

The European Social Fund: Supporting Social Dialogue at National, Regional and Local Levels

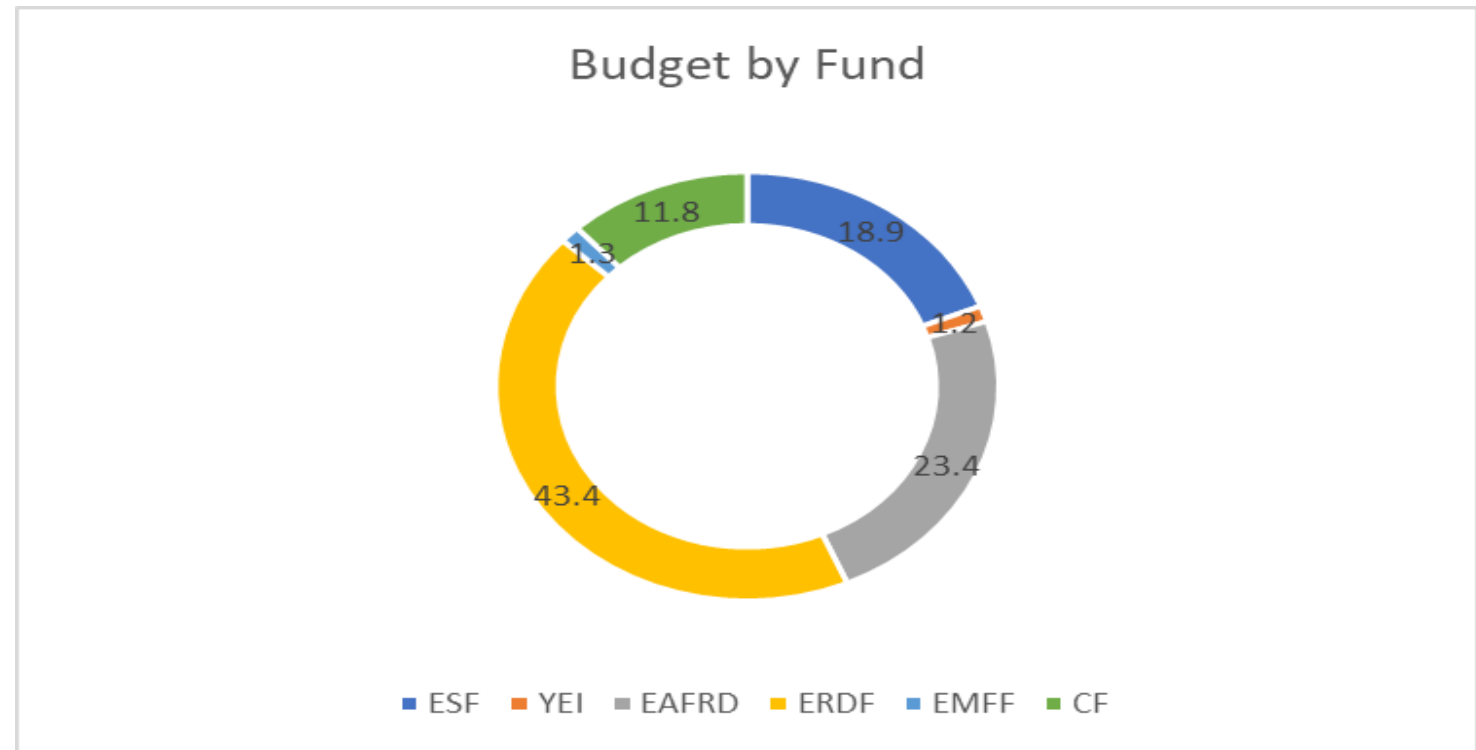
Summary of key findings

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The European Structural Funds 2014-2020: some basic facts

- Total ESIF funds 2014-2020: € 638,161,790,114
- Total ESF 2014-2020: € 120,461,019,673



The European Structural Funds 2014-2020: some basic facts

Alignment, concentration, simplification and result orientation

- Alignment between different ESF and other ESI Funds
- Fewer thematic priorities (includes possibility of TO11: 'Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration')
- Simplification (e.g. of standard scales and unit costs)
- Greater result orientation and guidance on result measurement

The European Structural Funds 2014-2020: some basic facts

Greater emphasis on involvement of social partners/stakeholders

- European Code of Conduct on Partnership in the Framework of ESIF
- Common Provision Regulations ESIF
- Article 6 (1) and (2) of Regulation calls on Member States to establish a partnership for each programme involving
 - Competent urban and other public authorities
 - Economic and social partners
 - Relevant partners representing civil society
- These partners should be involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of OPs
- In addition, among common output indicators is the number of projects fully or partly implemented by social partners



The European Structural Funds 2014-2020: some basic facts

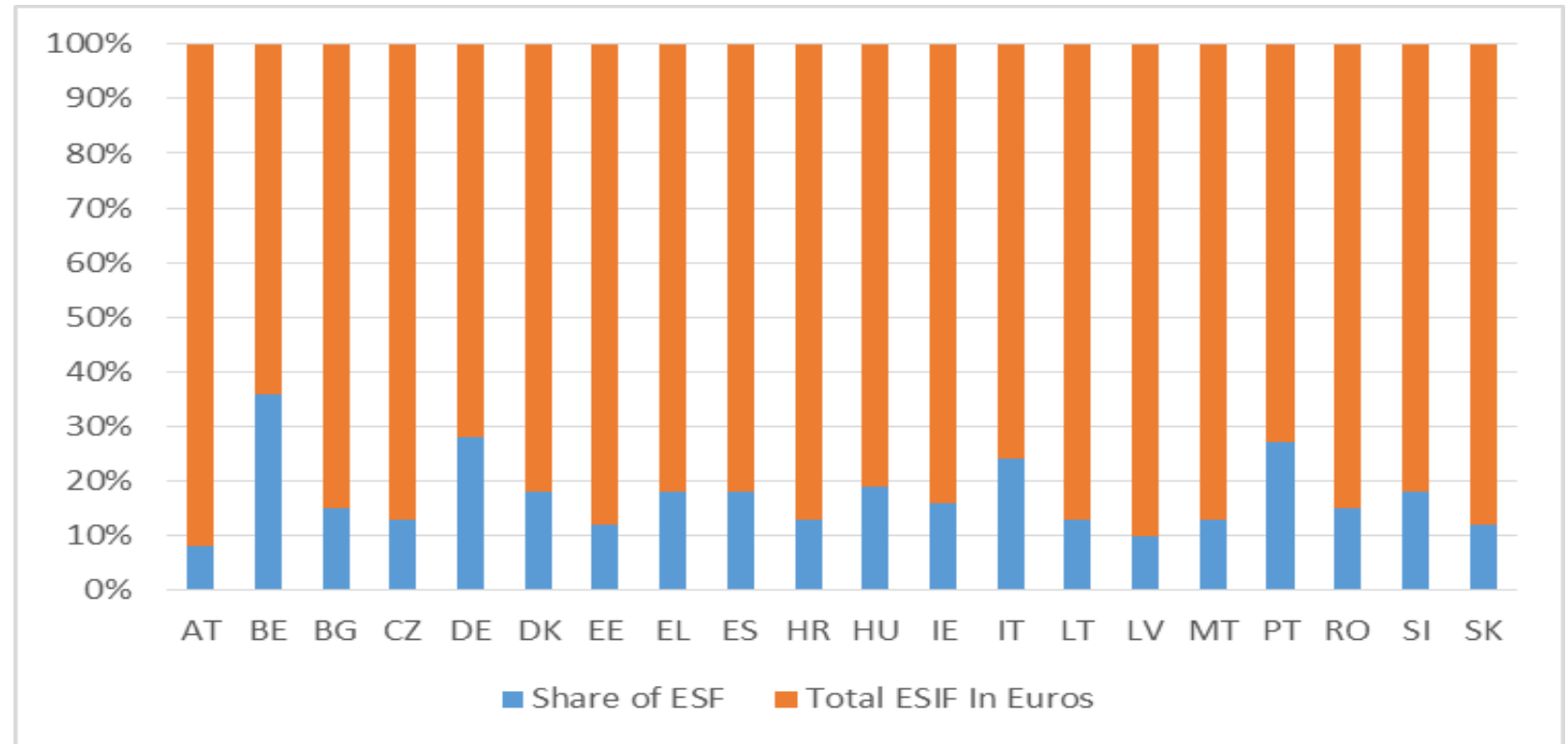
Greater emphasis on involvement of social partners/ stakeholders

- **European Code of Conduct on Partnership in the Framework of ESIF**
- ESF Regulation
 - Preamble (para 17) of ESF Regulation emphasises importance of social partners in good governance of ESF
 - Article 6 of Regulation calls on Member States to dedicate an appropriate amount of ESF resources to social partner capacity building 'according to needs'

To encourage adequate participation of the social partners in actions supported by the ESF, the managing authorities of an operational programme in a region defined in Article 90(2)(a) or (b) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 or in a Member State eligible for support from the Cohesion Fund shall ensure that, according to the needs, an appropriate amount of ESF resources is allocated to capacity building activities, in the form of training, networking measures, and strengthening of the social dialogue, and to activities jointly undertaken by the social partners'.

ESF expenditure 2014-20: Some basic facts:

Share of ESF in ESIF in countries studied



ESF
expenditure
2014-2020:
Some basic
facts: share of
ESF decided
and expended

Country	Decided	Spent
AT	30.4	0
BE	63.9	1
BG	41.8	7
CZ	34.2	5.3
DE	57.5	16.9
DK	34.1	5
EE	71	5.9
EL	31.2	13
ES	17.1	0.6
HR	13.1	0.8
HU	59.3	3.3
IE	99.8	0
IT	24	4.1
LT	26.8	10.6
LV	63.2	4
MT	83.3	3.3
PL	18.5	3.8
PT	41.6	4.1
RO	2.6	0.3
SI	45.2	4
SK	27.6	6

Study methodology

- Desk research
- Survey of national members of BusinessEurope, ETUC, CEEP and UEAPME (55 responses)
- Survey of social partner members of Monitoring Committees (31 responses)
- Interviews (follow up and additional)
- Progress report
- Two regional workshops
- Final report
- Closing conference
- Conference report

Implementation of partnership principle: Realised in Practice?

- Awareness of European Code of Conduct on Partnership is very high
- Partnership principle not considered fully implemented in practice in the make up of Monitoring Committees of the ESF: 60% of respondents considered it not implemented or only implemented to some extent (89% considered it fully implemented or implemented to some extent)
- Some evidence of slightly different assessments between employer and trade union organisations (6% of employers considered it not implemented at all)
- 29% of respondents considered the partnership principle to be implemented fully in practice; 56% stated it is implemented to some extent. 11% (6 respondents) argued it was not implemented at all.

Experience of Monitoring Committees: Participation and influence

- 61% of social partners always participated, while 26% only participate sometimes (13% never)
- 35% argued they always actively contribute (50% sometimes and 15% never)
- 25% of respondents consider their views are never taken into account in MCs (60% sometimes, 13% always)



Concerns regarding implementation of partnership principle

- Not all relevant partners are involved as required by ESIF regulations
- Social partners only one actor among many
- Partnership is more 'window dressing' than reality
- Size of MCs means that social partners with their limited votes cannot exert much influence
- MCs run by arm's length organisations mean that decisions are taken elsewhere
- Decision making process in MCs not always transparent
- Many important decisions already taken prior to the meeting of the MC

Good practice and suggestions for improvements

- Good practice exists where:
 - Implementation of partnership principle is enshrined in law
 - There is a national culture of active social partners involvement and this is recognised as offering added value



Good practice and suggestions for improvements

- Suggestions for improvement
 - Capacity building among social partners, including training for MC members to fully understand all documentation etc.
 - Involvement of social partners already at the planning/design stage, including calls for projects
 - Social partners to be given specific role
 - Ensure MCs are fully participatory and documents are shared well in advance to ensure meaningful participation
 - Responsibility on ministry to ensure social partners are involved in MCs of all OPs and in all regions



Awareness of availability of ESIF funding

- 80% of respondents aware of Article 6 requirement to allocate ESF funding to capacity building
- 28% stated there was a specific amount allocated to implement Article 6 requirements while 26% argued a horizontal approach is taken – significant degree of uncertainty and limited hard numbers
- 60% aware of TO11; 43% of respondents argued the OP had a specific allocation for SP capacity building under this TO (23% no, 28% don't know)

ESF support for social partner capacity building: Are possibilities fully exploited?

- Lack of coherent and comprehensive information about resources available for social partner capacity building; amount allocated significantly below 1% where figures are known
- TO11 funding (17 MS allocate EUR4.7 billion to this priority – 3.8% of the budgetary envelope) mainly used for public authorities; TA funding not always available to social partners

ESF support for social partner capacity building: Are possibilities fully exploited?

- Largely only project based funding available with significant administrative and monitoring requirements on a time limited basis – there is also some evidence of gold plating of requirements at national level
- Planning and implementation of projects is slow, so few examples have started significant activities



ESF support
for social
partner
capacity
building: Are
possibilities
fully exploited?

- Two types of project
 - Direct support for capacity building through research, training, networking, other joint activities
 - Can be directly related to ESF (e.g. Advisory Centres in DE; training in IT)
 - To strengthen capacity for social dialogue (including implementation of European level agreements), increase collective bargaining coverage and increase attractiveness for new members (advice for entrepreneurship; information exchange etc.)
 - Indirect support for thematic projects, e.g. on sector skills, health and safety, digitalisation

Reasons for lack of Social Partner capacity building funding

- Lack of Social Partner involvement in planning phase
- Lack of emphasis on this priority by EC and national ministries
- Capacity building funding seen to be mainly required for public institutions
- Lack of dedicated funding
- Lack of awareness of possibilities for such funding or difficult administrative procedures
- 51% of respondents thought that funding should have been allocated

Main priorities for social partner capacity building

- Survey findings on priorities considered 'very important or somewhat important'
 - Greater influence on decision making on European issues
 - Additional staffing related to European issues
 - Training on European issues
- Survey findings on priorities considered 'very important'
 - Greater influence on decision making on ESF
 - Greater resources linked to EU social dialogue agenda
 - Greater resources for developing social dialogue at national level

Main priorities for social partner capacity building

- Priorities and needs depend on national context and IR traditions
- Capacity building is increasing in importance, with greater emphasis on social partner involvement in European Semester process
- Need for skills development among existing staff
- Requirement for additional staff
- Increasing need to exchange information between social partner at national and European level

Main barriers to accessing and using funding

- Barriers to accessing funding:
 - Lack of suitable budget lines/priorities/programmes
 - Complex application processes
 - Lack of capacity to manage administrative procedures
- Barriers to implementing projects:
 - Heavy administrative and monitoring requirements
 - Short implementation periods and lack of continuity
 - Lack of dedicated staffing

Conclusions

- Capacity building among social partners is increasing in importance as result of quadripartite statement and European Pillar of Social Rights
- Emphasis on Partnership in European Code of Practice, ESIF and ESF regulations has brought improvements
- **However, issues remain in implementation of partnership principle and accessibility of funding is limited in many countries: Work still remains to be done**
- Not all social partners represented, seen as only 'one partner among many' and views only taken into account to limited extent; greater capacity building needed for participants

Conclusions

- Examples of good practice exist and mutual learning has significant value
- **Need for better monitoring of information on use of social partner capacity building opportunities**
- **Need for better opportunities to exchange information/experiences and good practice**
- **Still requirement for administrative simplification**
- **Capacity needs linked to (sustainable) staffing, knowledge acquisition and exchange of information**



Country examples - Bulgaria

- **Example of a more indirect capacity building - a project on capacity and skills mismatch (mycompetence.bg)**
- **An assessment of workforce skills needs at the national and sectoral level through joint action of social partners**
- **20 sector associations formed the basis for the sector skills assessments and developing skills profiles for key occupations**



Country examples – Czech Republic

- Capacity building projects supported since 2008, some unilaterally, but most jointly
- In the current funding period, four projects started in November 2015 and will run until 2018
- A joint project example:
 - the impact of and the potential for reducing working hours, with the aim to explore the degree to which working hours can be influenced via social dialogue
 - The target group are employees and employers. The project is implemented in partnership. There are 94 participants in the team which are shared between employers and trade unions
- Overall, the experience with the ESF is considered to be positive and it is likely that more projects will be submitted in a new call due in 2018



Country examples – Germany

- Both direct and indirect capacity building projects are supported
- Contact and Advisory Centres to Support social partner members of Monitoring Committees
 - Funded using Technical Assistance resources
 - Established to ensure social partners can participate in MCs 'at eye level'
 - Centres support social partners by preparing briefings on key documents and issues to be discussed, as well as providing newsletters and organising networking and conferences
 - ➔ MA's are now persuaded of added value of social partner involvement
- A joint project example: 'Directive on Continuing Training' (Weiterbildungsrichtlinie)
 - Aims to address the impact of demographic change and digitalisation
 - To provide relevant skills to the workforce and address skill shortages
 - Can also help train groups that otherwise have little access to lifelong learning
 - Run by a joint steering point where employers and trade unions work together to advice their members on accessing