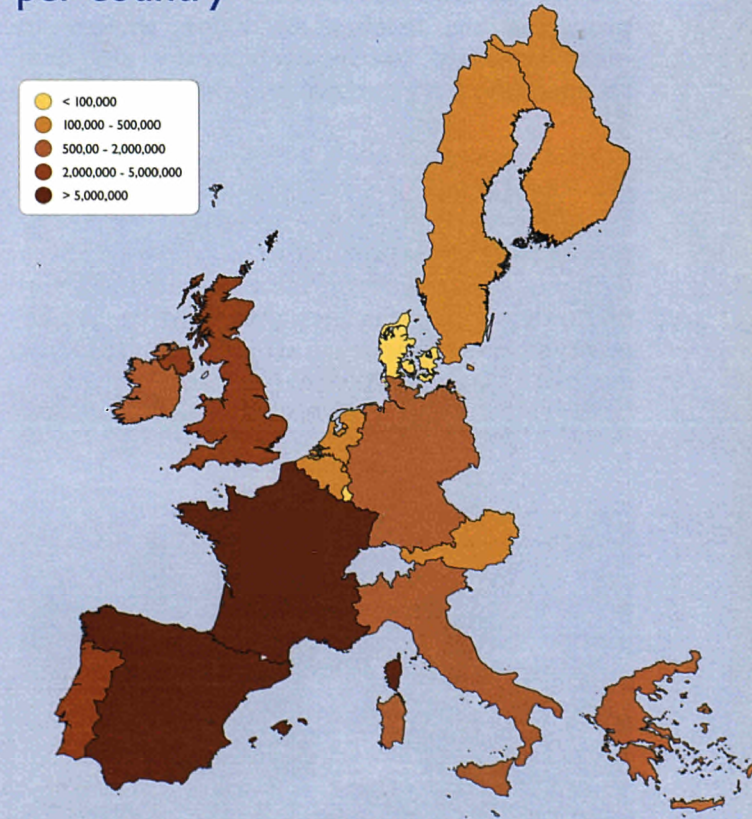
The ESF makes funding available through a joint financing principle with Member States, which enables them to complement existing programmes with new projects that meet European Union guidelines, but which otherwise might not be possible under national policy alone.

Transfer of knowledge

The ESF fosters Europe-wide transfer of knowledge and sharing of ideas and best practice, particularly through programmes called Community Initiatives. These benefit people who encounter special difficulties in the employment market. Projects are grouped under two Initiatives, Adapt and Employment.

Adapt aims to help companies and workers anticipate and prepare for industrial change and Employment promotes equal opportunities, helps the disabled, those disadvantaged in the labour market and young people to find work. ■

Number of ESF beneficiaries per country*



* All figures are indicative and based on Commission calculations

Adapt and Employment update

The second call for project proposals for the Adapt and Employment Initiatives is now fully operational. Pre-selection in all Member States has been set for 31 July, and from then until early December 1997, these projects will be focused on identifying transnational partners and establishing a time-tabled and costed transnational work programme. Final approval of what is expected to be around 7,000 projects will be given before the end of the year.

At the same time, the 4,000 projects which were selected in the first call launched in 1995 are beginning to show results:

Parità, occupazione, ecologia - Equality, ecology and employment (Employment - Now)

The ideal eco-friendly house maximises natural resources through the use of solar panels, water conservation and recycling devices. From basement to attic, it uses ecologically-sound materials, ranging from wool, linen and hemp for insulation, to plant-based paints and organic textiles for carpets and curtains. Now, similar principles are increasingly being applied to office buildings and bio-architecture and eco-technologies have become a growth sector.

A multi-regional project in Italy is linking equal opportunities with this emerging sector and is helping women create small enterprises. The Rome-based promoter of the project, Crasform, tries to overcome the staunch masculine image of the industry by highlighting the problems faced by suitably qualified women who are often pushed into alternative careers such as office work or teaching.



Stefano Casadio - Photo DAS, Rome

Who's the boss around here?

Crasform's Now project targets two groups of women. The first comprises architects and engineers, and the second, women without formal qualifications. It supplements the formal qualifications of the first group with training in renovation techniques, energy-saving technologies, insulation and health and safety, while the second group is given vocational training in building maintenance, including electricity, plumbing, painting and decoration. Both groups are taught to use new information technologies for management purposes, an essential skill when self-employed.

Each group is geared towards the setting up of small enterprises, but of a different nature. The highly-qualified women will enter and expand a new niche in the labour market by adding an ecological dimension to their existing skills and knowledge. The second group will create micro-enterprises or co-operatives providing services to other companies, including those created by the first group of women.

For Crasform, synergy is not simply 'Euro jargon', it is something very real. Women trainees are currently renovating a palace in an area of Venice participating in the Urban Community Initiative. This building will become the first women's refuge in the region and is an excellent practical example of the complementary use of EU funding.

The transnational partners reflect the growing European concern for environmental protection and offer additional skills. The LIFE project in Berlin has vast experience in training related to eco-technologies and distance learning. The project, Frauen in Technik, Handwerk und Ökologie, in Vienna, is working in eco-technologies and project management, while the Faculty of Architecture, in Pamplona, Spain, provides expertise in architecture.

Horizon 2001 - Promoting economic solidarity (Employment - Integra)

From 1997 onwards, Integra, the new strand of Employment, will tackle the employment and training problems faced by immigrants, refugees and those living in disadvantaged urban areas. Luckily, Integra isn't starting from square one, as it can build on existing experience in what was formerly the Horizon sub-strand, designed to help disadvantaged groups.

In the first call in 1995, the Trinirove Foundation was financed as a Horizon project which intended to develop the basic and vocational skills of the immi-

grant population in a number of neighbourhoods in Barcelona. These were largely very run-down areas in the North of the city, with many young immigrants and a birth rate much higher than the average.

A further aim of the project was to increase participants' chances of finding employment and to create 'social firms' or enterprises. Market opportunities were identified in three areas:

- maintaining parks or other public green spaces,
- improving the urban environment through planting trees and shrubs,
- recycling rubbish.

Therefore, the project which became known as Horizon 2001 had to create a closely knit local partnership with the regional government of Catalonia, with other neighbouring authorities, with schools and training centres, and with various associations of firms including the Spanish Association for the Recycling of Aluminium. In addition, information and experience was exchanged with other Spanish organisations working to recycle rubbish or protect the environment.

The organisers believe that the project can only be successful if it monitors closely the progress of all the participants in their transition from training to employment. It has established an advice and guidance service which offers vital moral and practical support to individuals as they follow what can often be a long and difficult road towards employment.

At the same time, Horizon 2001 has established a social cooperative called 'The Centre for Training and Employment'. It promotes the creation of 'social firms' which provide gardening and park improvement and maintenance services as well as employment for project participants.

The project forms part of the European Horizon 2001 network. With its Belgian partner SAW and its French partner GIEPP, it is trying to create a European Charter for Economic Solidarity, pilot new methods for project evaluation and develop new financial methods and tools to promote economic solidarity.

ACCEPT - changing attitudes (Employment - Horizon)

The concept of the bottom-up approach and the development of local partnerships is one of the guiding principles of the Employment Initiatives which brought together 15 different organisations from all over Northern Ireland. And, thanks to being selected for the Horizon strand, they are now able to offer and market a new spectrum of services for those suffering from mental illness.

In this consortium, public authority organisations such as the health boards, trusts, and the district councils, offer the involvement of their professional staff as well as financial support. At the same time, the voluntary organisations offer the expertise available in their extended networks, and their links to specific target groups such as homeless people and ex-offenders.

The results of this cooperation are impressive. There are five centres and four eye-catching high-street shops operating in Northern Ireland, providing a comprehensive guidance, training and employment service which has already been used by over 3,500 people.

These shops are backed up by an awareness-raising campaign through commercials on local radio and information activities in public exhibitions and shopping malls. In addition, to increase opportunities for job or work experience, lunch-time seminars and further training are provided for employers, and a number of experiments are currently under way which provide job coaches or mentors for people suffering from mental illnesses.

The next important phase in the project will be the launch of 'social firms' organised by experienced business managers, where 50% of all staffing posts are filled by people with mental illnesses. Some of the



Capturing the public's attention

current ideas include running a hotel and operating a 'rare breeds' farm. The work of the project is based on pooling resources and contacts. There is a concentration of expertise and a consequent reduction in the risk of overlap or duplication of work, particularly in developing new methods and materials.

This type of cooperation and sharing also provides the basis for the transnational partnership which involves the National Research and Development Centre in Helsinki; the Fundación Eragintza in Bilbao; Die Brücke in Rensburg, Germany; SOGG in Rotterdam; and Mental Health Matters in the United Kingdom.

As the Northern Irish ACCEPT project manager says: "All these extensions of our services have been made possible by the Employment Initiative and by

what the partners have learnt from each other. Also, the injection of EU finance to stimulate innovation has attracted five to ten times more resources, in cash or in kind, for each of our new activities."

NATURE - developing agro- and eco-tourism (Employment - Youthstart)

Until recently, taking an unskilled, casual or seasonal job, or leaving to try and find more challenging work in a big city, was the stark choice facing all young people in Evros. The development of the NATURE project has made a real difference to this border region of Greece.

This regional authority project is involving young people in local development and will create permanent jobs in agro-business, green tourism, habitat conservation and the preservation of cultural heritage. Other organisations are involved, including the training institute, local authorities, cooperatives and small businesses, and together with the regional authority they provide a whole new variety of opportunities.

For example, a database has been established to offer realistic guidance, counselling, placement and tailored training programmes. Also, a bus will soon be purchased to provide a mobile information service in this rural area.

In addition to their formal training for new jobs, the young participants have practical work experience with the World Wide Fund for Nature, the forestry service, local crafts and skills museums, visitors centres and various tourist firms and operators.

In the interim, the young people have established their own cooperative hotel for tourists in a traditional-style building donated by the town council of Soufli. From this base, they will run nature and archaeological guided tours and sell arts and crafts ware which has been produced locally.

The project's transnational partners are Basilicata Servizi Formativi (Basefor) from Italy and the Institut Régional de Formation pour Adultes (IRFA) in Languedoc Roussillon. These partners bring with them additional knowledge and expertise in training and management related to tourism and environmental services. They will also host study visits for the young participants in the Greek project.

The project builds on the experience of the LEADER Community Initiative which created the infrastructure that enabled cooperative, inter-agency activity to be planned and successfully implemented.

As for the lessons which can be learnt and applied elsewhere, the regional and national authorities in

Greece see this as a model project. If these lessons can be replicated, many more young people stand a much better chance of finding interesting and satisfying jobs on their own doorsteps and thereby contributing to the social and economic development of rural communities in Greece.

New Book Economy - the printing press and reading room of the next millennium (Adapt)

The introduction of new information and communication technologies has had many positive effects. At the same time, it has posed certain challenges for all those involved in the traditional and established ways of passing on concepts, ideas and feelings.

This Dutch project was established by the Hogeschool van Amsterdam's Faculty of Economy and Information in response to a proposal initiated by the Council of Europe to address the demands of the developing electronic publishing industry. During the two-year lifetime of this Adapt project, the core activities will focus on the participation of various individuals and groups involved in the shaping of this newly emerging industry.

In The Netherlands, the New Book Economy is piloting a study on the training needs of the sector, and is carrying out a qualitative investigation involving public and private libraries, booksellers, and publishers. Two models of the publishing firm and the library of the future will be constructed on the basis of this research. The project is also constructing a database on training, and on the educational and legal aspects of these developments to keep all interested parties informed. In addition, a series of training sessions on crucial topics such as the production and marketing of multimedia, copyright laws, and the use of the Internet, are being made available, together with an international training course.

At a transnational level, the project cooperates with its partners, the German Ministry of Employment



Raising awareness and developing skills

and Social Affairs and the Italian Ministry of Labour, to inject the new skills and know-how necessary to keep traditional businesses competitive. Transnational resource centres will be established to transfer knowledge and experience. In addition, the partners will work together to develop training

curricula and qualifications for trainers, those working in the book industry, and consultants. Although the project is currently limited to three Member States, the organisers hope to extend it to central and eastern European countries through the Phare Programme. ■

Coming soon

These are just a few examples of the many innovative projects supported by the Adapt and Employment Initiatives which are taking place in cities, towns and villages throughout the European Union. The next edition of ESF InfoReview will concentrate on the transnational partnerships in these two Initiatives and the extra advantages that this transnational cooperation bring to the projects.

In the meantime, if you would like to find out more about the Adapt and Employment Initiatives, a range of publications and information notes are available from EUROPS, the organisation which assists the European Commission in their implementation. Please contact:

EUROPS
Place du Luxembourg 2/3, B 1050 Brussels
Tel (+ 32-2) 511 15 10
Fax (+ 32-2) 511 19 60
e-mail: info@europs.lrt.be

Headlines

Programme progress in the EU

'Headlines' will feature a regular update on new ESF programmes. Throughout the first half of 1997, 66 Single Programming Documents (SPDs) for Objective 2 areas for the period 1997-1999 will be adopted by the European Commission.

A large number of SPDs currently under way provide support for projects to breathe new life into areas with significant unemployment and industrial decline in, for example Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Italy and The Netherlands.

New priorities in Objective 2 regions include the modernisation of technology for SMEs, the upgrading of industrial sites, and support for environmental and tourism projects. The overall budget of ECU 8.15 billion from the Structural Funds is an increase of 13.8% on the 1994-1996 figure. In Objective 2 areas, the ESF's actions are geared towards supporting those hardest hit by unemployment such as young people, the long-term unemployed, and women. The ESF is supporting reskilling and training so as to safeguard existing jobs in competitive industries.

In the United Kingdom, the new Objective 3 programme for 1997-1999 will adopt a more innovative and competitive approach. Rather than offering general training schemes, the programme organisation is split into sub-target groups, offering tailor-made packages of measures to suit different kinds of employment needs. This approach is known as the 'pathway concept' and has been designed to provide the nec-

essary stepping stones back to employment. From 1998 onwards, for the very first time, funding will move away from the central implementation system and allow different regions of the United Kingdom to make their case for ESF funds.

Developing equal opportunities



The promotion of equal opportunities for men and women was declared a key priority for the EU at the European Council in Essen in 1994. The first of a series of annual reports on the subject was published by the European Commission in March. The report demonstrates that despite undeniable progress in the last ten years, there are still pronounced differences between the opportunities available for men and women in the EU job market. One of the report's conclusions was that the promotion of equal opportunities should be a guiding principle governing all EU policies and activities. (This is known as 'mainstreaming'.) This is also one of the suggestions of the Fourth Action Programme on equal opportunities for the years 1996-2000 which calls for equality to be integrated into the EU's social dialogue at both regional and local levels and for women to be given more power in top-level decision-making.

Between 1994-1999, the ESF and the other Structural Funds have allocated about ECU 785 million to specific equal opportunity measures. According to a recent Eurobarometer Survey 'Women and Men in

Europe and Equal Opportunities' conducted at the request of the European Commission, 34% of those interviewed claimed no knowledge of domestic equal opportunity legislation, whilst 60% said they were unaware of any EU involvement. These results suggest that the task of raising awareness remains a major challenge. For more information see 'First Annual Report on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Union' - 1996.

Territorial Employment Pacts on target



Territorial Employment Pacts evolved from President Santer's Employment Confidence Pact, which he launched at the Florence European Summit in June 1996. It was supported by the Heads of State and Government both then and again at the Dublin Summit in December of that year. The

Pacts cover a defined territory - which might be anything from a small local authority to a region - and seek to enhance its capacity for job creation. An extended partnership, including not only those normally involved in employment or human resource matters, but also public authorities, academic institutions and NGOs, is formed to manage a process of analysis and strategic planning which leads to the drafting of an overall job-creation strategy.

Discussions have been taking place between Member States and the European Commission to define the list of areas which are eligible for assistance through Pacts. A large number of proposals have been submitted by Member States and regions, and final selection has not always been easy. The European Commission will offer grants of up to ECU 200,000 in technical assistance to help the selected Pact areas organise their internal partnership and coordination arrangements, and to draw up a satisfactory programme. The Pacts will look to the Structural Funds in general for support for their action plans.

As InfoReview was going to press, a seminar on good practice in local development and Territorial Employment Pacts was being organised in Rome with the help of CNEL - the Italian body offering technical assistance to the much wider network of Italian Pact areas. The organisers will present case studies and hope to encourage Pact Coordinators to take advantage of what others have learnt. A brochure on the same theme will be available soon.

InfoReview will return to Territorial Employment Pacts in more detail in its next edition. In the meantime, for further information on pacts and

good practice, please consult the web-site at <http://www.aeidl.be/pacts/>.

"The Human Race: available in a wide range of colours and styles"*

The launch of the European Year Against Racism (EYAR) on January 30 and 31 marked a major step forward in the fight against racism, xenophobia and

1997 European year



against racism

anti-Semitism. For the very first time, the institutions of the European Union will work together to combat the continuing presence of racial prejudice, discrimination and racist attacks

wherever these manifest themselves in the European Union. The EYAR is a key component of the European Commission's anti-racism strategy, laid out in its December 1995 communication, which formed the basis of the Council Resolution of July 1996 designating 1997 as the European Year Against Racism.

The aims of the EYAR

The EYAR is all about partnership. In order to reach as many people as possible, action will be taken at different levels and will involve NGOs, the media, trade unions, employers' organisations, local and regional authorities, religious bodies and educational establishments. Member States have a key role to play, and National Coordination Committees have been set up in each country to orchestrate EYAR events and activities by local, regional and national authorities.

The budget

The Community's budget for funding the EYAR's activities is ECU 4.7 million, with some ECU 3 million set aside for co-financing projects with a European dimension and Community added value. The ESF also contributes significantly to overcoming social conditions which favour the spread of racial prejudice and resentment; nearly one-fifth of the funding allocated to the European Social Fund for Objectives 1 and 3 is specifically aimed at combating social exclusion. Facilities to promote integration and combat racism, particularly discrimination in the labour market, have also existed for some time under the Community Initiatives, in particular under Employment-Integra.

A call for projects

The Commission issued a call for projects in January 1997, announcing two deadlines for applications: 1 March and 1 May 1997. Some 330 proposals for projects were submitted under the first selection round.

Making its mark

The EYAR is being promoted through a number of profile-raising events, such as the UEFA 'All-Stars' game in Lisbon in January 1997; a poster competition

*The official slogan of the EYAR

in Denmark in February; a Youth Against Intolerance fun-run and symposium in Belgium in March; an anti-racism rock festival planned for the summer in Britain; special training for Austrian judges on racism and hostility to foreigners to be held in October; and a European week of anti-racist cinema in France. A number of European celebrities from the worlds of sport and the arts will be acting as ambassadors and will raise the visibility of the EYAR: they include Flamenco dancer Joaquin Cortes, singer Neneh Cherry and former Olympic 100-metre sprint gold medallist Linford Christie.

InfoReview will keep you posted about the main developments during the European Year. Should you wish to receive more detailed information, including the contact address of the National Coordination Committee in your country, please send your name and address to the European Commission, European Year Against Racism Coordination Unit, DG V/D/4 (J37 - 2/21), 200 Rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels, or fax it to (+32-2) 295 18 99. Further information is also available on the EYAR web-site at the following address: <http://www.EuropeanYear1997.org>.

Article 6 - supporting new ideas in ESF assistance

Under Article 6 of the ESF Regulation, the ESF has funded a wide range of experimental schemes since 1995. The Article states that the ESF may support "operations of an innovatory nature which are intended to test new approaches to the content, methods and organisation of vocational training." Rather than limit the scope of measures to the guidelines laid down in the rest of the ESF Regulation, article 6 projects try out different ideas, although the overall goals are the same: to generate employment prospects, promote equal opportunities, and to help people who are facing, or threatened with, unemployment. Although Article 6 pilot projects only account for 0.5% of the ESF budget, they are considered essential when testing the water for new ideas which may translate into future mainstream programmes.

Two calls for projects were launched during 1996. In the first call the ESF approved 52 projects out of the 210 submitted. Projects were submitted from almost all Member States and the level of interest represented a marked increase compared to the previous year, when 169 proposals were submitted.

The other call selected eight projects devoted to the impact of the information society on the job market. The eight projects, which will run for between 18 and 24 months, will each receive up to ECU 250,000 in ESF co-financing to help integrate new technologies into employment and development policies at a local level. The results of the pro-

jects could help the ESF decide how to develop future guidelines to make the most of Europe's changing working environment.

A question of cohesion



At the very heart of the ethos of the European Union is its ambition to reduce the glaring social and economic disparities that exist between its Member States, regions and social groups. The ESF acts in conjunction with the other Structural Funds to fight these inequalities by developing human resources and employment potential to help integrate people more fully into society and to promote social cohesion.

According to the Cohesion Report published by the European Commission last November, these efforts have certainly been successful in bridging the gap between the richest and poorest Member States during the last ten years. This confirms that the 'prosperity gap' between countries fell significantly, largely owing to the remarkable economic progress of the EU's least affluent Member States; Spain, Portugal, Greece and Ireland.

The Cohesion Report foreshadowed a number of initiatives, including a Forum in Spring 1997, to discuss progress in this area. The Cohesion Forum, held between April 28 and 30, gathered together a wide range of participants and examined the effect of economic and social policy. The Forum featured discussions not only on the achievements of the EU so far in forging cohesion, but how policies could be improved over the coming years to meet new challenges.

The other pressing issue discussed at the Forum was how to deal with unemployment: with 18 million people without jobs in the EU, how can the Structural Funds be used most effectively to help them find permanent work? Two specific workshops at the Forum were dedicated to these issues. One examined the extent to which employment policy and ESF actions have been effective in improving employment potential and preventing and reducing unemployment and social exclusion; this included case study presentations by representatives from Spain and Italy. The other focused more fully on the contribution of EU cohesion and other policies to competitiveness and employment, examining the role of education and training.

In the next issue of InfoReview we will be looking in more detail at the results of the recent Cohesion Forum. ■

European Social Fund publications

Available publications (June 1997)

- **The European Social Fund** brochure, July 1995 (available in all EU languages)
- Leaflets on the ESF in each Member State,
 - **The ESF in Ireland** (available in English)
 - **The ESF in Italy** (available in English and Italian)
 - **The ESF in France** (available in English and French)
 - **The ESF in Germany** (available in English and German)
 - **The ESF Portugal** (available in English and Portuguese)
 Other Member States to follow
- **Building the European information society for us all** - First reflections of the High Level Group of Experts, Interim Report, January 1996 (available in all EU languages)
- **Living and working in the information society: People first** - Green paper, July 1996 (available in all official languages)
- Community Initiatives - Special Reports, Feb/May 1997, (available in all EU languages)
- Special Report **Employment-Horizon**
- Special Report **Employment-Integra**
- Special Report **Employment-Youthstart**
- Special Report **Employment-Now**
- Special Report **Adapt**
- **Adapt - Summaries of the Member States Operational Programmes**, January 1996 (available in English and French)
- **New Perspectives - Youthstart: a new commitment**, March 1996 (available in English, French, German and Spanish)
- **Provisional Directory of Projects**, Working Document, March/September 1996 (available in English). 4 editions:
 - Employment - Now
 - Employment - Horizon
 - Employment - Youthstart
 - Adapt

• **Special Report n°4: Employment - Now, New Opportunities for Women**, March 1996 (available in English, French and German)

• **Territorial Employment Pacts: Examples of good practice**, June 1997 (available in English and French)

The ESF on Internet

Consult the Europa server on:

europa.eu.int

For specific information about the ESF:

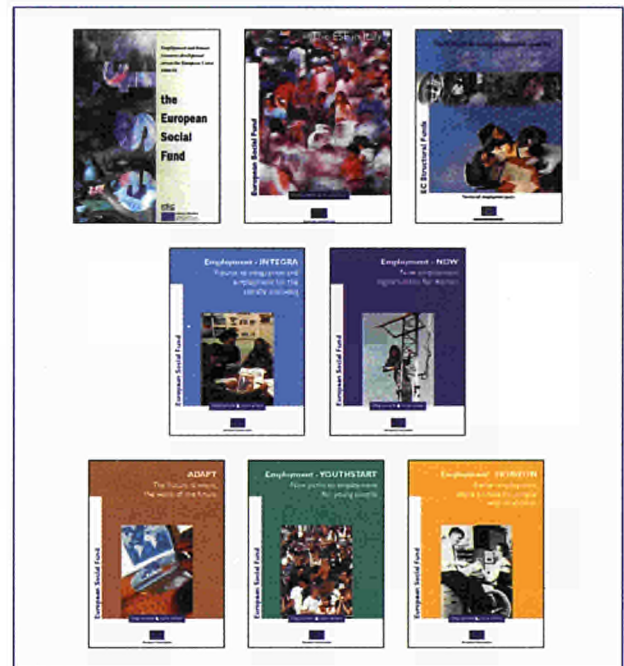
europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg05/esf/esf_home.htm (currently only in English)

To obtain copies of ESF publications, please contact

ESF Information Sector

Fax (+32-2) 295 49 18

E-mail: esfinfo@bxl.dg5.cec.be



The European Commission is not bound by the information contained in this publication. More information on the ESF elsewhere in the European Union and copies of this newsletter can be obtained from the address below. Publisher - European Commission. Currently available in English, French and German.



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ISBN 92-827-7537-2

