



The
Federal Government



THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND PLUS (2021–2027)

Shaping a social Europe

The European Union and the Federal Government promote programmes and projects in Germany through the European Social Fund Plus (ESF Plus).



Co-funded by
the European Union

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for the 2021–2027 funding period

Shaping a social Europe

The European Social Fund (ESF) is the European Union's most important labour market policy instrument, and has been for over sixty-five years.

In the current funding period, the ESF, now known as the European Social Fund Plus (ESF Plus), is focused even more on the idea of a more social Europe. It brings together four previously separate funding instruments: the previous ESF, the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), and Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) measures.

This brochure is aimed at all members of the public and everyone who is actively helping to shape and implement the ESF Plus in this funding period – in society, the business community or the political arena. It offers an overview of the diverse range of ESF Plus programmes and provides information about the financing and evaluation of the ESF (Plus) programmes at federal level.

The ESF Plus supports projects which improve the vocational training and labour market prospects of young people and people with experience of migration, and which create more upskilling options for people in employment. Business founders and small and medium-sized enterprises also benefit from ESF Plus funding. And the ESF Plus helps to support disadvantaged families and people who face particular difficulties in getting (back) on their feet in professional and social terms.

FULL INFORMATION ABOUT THE ESF PLUS IN GERMANY CAN BE FOUND AT WWW.ESF.DE.



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FACTS & FIGURES

3% was the unemployment rate in Germany in September 2023 – the EU-27 figure was twice as high, at 6%.

AROUND **2.6 MILLION** people were registered as unemployed in Germany in November 2023.

Around 263,000 people were homeless in Germany at the start of 2022.

Around **1.73 million** vacancies were available in Germany in the third quarter of 2023. Demographic trends mean that bottlenecks in the labour market are likely to increase; this could act as a lasting brake on economic growth in Germany.

6.2%

6% of young people in Germany

were unemployed in 2022. This is the lowest rate in the EU, where the average rate, at 14.5%, was more than twice as high.

of an age cohort (around 47,500 pupils) left school in Germany in 2021 without a school-leaving certificate and thus have poor prospects on the labour market.

AROUND **48%** of women in gainful employment worked part-time in the second quarter of 2023, compared to 11.7% of men. The part-time employment rate for women was thus much higher than the EU rate (around 28.6%), and the trend is upwards.

AT **80.7%** the employment rate was again at a high level in Germany in 2022, and above the EU average (74.6%). The female employment rate was 76.8% in 2022. The employment rate of older people (aged 55 to 64) has risen to 73.3%, putting Germany in fifth place in the EU.

24.9 million people, i.e. more than one in four people in Germany (29.7%), were from a migrant background in 2023 (2020: 21.9 million). They are at higher risk of unemployment. More than half of all unemployed people in Germany are from a migrant background (September 2023: 53.4%).

56% of Germany's 38.4 million employees in 2021 worked for small and medium-sized enterprises (up to 250 employees, with a maximum annual turnover of 50 million euros). Digitalisation, demographic change and decarbonisation represent major challenges for companies, their managers and employees.

THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND PLUS IN GERMANY

Shaping the future together

Dear reader,

The current funding period of the European Social Fund (ESF) is starting during a time of profound change.

The various crises of our times are shaping national and European politics, as well as people's everyday lives.

On top of this, we are confronted by long-term challenges as we move towards a digital and climate-friendly future.

In an ageing society, the issue of securing skilled labour is also a priority. There is no doubt: Great challenges lie ahead for our country and for Europe as a whole.

Nevertheless, the German labour market continues to be robust.

But there is also still a lot to do. It is important to me that we use innovative measures to keep people in work or get them back into jobs. At the same time, we must support companies and employees during the transformation of the world of work and of our working lives.

This is where the ESF comes in. Its success story spans more than 65 years. At European level, it is the instrument that invests in individuals and conveys the social values of Europe. This makes it a strong, useful complement to our national social and employment policies.

The past ESF funding period was a complete success. In Germany, around 2.7 million people benefited from various kinds of ESF funding between 2014 and 2022. Approximately 200,000 small and medium-sized enterprises were provided with advice and support.

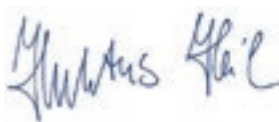
In the current funding period, the ESF, now called the European Social Fund Plus, is even more focused on the idea of enhancing the social dimension of Europe.

In Germany, some €6.56 billion are available from ESF Plus for this purpose. The Federal Government and the federal states use these funds especially to improve the vocational training and labour market opportunities of young people and those who have migrated. They funds are also used to provide more continuing vocational training opportunities for those in employment. Advice and support is also provided to those starting businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises, for example in securing the supply of skilled labour. Last but not least, with the help of the ESF Plus, we support disadvantaged families and we help people who find it particularly difficult to (re-)integrate into the labour market and social life.

For me, ESF Plus is a laboratory for innovation and will remain so. It is a real success story. It both represents and drives our model of a socially just Europe, where everyone has the opportunity to lead a self-determined life.

I am glad to have you be a part of this. I hope you enjoy the brochure!

Yours,



Hubertus Heil
Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs



EUROPE'S MOST IMPORTANT FUNDING INSTRUMENT

Investing in people

Dear reader,

The performance of the German economy is important for the European Union (EU). To strengthen it further, it needs workers and the self-employed who are up to the challenges of the future, such as demographic, green and digital change.

The European Social Fund Plus (ESF Plus) is taking on these challenges. The ESF Plus remains the EU's main instrument for investing in people also in the new funding period 2021–2027. Across Europe, it contributes to improving access to employment and education and training, thus supporting a skilled workforce. At the same time, it contributes to active inclusion. The ESF Plus thus helps to put the European Pillar of Social Rights into practice in a very concrete way and all across Europe's regions.

With the new funding period 2021–2027, around €6.56 billion in EU funds will be made available for the ESF Plus in Germany. The implementation of the ESF Plus has already started in Germany and the measures are well underway.

The focus of the ESF Plus in Germany in the new funding period is on social inclusion, youth employment and combating child poverty. In addition, the ESF Plus in Germany will also help to integrate refugees. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has made this issue even more important. In addition to these challenges, the German ESF Plus programmes will also contribute to the digital and green transformation to achieve the goal set by Commission President von der Leyen of becoming the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

This is our new growth strategy for the current decade, to create new businesses, many of them small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), and jobs, and to attract more investment. This requires increased investments into the skills of the people. At the same time, we are also striving to ensure that Europe continues to have the most advanced welfare systems in the world and remains a dynamic hub for innovation and competitive entrepreneurship. This is the fundamental promise of Europe's unique social market economy.

I am convinced: the ESF Plus will continue to strengthen social Europe. With this in mind, I count on our joint commitment to the ESF Plus to meet the social challenges of the coming years.

Yours,



Nicolas Schmit
European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights



FROM A EUROPEAN VISION TO TODAY'S ESF PLUS

The eventful history of the European Social Fund (Plus)

TREATIES OF ROME:

The Treaties establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) were signed in Rome on 25 March 1957 by the representatives of the governments of Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, the Federal Republic of Germany, France and Italy. Together with the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC, created in 1951), the EEC and EURATOM made up the European Communities. The signing of the treaties is considered to be the date of the foundation of the European Union (EU) and the ESF.

Creating better employment opportunities for people in Europe – that has always been the goal of the European Social Fund (ESF). Set up in 1957, the fund supports measures to prevent and tackle unemployment, increase initial and continuing training opportunities, and ensure good working conditions. The role and functioning of the ESF have been revised several times since its establishment to align them with the changing circumstances on the labour market and the requirements of Community structural policy.

The rules for the ESF were first set down in the 1957 Treaties of Rome. Its role was to promote employment opportunities and occupational mobility within the Community. The main priority was to reduce the level of unemployment in the most seriously affected regions, such as southern Italy. The Federal Republic of Germany used the fund to support the retraining of workers who had suffered an accident at work, in particular.

Youth unemployment in Europe rose sharply in the 1970s. With roughly two million people under 25 out of work in 1977, the number of unemployed young people had more than doubled within four years. This is what prompted the Member States to primarily direct the ESF at tackling youth unemployment.

The funding was initially used on an ad hoc basis to support many individual projects. Even back then, European Economic Community (EEC) funding was required to be supplemented by national funds. Economic upheavals during the second ESF period, from 1971 to 1983, made it necessary to reform the fund. Instead of covering the expenses of the Member States retroactively, the ESF was now to decide in advance how its funding was to be allocated.

The Delors Plan lays the foundation for the present-day ESF

In 1988, the ESF was fundamentally reformed under the “Delors Plan”. This established the principles of concentration, programming, partnership and additionality, which still form the basis for the work of the EU structural funds as we know it today. The previous approach of managing individual projects was replaced by the programming system, and the partnership principle saw an expansion in the European Commission’s cooperation with authorities in the Member States, often with the inclusion of the social partners. Finally, the additionality principle established the requirement that the structural funds should not be used as a substitute for national funding. The ESF’s aim was to tackle long-term unemployment and enable young people to get their careers off to a successful start.



ESF

Establishment of the European Economic Community and the
BIRTH OF THE ESF

1957

Establishing a balance between the Member States

1957–1971

Reducing youth unemployment

1972–1983

Setting the course for structural changes

1984–1988

Delors Plan is adopted

1988

Support for disadvantaged regions

1989–1993

The 1990s: Developing Eastern Germany and defining the European Employment Strategy

Following German reunification in 1990, the European Commission decided to make a substantial contribution to the development and restructuring of the new federal states to make their integration into the Community as swift and harmonious as possible. The ESF supported initial and continuing vocational training programmes, provided grants to keep businesses running and employment aid, and created inter-company training positions.

As globalisation gathered pace, the ESF pursued a new goal: proactively fostering economic development by upskilling workers and supporting the introduction of new production processes. The ESF also sought to integrate people who had previously been largely excluded from the labour market, such as young people and people with disabilities.

In the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), the EU Member States agreed to put employment at the centre of European policy-making and coordinate the labour market policies of the Member States within the framework of a European Employment Strategy. The main priority areas were employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities for men and women. The ESF became the most important financial instrument for the professional development of people in Europe.

2000–2006 funding period: Focusing on equal opportunities

Overcoming discrimination in the workplace, access to employment, new and better jobs – these were the key topics at the turn of the millennium. The focus was also on persuading employers that encouraging diversity in the workplace also contributes to

business success. The EQUAL Community initiative was an important new development in this context.

In the 2007–2013 funding period, administration was also simplified so that funding could be more efficiently, with the aim of addressing the challenges arising from EU enlargement, an ageing society and globalisation more effectively.

2014–2020 funding period: Securing the skills base and promoting lifelong learning

ESF funding was aligned with the “Europe 2020” strategy for growth and employment, the National Reform Programme and the Council recommendations on employment. The Fund contributed to securing the supply of skilled labour and tackling poverty. Other priorities included encouraging self-employment, ensuring people could combine work and home life, improving the level of educational attainment and promoting lifelong learning.

2021–2027 funding period: The ESF Plus

The European Social Fund Plus (ESF Plus) brings together four EU financing instruments that were previously separate: the ESF, the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and the European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI). The ESF Plus is thus making an important contribution to turning the European Pillar of Social Rights, adopted in 2017, into reality.

One important change is the greater thematic concentration of funding on the areas of social inclusion, integration of the most disadvantaged groups, action to tackle child poverty, support for young people, and capacity building among social partners and in the social economy.

Moving people
into
work

German reunification: support for restructuring in the new federal states

1990

Creation of structural funding instruments

1994–1999

Promotion of equal opportunities

2000–2006

Promotion of convergence processes

2007–2013

Creating better jobs and a socially inclusive society

2014–2020

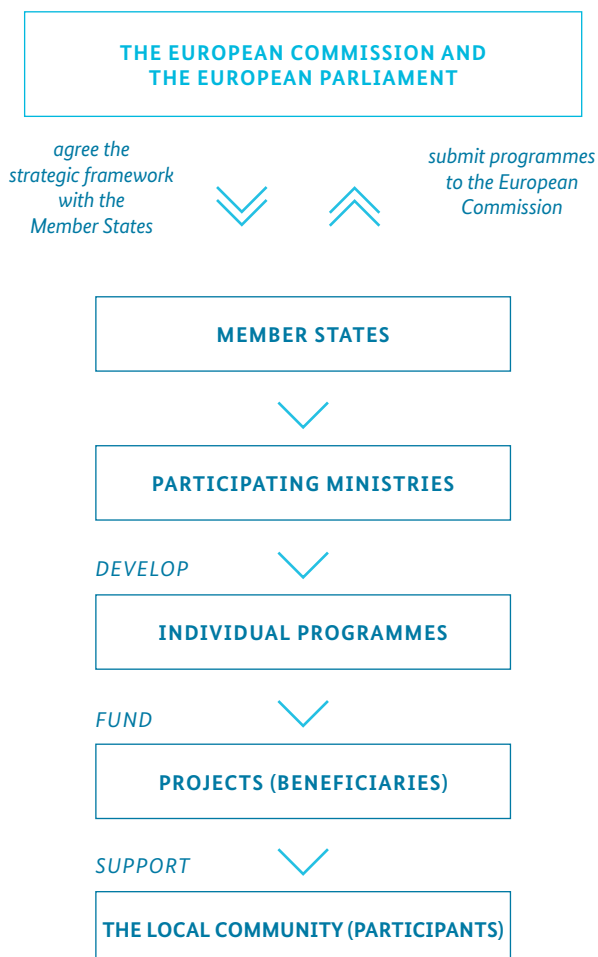
THE ESF PLUS: making the European Pillar of Social Rights a reality

2021–2027

FROM A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK TO SUPPORT ON THE GROUND

How the European Social Fund Plus works

The European Social Fund Plus (ESF Plus) is implemented within the framework of seven-year programming periods. The first step involves negotiations between the EU Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission on the fundamental strategic direction and the financial resources within the Multi-annual Financial Framework.



The allocation of funds to the individual Member States and regions is calculated on the basis of socio-economic data, including the regional gross domestic product (GDP), gross national product (GNP), and population and unemployment data.

The Member States develop a programme (previously known as an Operational Programme) based on their individual employment and social policies, setting out the strategic direction for the use of the ESF Plus funds, objectives and actions, among other things. They submit the programme to the European Commission for approval.

One distinctive feature in Germany's case is that there are multiple ESF Plus programmes – one at federal level and 16 programmes developed by the federal states.

The implementation of the ESF Plus at federal level generally takes place in the form of individual programmes, which reflect the objectives agreed with the European Commission and programme actions at national level. The next step is for funding calls and announcements to be published for the individual programmes. Interested organisations and companies can apply, and receive funding if they qualify as part of this process. Applications for ESF Plus funding are not submitted directly to the participating federal ministries, but rather to intermediate bodies, which are responsible for application approval, administration and billing. Funding calls and announcements are published regularly on the ESF website www.esf.de, which also offers information on the eligibility conditions, selection criteria and deadlines.

People resident in Germany can subsequently participate in an ESF Plus project. Participation is generally free of charge.

There are also programmes where small and medium-sized enterprises and solo self-employed people can apply for ESF Plus support; these currently include the INQA-Coaching (see p.15) and KOMPASS (see p.16) programmes.



»IT REALLY BOOSTED MY SELF-CONFIDENCE«

LARISSA RUDOLPH
GERIATRIC NURSING ASSISTANT

Approaching strangers, speaking English, going abroad without one's friends – Larissa Rudolph never thought she would have the courage to do all that. After training as a geriatric nursing assistant she had to battle anxiety and lack of prospects. "Since I only did a one-year training course it was hard to find a job. I didn't have a reason to get up in the morning. What was there to get up for?"

Through her employment agency, she heard about an internship in Scotland that was supported by the European Social Fund. Should she dare? Larissa Rudolph overcame her fears and signed up for the internship. Following a preparatory course over several months, she headed to Scotland for the work placement in a nursing home in Edinburgh. Her old anxieties returned but at some point the breakthrough came. "I am so proud of myself that I did it." Larissa Rudolph's new-found self-confidence paid off: just a few weeks after returning home she got a permanent job in a clinic for people suffering from mental illness.

FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COHESION IN EUROPE

The ESF Plus in the 2021–2027 funding period

In the 2021–2027 funding period, the previous ESF (now known as the ESF Plus) has been strengthened to enable it to make an even more targeted contribution to a more social Europe and implement the European Pillar of Social Rights in practice.

The ESF (Plus) makes a vital contribution to economic, territorial and social cohesion in Europe and to the reduction of regional disparities between European regions by funding, in close cooperation with the individual Member States, programmes and projects on the ground which are aligned with their national employment and social policies.

The EU defines the financing and the most important goals for the individual structural funds for a seven-year period (known as the Multiannual Financial

Framework – MFF). These funds are intended to reduce economic and structural disparities in the Member States. Countries with low economic growth and high unemployment receive proportionately more funding from the

ESF Plus than those whose economies are performing well. The aim is to permanently increase the employability of people in the EU and encourage social innovation. ESF Plus funding of roughly €99.3 billion is available for the EU countries in the 2021–2027 funding period, with Germany receiving around €6.56 billion, shared between the federal level (roughly €2.22 billion) and the federal states (roughly €4.34 billion).

A partnership agreement between the European Commission and the individual Member State is concluded as a precondition for receiving this funding. The agreement sets out, among other things, how the funds will be used by the Federal Government and the federal states to achieve the objectives for the ESF Plus funding period. The Federal Government and the states subsequently draw up their individual ESF Plus programmes, in which they define concrete actions and strategies through which they plan to achieve the labour market objectives and reach the target groups specified in the partnership agreement. In Germany, due to the country's federal structure, there is one ESF Plus programme at federal level as well as 16 programmes established by the federal states; the various programmes complement one another.



The individual ESF Plus programmes and concrete actions are designed in collaboration with and with the agreement of the social partners and civil society organisations. The partnership principle ensures that the funding is thematically concentrated, and that it is used where it is most urgently needed and where it will yield the greatest benefits.

The European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission agreed on the European Pillar of Social Rights in 2017. It sets out a total of 20 principles from the field of employment and social policy. They are divided into three chapters: “Equal opportunities and access to the labour market”, “Fair working conditions” and “Social protection and inclusion”.

€99.3
BILLION

are available for all the EU states in the 2021–2027 funding period



IMPLEMENTING THE ESF PLUS TOGETHER

The federal and state programmes complement one another

Der ESF bietet

The ESF Plus Federal Programme for the current funding period was drawn up in 2021, a process in which the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) took the lead with the participation of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), and the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building (BMWSB) (see the programme overview starting on p.14).

For all ESF Plus programmes at federal level, extensive consistency talks were held with the states during the early planning stage in order to ensure a dovetailed and holistic approach to ESF Plus funding in Germany, while at the same time differentiating the federal and state programmes from one another. While the states focus primarily on regional problems with their ESF Plus programmes, the ESF Plus funding at the federal level aims to ensure that particularly disadvantaged groups can access federal ESF Plus support irrespective of regional support measures. Beyond the preparatory and initial phases of the programmes, there is an ongoing process of coordination between the Federal Government and the federal states during programme implementation in order to optimise ESF support in Germany and maximise synergies.

The Monitoring Committee

The participating ministries, social partners, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and representatives of the federal states and the European Commission work in partnership to oversee programme implementation in the framework of a Monitoring Committee as the managing authority for the ESF Plus, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs chairs the Committee. The Monitoring Committee meets at least once a year. It is made up of representatives of the participating federal ministries, the social partners, the Federal Employment Agency, various NGOs, the federal states and the European Commission. The Monitoring Committee's responsibilities include ensuring compliance with objectives, analysing problems, and approving suggested changes to the federal programme.

Horizontal principles

In the planning and implementation of the ESF Plus, what are known as "horizontal principles" must be upheld across the board and at all levels to ensure that no one faces discrimination and the measures are sustainable.

- Promotion of gender equality
- Promotion of equal opportunities and non-discrimination
- Promotion of sustainable development

In addition, specific actions are to be implemented on the issues of gender equality and sustainability, or with the aim of achieving climate targets.

Menschliche berufliche Zukunft



FOUR QUESTIONS FOR ...

Arnold Hemmann, head of the federal ESF managing authority at the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, on what is new in the 2021–2027 funding period

#1

WHAT HAS CHANGED IN THIS FUNDING PERIOD COMPARED WITH THE PREVIOUS ONE?

One important and far-reaching change is a stronger thematic concentration of funding. ESF Plus funding is to be used in particular to promote social inclusion, assist the most deprived, tackle child poverty, and support young people. In concrete terms, this can be achieved by improving access to employment and general and vocational education, and supporting equal access to the benefits of the regular welfare system. In the current funding period, each Member State must allocate at least 25 per cent of the total ESF Plus resources available to measures in the field of “social inclusion” and at least 3 per cent to “support for the most deprived”. The current plan is for the ESF Plus Federal Programme to spend around 28 per cent of the funding on social inclusion and nearly 9 per cent on support for the most deprived.

#2

WHY IS LESS MONEY AVAILABLE IN THIS FUNDING PERIOD?

One of the aims of the ESF is to give people in economically weaker Member States prospects of integration into the labour market. The distribution of the money in the structural funds to the Member States is based on a number of indicators, such as employment, unemployment and the strength of the economy. Compared with other EU Member States, Germany is doing well, and very well in some cases. Germany has therefore received less EU funding this time than in the previous programming period. Out of the structural funds for the 2021–2027 funding period, roughly €6.56 billion has been allocated to the ESF Plus in Germany. The Federation and the states continue to manage this ESF Plus funding separately. The federal share is around €2.22 billion (34 per cent). The remaining ESF Plus funding, around €4.34 billion (66 per cent), is managed by the federal states.

unemployed, migrants and young people experiencing placement difficulties, as well as, for example, the promotion of continuing education and training, and efforts to secure the supply of skilled labour. The ESF Plus is thus making an important contribution to turning the European Pillar of Social Rights, adopted in 2017, into reality.

In addition, the ESF Plus programmes of the Federal Government are providing vital impetus for the transformation of the world of work, for example by supporting sustainable and high-quality employment, start-ups and entrepreneurship. This includes, for example, support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) when it comes to securing the supply of skilled labour, funding for consultancy services for SMEs and solo self-employed people, and the development of continuing vocational education and training programmes.

#4

HOW DOES THE ESF CONTRIBUTE TO THE EUROPEAN IDEA?

Employment and social affairs are fundamental components of the EU. The ESF Plus makes the concept of Europe tangible for the citizens of the individual EU countries. The people of Europe can experience first-hand that Europe is not just about economics and finance; it also delivers very real, direct support through targeted projects.

#3

WHY IS ESF FUNDING STILL SO IMPORTANT IN GERMANY?

Not everyone benefits in the same way from the economy performing well. In Germany, as elsewhere, opportunities for integration into the labour market depend on the region, educational attainment and a host of other factors. Support is geared towards the labour market integration of the long-term



KEY THEMATIC AREAS AND TARGET GROUPS OF THE ESF PLUS FEDERAL PROGRAMME

#1

BETTER EDUCATION AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES AND PROSPECTS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Since 1957, the ESF has been supporting employability so that people in Europe have better opportunities in the labour market. In the framework of efforts to secure the supply of skilled labour, the current ESF Plus focuses in particular on people – and especially women – from a migrant background, including refugees.

#2

CONTINUING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR PEOPLE IN EMPLOYMENT

Lifelong learning is an important topic, including for people in employment. The ESF Plus enables women, migrants, older people, people with disabilities, single parents and people with low-level qualifications, in particular, to engage in continuing vocational education and training.

#3

SUPPORT FOR DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people are a particular target group for the ESF Plus. They receive support to help them take responsibility for their own lives, among other things. Young people who are unemployed or looking for a job can take part in transnational mobility measures across Europe via projects funded by the ESF Plus. Disadvantaged university

students receive additional support from ESF Plus funding in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme.

#4

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Disadvantaged families, families in special circumstances, and families with children that are affected by or at risk of poverty benefit from a wide range of ESF Plus programmes.

#5

SUPPORT FOR THE MOST DEPRIVED

Some people suffer from multiple disadvantages, especially people who are homeless, and newly arrived EU citizens and their children. The ESF Plus is developing particularly low-threshold and innovative services for them, as these groups are often not reached by local projects.

#6

ADAPTATION TO CHANGE

Demographic change and the digital and green transition are creating challenges, in particular for SMEs, their employees, and solo self-employed people. The ESF Plus boosts their capabilities, innovativeness and competitiveness.

#7

SECURING A SUFFICIENT SUPPLY OF SKILLED WORKERS IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (SMES)

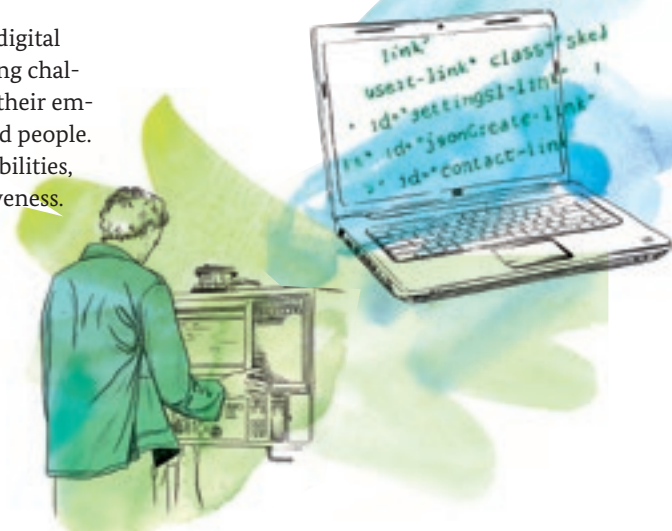
SMEs are supported in recruiting and retaining skilled workers, and in creating new jobs and training places.

#8

START-UPS

Start-ups, especially innovative, research-based start-ups coming from academia, are supported via the ESF Plus.

In addition, forms of social innovation are developed and trialled. These measures aim to place young men with particular difficulties in education, vocational training and employment. Older people are another target group, and innovative measures are trialled with the aim of enabling them to better participate in society and achieve financial security.



OVERVIEW OF ESF PLUS PROGRAMMES OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

For the 2021–2027 funding period

There are a total of 27 ESF Plus programmes at federal level in the current funding period. Each federal ministry participating in the ESF Plus focuses on specific topics and target groups.

The **Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS)** has a total of 13 programmes which focus on securing the supply of skilled labour and actions to promote social inclusion and combat poverty.

27

FUNDING PROGRAMMES

under the ESF Plus for the current funding period

With its four programmes, the **Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)** sets the priority of promoting education in municipalities, strengthening continuing education and training activities, boosting the educational opportunities of people from a migrant background, and supporting research into the future of education and work.

The **Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ)** offers six programmes that focus on support for young people, families and women. Other important topics include the social integration of various target groups, and the inclusion of adults aged 28 and over and older people aged 60 and over.

The funding programmes run by the **Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK)** support small and medium-sized enterprises in order to boost competitiveness and contribute to efforts to secure the supply of skilled labour. Two programmes support start-ups.

The **BIWAQ** programme of the **Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building (BMWSB)** flanks the Urban Development Support programme “Social Cohesion – Building Coexistence in the Neighbourhood Together” in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods.

Individuals only receive support via the projects funded in the framework of the ESF Plus programmes. If you would like to access ESF Plus support, you can get in touch directly with a local ESF Plus project (see p. 25, “The ESF Plus at a glance”).



AROUND

€6.56

BILLION

WILL BE ALLOCATED TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE FEDERAL STATES FROM THE ESF PLUS IN 2021–2027

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

#1

Akti(F) Plus – Active for families and their children
www.esfplus.de/aktiv-plus

OBJECTIVE: Improving the living situation and social inclusion of families and their children who are at risk of social exclusion and poverty.

CONTENT: A holistic coaching approach is used to support families, especially parents and single parents, in taking up or increasing employment which provides an adequate income, and in accessing local and regional support services and social benefits. At the same time, cooperation structures are established and expanded to offer better, sustained support for families. To this end, projects work together with municipalities (e.g. youth welfare offices), the public employment service (employment agencies, job centres), non-statutory welfare organisations and non-profit organisations, as well as with companies and associations. Funding is also provided for an overarching networking centre to support the projects in these networking activities.

ZIELGRUPPE: Families/parents with children receiving benefits under Book II of the Social Code (citizen's benefit) or social assistance under Book XII of the Social Code; families which are receiving or entitled to child supplement (Kinderzuschlag) or the future basic child allowance (Kindergrundsicherung); special target groups, such as single parents and people with disabilities.

#2

EhAP Plus – Integration helps counter the exclusion of the most deprived
www.esfplus.de/ehap-plus

OBJECTIVE: Improving the living conditions and social integration of particularly deprived newly arrived EU citizens and their children under the age of 18, as well as homeless people or people at risk of homelessness and their children under the age of 18.

CONTENT: Providing outreach, counselling and support in accessing local and regional support services. In addition, low-threshold and easy to access information will be provided by digital means to inform people who cannot be reached by local support, in particular, about services offered by the regular welfare system and EhAP Plus projects. The project operators are municipalities, non-statutory welfare organisations, non-profit organisations, research institutes, associations and companies.

TARGET GROUP: Homeless people and people at risk of homelessness and their children under the age of 18, and newly arrived EU citizens (including members of marginalised communities, such as the Roma community) and their children under the age of 18.

#3

INQA-Coaching
www.esfplus.de/inqa-coaching

OBJECTIVE: Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) receive individual coaching to support them in developing tailored solutions to necessary adjustments in terms of staffing policies and the organisation of work in the context of digital transformation. Companies should subsequently be able to respond independently to change processes.

CONTENT: Funding is provided for participative, agile coaching processes that put people front and centre as the starting point for sustainable change processes in the workplace. The INQA consultation centres (IBS) act as regional points of contact for SMEs. They carry out the initial INQA consultation and offer administrative support. The programme is implemented by specially trained INQA coaches. The INQA-Coaching Centre (ZIC) is responsible for the programme's coordination and quality assurance, and also serves as the first point of contact for the consultation centres and INQA coaches.

TARGET GROUP: SMEs with up to 249 employees.

#4

IQ – Integration through Qualification
www.netzwerk-iq.de

OBJECTIVE: Supporting adults of non-German origin when it comes to the recognition of foreign professional qualifications and their integration into the labour market in line with their qualifications.

CONTENT: Developing and trialling pilot projects for people of foreign origin: counselling services on the recognition of foreign qualifications and skills development, and counselling services on fair integration (advice on labour and social law for third-country nationals). Regional integration networks offer upskilling, coaching and support measures for groups or individuals to enable them to put the qualifications they gained abroad to good use in the German labour market.

TARGET GROUP: People of non-German origin who have a professional qualification gained abroad, or who have informal skills which can be used for skilled employment.

#5

JUVENTUS Germany: Strengthening mobility – for a social Europe
www.esfplus.de/juventus

OBJECTIVE: Disadvantaged young people can improve their prospects in the labour market through company internships in other EU countries. The aim is to promote their gradual and sustainable integration into work or vocational training, or their (re-)enrolment in school education, thereby enhancing their individual employability. Germany is participating through JUVENTUS in the new EU initiative ALMA (which stands for "Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve").

CONTENT: JUVENTUS allows people to take part in two-month internships in another European country. The participants are supported by educational project staff in collaboration with transnational cooperation partners. They are involved in intensive individual preparation and follow-up in Germany. The projects are implemented by cooperation networks in which stakeholders such as local job centres or employment agencies, companies and project operators

cooperate closely to promote the participants' sustainable integration into work or vocational training.

TARGET GROUP: Young adults aged 18 to 30 who are unemployed/seeking work.

#6

**KOMPASS – Compact help
for solo self-employed persons**
www.esfplus.de/kompass

OBJECTIVE: Solo self-employed people receive support in positioning themselves to weather crises and face the future with confidence, through continuing education and training courses.

CONTENT: Funding is provided for tailored, individually selected continuing education and training courses. Across Germany, more than 30 KOMPASS focal points offer free consultations for solo self-employed people to advise them on their skills development needs and provide administrative support. After successfully completing their course, the solo self-employed participants receive a partial reimbursement of 90 per cent of the costs. The maximum grant is €4,500. Funding can be provided once within a twelve-month period for courses with a minimum duration of 20 hours.

TARGET GROUP: Solo self-employed people who have been in business for at least two years, for whom this is their main professional activity, and who employ a maximum of one person full-time or multiple people whose combined working hours represent a maximum of one full-time equivalent.

#7

**MYTURN – Women with
migration experience get started**
www.my-turn.info

OBJECTIVE: Enabling women with personal experience of migration who have limited (formal) qualifications, and who need greater support, to participate to a greater extent in skills development programmes. The aim is for them to take up a long-term job that is subject to social security contributions, move into self-employment or begin vocational training.

CONTENT: The programme uses an outreach approach specifically tailored to women and their situation in life, offers (or refers them to) advisory services, and provides continuous, individual support based on trust. The projects implement this through five compulsory modules and one elective module. The compulsory modules cover outreach and the provision of information on relevant benefits in the regular welfare system, empowerment activities, advice on combining work and family life, networking with businesses, and individual support. The elective module on “childcare access” supports mothers with migration experience in looking for and making use of standard childcare services.

A key element of the project work is continuous individual support even during skills development measures and after participants have begun vocational training or taken up a job; the duration of support is only limited by the project's lifetime. The project operators include educational institutions and skills development providers, non-statutory welfare organisations, municipal offices or organisations, migrant-led organisations and women's organisations. Crucially, the projects are also required to cooperate with the local job centres and employment agencies.

TARGET GROUP: Women with personal experience of migration who have limited (formal) qualifications and need greater support.

#8

Giving advice – Yes to vocational training!
www.esfplus.de/ratgeben

OBJECTIVE: Supporting young people in the transition from school to vocational training. The programme aims to train the direct attachment figures of immigrant young people or young people with immigrant parents (such as parents, relatives, instructors from clubs) for their role as advice givers and to raise their awareness of the special role they play.

CONTENT: Information, advisory and training services are provided with the aim of empowering key figures in young people's lives to motivate and support them in overcoming barriers in the transition from school to vocational training. Extensive networking takes place between the various project operators to promote experience sharing and mutual learning to further enhance the support provided. The project operators are institutions and organisations which have experience with the transition from school to vocational training (e.g. training centres, associations, municipalities).

TARGET GROUP: Key figures in the lives of young migrants, young people with immigrant parents, or adolescents and young people with personal or family experience of migration.

#9

Tailwind³
www.esfplus.de/rueckenwind3

OBJECTIVE: Securing a sufficient supply of skilled workers in social fields by offering vocational skills development programmes which enable employees to adapt their skills. This takes place in combination with the adaptation of structures and cultures at organisations and enterprises in the non-profit social economy.

CONTENT: Employees' adaptability and employability is enhanced, which strengthens the resilience of the organisation as a whole. The project operators are non-profit institutions which belong to or are represented by one of the six central organisations in the Federal Association of Non-statutory Welfare (BAGFW), or other non-profit social welfare organisations in Germany.



TARGET GROUP: Employees in social occupations.

#10

Shaping the changing world of work through social partnership: continuing education and training and promoting gender equality
(ESF Social Partner Initiative)
www.esfplus.de/wandel-der-arbeit

OBJECTIVE: By developing sustainable continuing education and training structures in companies and strengthening the equal, livelihood-securing participation of women in the labour market, companies' innovativeness and competitiveness is to be bolstered and the occupational competence of employees is to be maintained and promoted. The overarching aim of the programme is to empower stakeholders to shape the world of work through social partnership to promote a sustainable human resources policy and corporate culture.

CONTENT: Establishing and expanding sustainable and participative human resource development and continuing education structures in companies (especially SMEs), and promoting equal opportunities in the workplace.

TARGET GROUP: Employees (of SMEs), in particular: women, people with low-level qualifications, people from a migrant background, people with disabilities.

#11

Win-Win – Through cooperation for integration
www.esfplus.de/win-win

OBJECTIVE: Developing, trialling and transferring innovative approaches and measures to improve the labour market access of particularly disadvantaged young men aged 18 to 35, and steps to bring them closer to the labour market.

CONTENT: By forming new partnerships between municipalities, the public employment service, non-statutory welfare organisations and other civil-society (migrant-led) organisations and business associations, including small and medium-sized enterprises or other migrant-led or social enterprises, innovative approaches and measures to promote social integration will be developed,

trialled, and transferred to other municipalities or other social contexts. The aim is to reach, in particular, young men who cannot (or can no longer) be reached or assisted by local employment agencies or job centres, or who refuse or reject cooperation with the employment agencies or job centres.

TARGET GROUP: Young men with or without a migrant background and young men aged 18 to 35 who are not gainfully employed, including male EU citizens who have recently arrived in Germany, members of minorities and third-country nationals.

#12

WE – Networks integrating refugees into the regional labour market
www.esfplus.de/wir

OBJECTIVE: Improving the integration of refugees into the labour market.

CONTENT: Refugees receive counselling and long-term support that reflects their particular circumstances. They are supported in accessing benefits in the regular welfare system, in undertaking (if necessary) individually required skills development measures, in being placed in work, vocational training or school education, and in undertaking company-focused activation measures. Special consideration is given to people with impairments or disabilities, or health needs as a result of forced migration. In addition, a nationwide, multilingual online pilot project is being funded. It is exploring on a pilot basis how refugees in Germany can be given information via social media and how they can be guided to the relevant advisory services. The project operators are municipalities, non-statutory welfare organisations, companies, research institutes or associations.

TARGET GROUP: Refugees with a temporary residence permit, permission to remain pending an asylum decision, or whose deportation has been temporarily suspended, and who are not subject to an absolute ban on working.

#13

Hubs for tomorrow
www.zukunftszentren.de

OBJECTIVE: Supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), their employees, and (solo) self-employed people in addressing the digital, demographic and green transitions. The target group is supported in introducing digital technologies and AI-based systems in their companies through a participative approach based on social partnership, and in developing the necessary skills on a practical basis.

CONTENT: Alongside regional and sector-specific advisory services and networking, in-company skills development is being re-imagined and trialled – with the aim of fostering self-learning skills and creative competencies to shape the future. Implementation takes place through twelve “regional hubs for tomorrow” covering the entire country. A Centre for the Future of the Working World (ZZA) serves as a co-ordination and transfer hub, while a “House of the Self-Employed” acts as an association representing the interests of (solo) self-employed people.

TARGET GROUP: SMEs and their employees, and the self-employed, especially solo self-employed people.

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

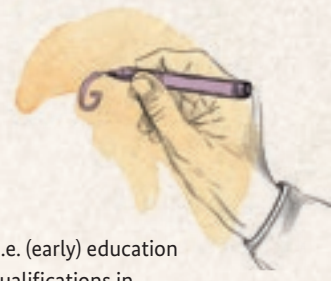
#14

Education communities
www.esfplus.de/bildungskommunen

OBJECTIVE: Supporting counties and towns constituting a county in their own right in developing and expanding a data-based community education management system.

CONTENT: Establishing education landscapes for lifelong learning which combine both digital and analogue elements. In addition, education communities select specific thematic priorities from the fields of cultural education, education for democracy / civic education, education for sustainable development, securing the supply of skilled labour / education during structural transformation, integration or inclusion.

TARGET GROUP: Municipalities.



#15

Integration through Education
www.esfplus.de/integration-durch-bildung

OBJECTIVE: Increasing the educational opportunities of people with experience of migration or a refugee background, especially girls and women.

CONTENT: Funding is provided for tandems of researchers and practitioners to generate knowledge for a diversity-sensitive education system, to put this knowledge into practice for these specific target groups, and to develop empowerment and educational programmes for girls and women with experience of migration.

TARGET GROUP: Higher education institutions and research organisations in association/cooperation with education providers, migrant-led organisations or other stakeholders from educational practice.

#16

**Sustainability at work –
 future-oriented training**
www.esfplus.de/nachhaltig-im-beruf

OBJECTIVE: Strengthening vocational education for sustainable development in companies and in non-company and inter-company vocational training centres.

CONTENT: Funding is provided for projects which equip training staff to design sustainability-focused vocational training programmes, to establish corresponding courses at continuing vocational education and training centres, and to enhance the conditions for companies to embed sustainability in vocational training. In addition, projects are funded that find innovative qualification approaches to support companies in meeting the challenges of sustainable transformation.

TARGET GROUP: Social partners, education providers, companies, associations, municipalities, higher education institutions, research organisations.



#17

Future of work
www.esfplus.de/zukunft-der-arbeit

OBJECTIVE: The opportunities and risks of changes in the digitalised and connected world of work are to be studied, and new models for work design and organisation are to be developed in partnership with companies. The aim is to advance both technological and social innovation. This programme is part of the research programme “Future of Value Creation – Research on Production, Services and Work”.

CONTENT: Funding is provided for projects that deal with socio-technical innovations and their impact on staff at all levels of the company. The focus is on developing and trialling strategies and models through close cooperation between the research community, business and the social partners.

TARGET GROUP: Companies, the research community, social partners.

**FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR FAMILY
 AFFAIRS, SENIOR CITIZENS, WOMEN
 AND YOUTH**

#18

**Opportunities for parents – Strengthening
 families by supporting parents**
www.elternchancen.de

OBJECTIVE: Supporting the establishment of local prevention networks in up to 64 municipalities or districts in which parent mentors are employed at elementary school, daycare centers, youth welfare offices or other places of early education and family education. The „parent support networks“ offer individual on-site support for disadvantaged and needy families.

CONTENT: The (gradual) establishment and expansion of local networks to support parents is being funded at 64 locations across Germany. These projects are carried out by local authorities and independent child and youth welfare organizations. In addition to cooperation with youth welfare offices family education institutions (family centers, family education centers, parenting schools, daycare centers, multi-generational houses or migration advice centers), the program focuses on cooperation with elementary

school. Parent mentors, i.e. (early) education specialists with further qualifications in parenting, develop tailor-made offers to support families. They provide parents with advice and support when it comes to questions about their children's upbringing and development.

TARGET GROUP: Families in special circumstances, including families with a low (earned) income, families with a migration or refugee background and educationally disadvantaged families. The target group also includes single parents and families with children of primary school age.

#19

**Together for quality: Involving
 children in all-day care and education**
www.kinder-beteiligen-im-ganztag.de

OBJECTIVE: Creating a high-quality all-day care and education system which strengthens participatory structures and democratic action.

CONTENT: Training is provided for staff and teachers at the participating schools on the participation of primary school pupils and the encouragement of democratic action. The training curriculum on the participation of primary school pupils, developed on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, will be reviewed and updated in this context. Strategies for all-day schools will be developed or revised to strengthen participation or expand participatory structures. The projects are implemented by municipalities and all-day primary schools.

TARGET GROUP: Staff and teachers at all-day primary schools and facilities offering all-day care for children of primary school age.

The programme expires at the end of 2024.

#20

JUGEND STÄRKEN -

Encouraging Youth by building bridges to independence

www.jugend-staerken.de/just-best

OBJECTIVE: Developing and trialling youth social work structures which are tailored to specific needs in the municipality and which support local young people as they move towards living independent lives.

CONTENT: More long-term, individual social and educational support across institutional boundaries and legal categories, with the aim of enabling participants to lead self-determined and stable lives. This includes ensuring stable housing. The projects are implemented by providers of public-sector and non-public-sector youth services.

TARGET GROUP: Young people in precarious situations, especially care leavers, i.e. young adults who have spent part of their lives in residential child and youth care (e.g. in supervised residential groups, children's homes or foster families) and who are in the process of transitioning to live independently. The target group also includes young people who are not in education, training or employment, and young people who are homeless.

#21

Strengthening the participation of older people -

countering loneliness and social isolation
www.esfplus.de/teilhabe-staerken

OBJECTIVE: Improving the individual income and living situations of older people aged 60 and over, both during their active working life and in the post-working phase; this is intended to prevent and alleviate loneliness and social isolation.

CONTENT: The programme is part of the Federal Government's strategy to counter loneliness. It aims to educate and support people with regard to accessing social benefits, avoiding loneliness and social isolation, and dealing with other individual challenges. Funding is provided for socially innovative projects with new ideas and schemes to achieve these goals. The projects are implemented by non-profit organisations and by municipalities, counties, towns which constitute a county in their own right, and boroughs in a city-state.

TARGET GROUP: Older people aged 60 and over and their partners, irrespective of marital status.

#22

Strengthening cohesion - connecting people

www.esfplus.de/zume

OBJECTIVE: This funding programme is also part of the strategy to counter loneliness, and aims to establish or expand municipal structures to prevent or alleviate loneliness and social isolation for people in middle adulthood.

CONTENT: This structural programme aims to contribute to the better integration of the target group into the life of the community and the labour market. There are two objectives which must be implemented by the projects: establishing or reinforcing municipal structures to prevent and alleviate loneliness and social isolation, and improving social participation and labour market opportunities for the target groups. The project operators are local authorities, e.g. municipalities, counties, towns which constitute a county in their own right, and boroughs in a city-state.

TARGET GROUP: People in middle adulthood, aged 28 to 59, e.g. single parents, carers, people from a migrant background, people who are unemployed, or people in transitional situations, e.g. entering working life, separating, moving home, or changing job.

#23

Integration course with Child Plus: Perspective through Qualification

www.esfplus.de/intmikiplus

OBJECTIVE: On-site child supervision, below the level of standard childcare services, is provided to enable migrant parents to take part in an integration course. This service also makes it easier for children to transition to standard childcare services, and enables potential skilled workers to be recruited.

CONTENT: The child supervision provided during integration courses is being upgraded; this service enables parents to take part in the course, and thus promotes their integration. Children can only be supervised by this service if they cannot access a place in standard childcare services, and they are not yet of school age. This service bridges the gap, preparing children and their families for the transition to standard services in the early childhood education and care system. In particular, it is possible to attract individuals who are interested in qualifying for a role in child minding. Compulsory training is provided for self-learning by staff; it covers the fundamentals and addresses the special requirements of child supervision during integration courses.

TARGET GROUP: People who are employed, with social security coverage, to deliver child supervision during integration courses.



**FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC
AFFAIRS AND CLIMATE ACTION**

#24

EXIST Transfer of Research
www.exist.de

OBJECTIVE: Supporting the creation of start-ups which are based on high-tech innovation and which make substantial contributions to the German Sustainable Development Strategy.

CONTENT: The programme provides support for outstanding research-based start-up projects that involve costly, high-risk development work.

TARGET GROUP: Scientists at higher education institutions and non-university research institutions.

#25

EXIST Business start-up grant
www.exist.de

OBJECTIVE: Supporting start-up entrepreneurs and higher education institutions in turning their idea into a reality, drawing up a viable business plan, and developing marketable products and services.

CONTENT: The start-up projects are innovative technology- or knowledge-based projects with significant unique features and good commercial prospects of success.

TARGET GROUP: Scientists, graduates, students at higher education institutions and non-university research institutions.

#26

**Promoting management consulting
for SMEs**
www.esfplus.de/KMU

OBJECTIVE: Increasing the entrepreneurial expertise of SMEs and members of the liberal professions so that they can meet the many challenges of economic trends and the changes caused by the demographic, digital and green transitions.

CONTENT: Grants are provided towards the cost of consultancy measures relating to all management issues, including business, financial, human resources and organisational issues. The goal is to increase entrepreneurial expertise, thereby boosting the prospects for success, performance and competitiveness, as well as employment capacity and adaptability.

TARGET GROUP: Entrepreneurs.

In addition, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action is planning to establish an ESF Plus funding programme on “climate literacy” (www.esfplus.de/klima).

**FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR HOUSING,
URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND
BUILDING**

#27

**Education, Economy, Work in the
Neighbourhood – BIWAQ**
www.biwaq.de

OBJECTIVE: Outreach and services for people who are hard to reach and who live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The aim is for them to benefit from skills development programmes and thus have better prospects in the labour market. The local economy will also be strengthened, to boost social cohesion and residents’ social participation.

CONTENT: Funding is provided for low-threshold projects to integrate people into work and strengthen the local economy. The labour market projects are linked to integrated urban development strategies and investment in urban development at local level, such as measures to improve the residential environment (e.g. by creating a neighbourhood garden). This creates tangible added value for the neighbourhood and strengthens community in the neighbourhood.

The projects are implemented by municipalities which contain areas actively or formerly benefiting from assistance under the Urban Development Support programmes “Social Cohesion” and “Social City”, and their project partners, in cooperation with additional partners.

TARGET GROUP: Unemployed people (including the long-term unemployed), people of foreign origin, people aged 55 and over, and local businesses (small and medium-sized enterprises, including solo self-employed people) in neighbourhoods in particular need of renewal.



»THAT'S WHEN I REALLY GREW AS A PERSON«



HEIKE DOMARATIUS
CEO OF GEMINO MASCHINENBAU GMBH

Heike Domaratus has been around milling and CNC machines since childhood. She has since taken over the reins of Gemino Maschinenbau GmbH from her parents. "At some point, we had to consider what path the company should take going forward and how we can make our business fit for the future." They replaced the entire management team, created new positions and promoted long-standing employees to management level. However, the change of role did not prove easy for some colleagues, which was why the Domaratus family decided to seek professional help from outside. Coaching specifically for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which was supported by the ESF, improved internal communication, clearly defined the roles of the new managers and provided training on how to interact with staff. "Personally I've become a lot more confident in my new role as CEO. And the entire company has benefitted from the process: the whole team has come closer together and processes, such as shift change, now run a lot more smoothly."

THE PRINCIPLES OF ESF PLUS FINANCING

The European Commission and Member States pursue a policy of co-financing

The financing principles set down in the EU Regulations must be upheld in the financing of programmes, projects and labour market integration measures through the ESF Plus.

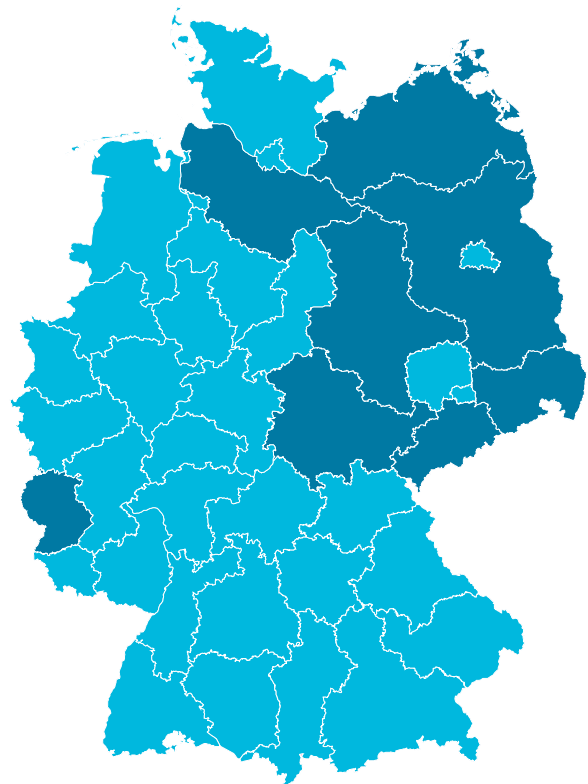
The ESF Plus funds are distributed on the basis of the principle of shared management. Here, the EU Member State – and not the European Commission – chooses who will receive the ESF Plus grants, and manages the expenditure in accordance with national and European law. A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system is in place to ensure that the ESF Plus funding is used and managed properly and appropriately.

The ESF Plus support is mainly provided in the form of a “non-repayable grant”. In a large number of funding guidelines, ESF Plus funding for the projects is supplemented by other fund providers; this can include national funds of the Federal Government (national co-financing/budgetary funds), or funding provided by the project operators, municipalities or companies.

The ESF Plus intervention rate sets down the maximum percentage of total project expenditure that can be covered by ESF Plus funding. The intervention rate varies by target area. In Germany there are:

- More developed regions where gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is above 100% of the EU average: up to 40% of the cost of ESF projects in these regions is covered by ESF Plus funds.
- Transition regions where GDP per capita is between 75% and 100% of the EU average: up to 60% of the cost of ESF Plus projects in these regions is covered by ESF Plus funds.

DISTRIBUTION OF TARGET AREAS IN GERMANY:



■ Transition regions where GDP per capita is between 75% and 100% of the EU average

■ More developed regions where GDP per capita is above 100% of the EU average

Source: Structural Funds 2021-2027 (ERDF and ESF) eligibility: Germany

ENSURING THE FUNDING REACHES WHERE IT IS NEEDED

Monitoring and evaluation

The EU legal framework requires evaluations and regular monitoring to make sure that ESF Plus funding is effective, efficient, and reaches where it is needed.

The objectives for the ESF Plus Federal Programme for 2021–2027 are enshrined in a performance framework. ESF Plus funding is measured and evaluated during the implementation process, and transparency is ensured through reporting. For this purpose, a system has been developed for continuous monitoring and the evaluation of funding. Progress is measured at the mid-term point and at the end of the 2021–2027 funding period, in particular.

At the heart of the monitoring process is the collection of (individual) participant and company data relating to joint and programme-specific output and result indicators. The data is recorded and stored digitally. As part of this process, ESF Plus projects collect data on, for example, the professional and social circumstances of participants at the start of ESF Plus support and again up to a maximum of four weeks after completion of the measure. This data also provides the basis for the thematic evaluation of the entire ESF Plus Federal Programme. The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, as the ESF managing authority, reports regularly to the European Commission on the financial and material progress made by the ESF Plus Federal Programme.



The overall evaluation of the ESF Plus Federal Programme builds on this monitoring and assesses the ESF Plus funding on the basis of various criteria, including achievement of the objectives, effectiveness, efficiency, the (Union) added value of the funding, the implementation of the horizontal principles and the geographic dimension of the effects. To allow the effectiveness to be assessed, data is collected about the professional circumstances of a sample of participants six months after completion of the measure (post-measure survey).



TRANSPARENCY AND CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

Various ways to find information and make your voice heard

The main source of information about the ESF (Plus) in Germany is the website www.esf.de. It publishes information about how ESF funding is being used, and the objectives, results and successes of the European Social Fund.

The ESF site offers people who are unfamiliar with the ESF but are interested in learning more the option to use the “I am looking for support for...” search filter to be taken directly to relevant ESF Plus funding programmes. Transparency about how funding is being used is also ensured by the list of projects, which enables interested members of the public to see exactly what ESF Plus projects are being funded in Germany.

To involve the public in shaping the current 2021–2027 funding period, an online consultation was held via the www.esf.de website from 13 June to 12 July 2019. Around 1,500 people commented on support needs, target groups, and substantive and technical proposals relating to the implementation of the ESF Plus. These suggestions and proposals were fed into the planning of the support strategy. Besides the participating federal ministries, institutions such as social partners, welfare organisations and civil society organisations were heavily involved in developing the ESF Plus Federal Programme. Finally, the ESF Plus priorities of the Federal Government identified on the basis of these consultations were presented to the public and discussed at a workshop.

The public is also informed about the ESF Plus through social media channels, technical and regional events, and publications such as leaflets and videos.



The ESF Plus Federal Programme can be found on the following social media platforms:

www.esf.de/facebook
www.esf.de/instagram
www.esf.de/linkedin
www.esf.de/youtube

The ESF helpline (see p. 27) also answers questions about the ESF Plus. In addition, a good overview of the full spectrum of the ESF Plus and its projects is available from the ESF newsletter (German only), which is published on www.esf.de. You can sign up to receive the newsletter in the “Infothek” section of the German site.



THE ESF PLUS AT A GLANCE

#1

WHAT IS THE ESF PLUS?

The ESF Plus is the EU's main tool for promoting employment in Europe. It improves access to the labour market and to more and better jobs, offers skills development, encourages innovation, assists small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and supports the social integration of disadvantaged people and the most deprived.

#2

WHY DO WE HAVE THE ESF PLUS?

The ESF Plus is part of the European cohesion policy to support economic and social cohesion in Europe. In 2021–2027, the Federal Government and the federal states will receive roughly €6.56 billion from the ESF Plus. The ESF Plus programmes of the Federal Government will make €2.22 billion available, while €4.34 billion is earmarked for the ESF Plus activities of the federal states.

#3

WHO DOES THE ESF PLUS HELP?

In the current funding period, the ESF Plus programmes of the Federal Government are primarily directed at (long-term) unemployed people, (disadvantaged) young people, migrants, start-up entrepreneurs, and small and medium-sized enterprises.

#4

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE ESF PLUS?

The ESF Plus supports practical projects that have a local impact. Around 782,000 people will benefit from the projects at federal level in the 2021–2027 funding period. In addition, some 121,000 small and medium-sized enterprises will receive assistance in their search for skilled workers, in addressing the digitalisation of the world of work, and in dealing with demographic change.

#5

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ESF PLUS?

On the ESF website www.esf.de you can find detailed, up-to-date information about the European Social Fund Plus Federal Programme, an overview of current funding calls, and information about the individual funding programmes and ongoing projects. The ESF Plus is also present on social media:

Facebook (www.esf.de/facebook),
Instagram (www.esf.de/instagram),
LinkedIn (www.esf.de/linkedin),
YouTube (www.esf.de/youtube).

#6

HOW CAN THE PUBLIC BENEFIT FROM THE ESF PLUS?

Individuals only receive support via the ESF Plus projects established in the framework of the 27 ESF Plus funding programmes. If you would like to access ESF Plus support, you can get in touch directly with a local ESF Plus project.

On the homepage of www.esf.de, under the heading “How to profit from ESF?” there is a dropdown menu with the text “I am looking for support for...” which can be used to search for a suitable funding programme and then a relevant project.



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Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS)
Division EF3 – European Social Fund: Information, Communication, Public Relations
D - 53107 Bonn

Email: esf@bmas.bund.de

Website: www.esf.de

Social media: www.esf.de/facebook; www.esf.de/youtube; www.esf.de/instagram; www.esf.de/linkedin

As at: January 2024

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Phone: +49 (0)30 18 272-2721; Fax: +49 (0)30 1810 272-2721

CONCEPT/DESIGN: *Johanssen + Kretschmer Strategische Kommunikation GmbH, V-FORMATION –
Agentur für visuelle Kommunikation GmbH*

ILLUSTRATIONS: *Ini Neumann*

TYPESETTING/LAYOUT: *Graphics Section of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Bonn*

PRINTED BY: *In-house Print Shop of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Bonn. Printed on FSC® paper*

When citing this publication, please state the publisher, title and publication date.

Led by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, these ministries are involved in the development and delivery of the ESF Plus Federal Programme in Germany:

