European Social Fund (ESF) 2014-2020 – proposed Regulation

Citizens' summary

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

- In the EU today, almost 23 million people are unemployed and an estimated 113 million are living on or below the poverty line, at risk of social exclusion. Social and employment issues are a primary concern for Europeans.
- To get people back to work and out of poverty, Europe must tackle its skills shortages, low labour mobility, under-performing education systems and labour market policies.
- More generally, it must deliver an effective response to the financial and economic crisis, demographic and migratory trends, and keep up with technological change – all significant challenges to social cohesion and competitiveness.
- The proposed Regulation will enable the European Social Fund (ESF) to continue improving opportunities for employment, education and training, and combating social exclusion and poverty in 2014-2020.

WHO WILL BENEFIT AND HOW?

- Unemployed people especially the young and long-term unemployed women returning to the labour market and disadvantaged groups will have more options for training, counselling, and individualised assistance. This will benefit millions of people, as around 10 million people a year take part in ESF measures across Europe.
- Businesses, non-profit organisations and public authorities will receive support to help them
 adapt to technological change, shift towards a low-carbon economy, keep up with global
 competition and implement reforms.
- Funding will be channelled through national or regional bodies entrusted with the implementing the ESF.

WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU?

• The EU is mandated to reduce the large regional disparities across the EU in terms of levels of development (per capita GDP), productivity, employment, education attainment and poverty, and to meet its ambitious <u>Europe 2020 objectives</u>.

WHAT EXACTLY WILL CHANGE?

If adopted, the proposed Regulation would mean:

- greater focus on a limited number of objectives in line with the Europe 2020 strategy to increase funding impact.
- EU countries would have to ensure that, of the total EU cohesion policy funding they received, a certain minimum percentage came from the ESF. This would help focus attention on employment promotion, education and training and poverty reduction.
- greater emphasis on combating youth unemployment and supporting the most disadvantaged groups, such as migrants or marginalised communities – with at least 20% of ESF funding going to support social inclusion measures.

- greater involvement of social partners and NGOs in implementing the ESF especially in less-developed regions.
- support for specific measures to promote equality between men and women and combat discrimination.
- a more active role for the Commission in facilitating transnational cooperation and promoting social innovation.
- a less complex ESF, with a special attention on simplification for small beneficiaries.
- a more result-driven approach to managing operational programmes through joint action plans.

WHEN IS THE PROPOSAL LIKELY TO COME INTO EFFECT?

 The proposal by the Commission will now be discussed and negotiated with the European Parliament and EU governments. It should enter into force in 2013.

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