

Are you looking for support through the ESF?

If you would like to improve your prospects on the labour market with the help of an ESF project, you can contact the ESF project directly. An overview of all 27 previous Federal Government ESF programmes can be found on the online portal at www.esf.de/en.

From here you can also access online information about ESF programmes of the Federal States.

If you would like to learn more about the work of the various ESF projects and the very real ways the ESF helps people get onto the labour market, you can take a look at the ESF stories on www.facebook.com/esf.deutschland, www.youtube.com and www.instagram.com/europaeischer_sozialfonds/

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THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND IN GERMANY 2014-2020

Designing. The Future. Together.

What is the ESF?


The European Social Fund (ESF) is the European Union's most important labour market policy instrument for promoting employment in Europe.

The Fund was created in 1957 when the European Economic Community came into being. Since that time it has improved employment prospects, helped people get training and qualifications, and worked to reduce discrimination on the labour market.

The European Union uses the ESF to achieve its aim of giving people career prospects. It focuses on the (long-term) unemployed, (disadvantaged) young people and migrants, but also on start-up entrepreneurs, as well as small and medium-sized businesses.

In the ESF programming period from 2014-2020, we expect the ESF to help implement the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy, for intelligent, sustainable and integrated growth in the EU, so that more and better jobs are created, with disadvantaged groups in particular being integrated into the labour market.


The ESF brings Europe to life in Germany.
As a stimulus for equal opportunities.



What does the ESF promote?

The ESF is not an employment agency and therefore does not advertise jobs. In actual fact it works across the whole of the EU supporting tens of thousands of local and regional labour market projects, which vary widely in terms of type, size, aims and target group.

The ESF funds practical projects which produce effective results right at the point of delivery. It is the driving force behind a sustainable labour market.




Getting People into jobs

The ESF promotes qualifications, training and employment services, so that people in Europe have greater opportunities on the labour market. In addition, start-up entrepreneurs are given the support they need on the path to becoming self-employed. Businesses receive help to cope with demographic change as well as support in increasing their competitiveness and finding skilled staff.

Social inclusion

The ESF finances projects which promote active inclusion and combat poverty. Disadvantaged groups are given comprehensive support to get (back) onto the labour market, as a means of reducing social exclusion.

The ESF gives people the power to determine their own professional future. Even under difficult conditions or when making a fresh start.



Better education

The ESF promotes improvements in general and vocational education. Particular attention is paid to young people leaving school to start their working lives. The aim here is to integrate less-able youths into vocational training and to improve businesses' own in-house training. Ongoing training for people already in work and strategies for lifelong learning are also major ESF concerns.

How much ESF funding is available?

The German Federal Government and the Federal States will receive a total of around 7.5 billion euros from the ESF in the seven years. Of this, some 2.7 billion euros will go to the ESF/Federal Government Programme and around 4.8 billion euros will go to ESF activities in the Federal States.

The ESF/Federal Government Programme, known as the Federal Government Operational Programme (OP), with its concrete measures for the 2014-2020 programming period, was primarily developed by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with the involvement of the following ministries:

- Federal Ministry of Education and Research
- Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy
- Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
- Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community
- Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety