



ESF Data Support Centre

Final ESF Synthesis Report of Annual Implementation Reports 2020 submitted in 2021

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ESF Data Support Centre

**Final ESF Synthesis Report of Annual
Implementation Reports 2020 submitted in 2021**

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List of acronyms

AIR	Annual Implementation Report
ALMP	Active Labour Market Policies
CIE	Counterfactual impact evaluation
CIR	Commission Implementing Regulation
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation
CSR	Country Specific Recommendations
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
IB	Intermediate Body
IP	Investment Priority
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
MA	Managing Authority
MS	Member State
NRP	National Reform Programme
OP	Operational Programme
PAX	Priority Axis
PES	Public Employment Service
SO	Specific Objective
SFC	System for Fund Management
SME	Small or Medium-sized Enterprise
TA	Technical assistance
TO	Thematic Objective
YEI	Youth Employment Initiative

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The present report has been prepared for Task 6 of the ESF Data Support Centre (VC/2019/032). It provides a summary of monitoring information reported by Managing Authorities (MAs) of European Social Fund Operational Programmes (ESF OPs) in their 2020 Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs, showing implementation by end of 2020) **submitted by September 7, 2021**. Data submitted at a later stage by Member States could not be taken into account for the purpose of this report. It covers both the measures implemented under the ESF and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). This reporting cycle covers 2020, and aggregates 2014-2020 implementation data.

This report provides input for the Annual Summary Report to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (according to Article 53(1) of the CPR).

Figure 1.1 Overview: contents of report

Scope of ESF

- Overview of budget allocations
- Changes to operational programmes since the start of the programming period

Reported progress of YEI implementation

- An overview of the progress made in the implementation, as expressed by the financial spending figures and indicators for outputs and results

Reported progress of ESF implementation

- An overview of the progress made in the implementation, as expressed by the common and programme specific output, result indicators at national level, thematic objective and investment priority.
- An overview and assessment of the performance, as shown by cumulated achievements in relation to financial allocations and quantified achievement targets, along with success rates.

ESF support to EU policy objectives

- An analysis of the contribution to the main EU policy objectives. The assessment of the contribution of the ESF and YEI to these objectives is based on the monitoring data in the AIRs 2020.

1.2 Methodology

This report is based on a total of 187 AIRs submitted on SFC2014 (the System for Fund Management in the European Union), by **September 7, 2021**. At the time of writing, not all AIRs had been formally approved by the European Commission, which means that minor changes after this date remain possible. The table below summarises the status of each of the AIRs.

Table 1.1 Number of AIRs by status

MS	Total no OP	AIRs Returned for modification	AIRs Admissible	Accepted by EC
AT	1			1
BE	4	2		2
BG	3			3
CY	1			1
CZ	3			3
DE	17	1		16
DK	1			1
EE	1	1		
ES	23			23
FI	2	1		1
FR	33	7	3	23
GR	17	1		16
HR	1			1
HU	5	5		
IE	1		1	
IT	29	1		28
LT	1			1
LU	1			1
LV	1			1
MT	1			1
NL	1			1
PL	17			17
PT	10	9		1
RO	2			2
SE	2			2
SI	1	1		
SK	2	1		1
UK	6	1		5
EU	187	31	4	152

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

In order to prepare this year's synthesis report of the AIRs, the following methodological steps were undertaken:

1. First of all, data was collected from all OPs and AIRs submitted through SFC until September 7, 2021. Data was exported from SFC2014 by the EC, including information on (1) programme architecture (Member State; CCI – the Operational Programme code; PAX – Priority Axes; IP – Investment Priority; type of region); (2) financial tables (Table 6 and 7 in Section 3.4 of the AIR), ESF common output and result indicator tables (table 2A and 4A in section 3.2 of the AIR), Youth Employment Initiative result indicators (Table 2B), and programme-specific output and result indicator tables (table 2C and table 4B in Section 3.2 of the AIR).
2. Secondly, the extracted data was assessed (addressing missing values, 'zero' values, extreme values, coherence between output and result values, unit costs, identification of measurement units) by defining rules for (1) the detection of trivial errors (gaps, inconsistencies and format errors) and (2) the detection of performance peculiarities, outliers (under- or over performance, etc.). In order to allow comparison at EU level and further aggregation and analysis, some of the data was further screened and categorised.
3. Thirdly, data collected was analysed by: aggregating financial, output and result indicators; measuring progress in target achievement; calculating success rates of individuals supported; calculating costs per output and result; benchmarking with the EU average, analysing outliers, and analysing categories of qualitative information in the AIRs.

2 Scope of the ESF

2.1 Scope of ESF budget

The European Social Fund (ESF) is structured into 187 ESF Operational Programmes (OPs)¹ for the 2014-2020 programming period, adopted by the 27 Member States and the United Kingdom². Currently, the total EU budget for the ESF is a little over EUR 95.7 billion. From this total, EUR 4.4 billion are separated to complement YEI funding, leaving a total of EUR 91.3 billion allocated to implementation of the ESF. Member States match EU funding with national co-financing, summing to a total scope of ESF interventions of EUR 133.7 billion, or EUR 138.2 billion when including the YEI. Table 2.1 below summarises the total EU budget and total ESF amount available to all Member States. The allocation of the funds under the Youth Employment Initiative is also reported here.

Table 2.1 Allocated ESF / YEI Budget (2014-2020)

MS	Nr. of OPs	EU amount (in € million)*			EU + national (in € million)*		
		ESF budget	ESF budget (incl. ESF contribution to YEI)	YEI (dedicated budget)	ESF budget	ESF budget (incl. ESF contribution to YEI)	Total ³ (ESF + ESF contribution to YEI + YEI)
AT	1	442.1	442.1	-	875.7	875.7	875.7
BE	4	1 096.4	1 160.8	64.4	2 293.3	2 422.1	2 486.5
BG	3	1 706.5	1 761.7	55.2	1 965.9	2 030.8	2 086.2
CY	1	215.3	233.5	18.1	241.8	263.2	281.3
CZ	3	3 656.8	3 670.4	13.6	4 500.7	4 516.7	4 530.3
DE	17	8 050.2	8 050.2	-	13 100.6	13 100.6	13 100.6
DK	1	267.7	267.7	-	466.5	466.5	466.5
EE	1	589.3	589.3	-	695.0	695.0	695.0
ES	23	8 953.0	10 345.3	1 392.3	12 184.3	13 822.3	15 214.5
FI	2	558.8	558.8	-	1 107.1	1 107.1	1 107.1
FR	33	5 710.1	6 192.5	479.6	9 891.2	10 550.6	11 033.0
GR	17	3 998.7	4 253.8	255.1	5 138.2	5 468.1	5 725.7
HR	1	1 944.7	2 047.9	103.2	2 194.4	2 315.8	2 418.9
HU	5	4 865.4	4 915.2	49.8	5 911.5	5 970.0	6 019.8
IE	1	416.4	484.5	68.1	832.7	969.0	1 037.2
IT	29	11 605.7	12 541.6	935.9	18 328.9	19 744.9	20 691.3
LT	1	1 237.4	1 269.2	31.8	1 449.2	1 486.6	1 518.4
LU	1	89.7	89.7	-	109.8	109.8	109.8
LV	1	668.3	697.3	29.0	786.2	820.4	849.4
MT	1	245.8	245.8	-	279.5	279.5	279.5
NL	1	730.7	730.7	-	1 334.9	1 334.9	1 334.9
PL	17	12 874.3	13 144.0	269.7	15 148.9	15 466.2	15 735.8
PT	10	7 445.0	7 670.1	225.2	8 955.2	9 220.1	9 445.3
RO	2	4 622.4	4 773.5	151.1	5 438.6	5 616.4	5 768.6
SE	2	949.5	993.7	44.2	1 671.1	1 759.4	1 803.6
SI	1	732.0	741.2	9.2	911.7	923.2	932.4
SK	2	2 873.8	2 959.9	86.1	3 394.2	3 495.5	3 581.7
UK	6	4 722.0	4 907.3	185.3	8 533.0	8 886.0	9 064.9
EU28	187	91 268.1	95 737.7	4 466.8	127 740.3	133 716.5	138 193.9

* Includes Technical assistance

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

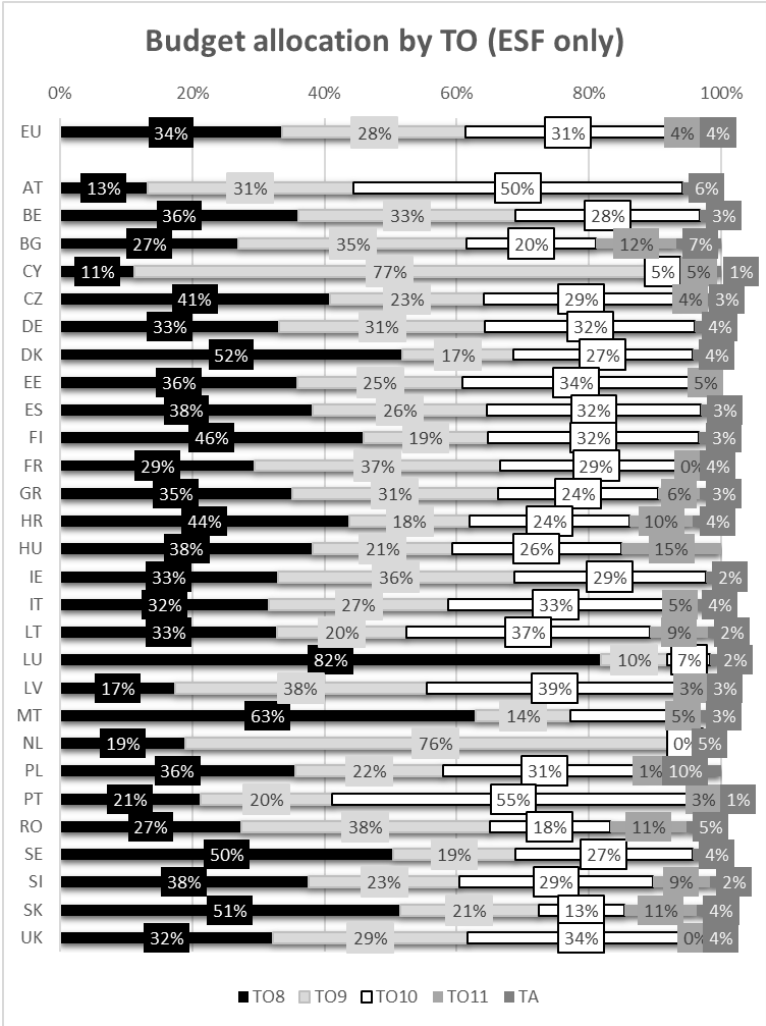
¹ These include 3 programmes fully dedicated to technical assistance, whose direct aim is not the delivery of policy results (thus not contributing significantly to achievements in terms of ESF common indicators).

² Under the terms of the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement, the UK is eligible for its full allocation of ESF from the 2014-20 budget cycle. Like all 27MS, it remains allowed to submit claims for projects under the 2014-2020 programmes until 2023.

³ This total sums the total amounts for the ESF, the total amounts for the YEI funded by ESF and the dedicated budget for the YEI (EU amount).

To better understand the priorities chosen by Member States within these overall budgets, the figure below summarises the share of ESF investments across all analysed OPs in the EU for the four ESF-relevant Thematic Objectives.

Figure 2.1 ESF allocation to thematic objectives



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

The figure shows how Member States have in some cases made specific choices in the programming of the ESF. In the Netherlands for instance, 76% of the budget is dedicated to Social Inclusion (Thematic Objective 9), compared to the legally required minimum of 20% in Lithuania⁴. In Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg and Croatia the latest approved version of the OP allocated less than 20% to social inclusion objectives, which can happen in specific cases where there are specific priority axes with social innovation or transnational cooperation measures.

The importance of employment objectives in Luxembourg (82%), Malta (63%), Denmark (52%), Slovakia (51%), and Sweden (50%) also stands out, for instance in comparison to Cyprus (10%), Austria (13%), Latvia (17%), and the Netherlands (19%).

2.2 Coronavirus response

The European Commission has responded to the coronavirus pandemic and its economic fallout with a number of initiatives that have implications for the implementation of the ESF.

⁴ As required by Article 4 of the ESF Regulation (2013/1304).

- In March 2020, the **Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative** (CRII) was launched. The initiative actively promotes continued investments by mobilising available cash reserves in the European Structural and Investments Funds, to fight the crisis⁵. By frontloading payment allocations, it seeks to increase the liquidity necessary to support additional actions as quickly as possible and where these are most needed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The European Commission followed up on the first package in April through the **Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative plus (CRII+)**. It complements the earlier package through additional flexibility in programming. It allows transferring funds across the three cohesion policy funds (the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, and Cohesion Fund) and across the different categories of regions. In addition, it adds flexibility when it comes to the rules around thematic concentration, and introduces the possibility of a 100% EU co-financing rate for crisis-related measures financed through cohesion policy programmes for the accounting year 2020-2021. The purpose of this added flexibility is to enable unspent resources to be directed where they are most needed, thus ensuring that EU funding can be used with maximum flexibility and speed, while minimising the administrative burden.
- After these two rapid-response crisis measures, the European Commission launched a comprehensive recovery plan termed **REACT-EU** in May 2020, which played a key role in equipping the European Structural and Investment Funds with the means to support additional measures. It was approved by the Council and the European Parliament in December 2020, and introduced a total of EUR 50.6 billion as additional EU budget resources to existing cohesion policy programmes for the years 2021 and 2022⁶. This funding will be available to Member States until the end of 2023. It further expands the previous Corona response packages and **provides new funding to bridge the gap** between the immediate emergency response in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its social consequences and the long-term recovery.

Each of these packages of measures serves to increase the flexibility in programming, redirect resources to where these are most needed and introduce new priorities under the heading of fighting the pandemic. In response, Member States have the possibility of carrying out a substantial review of their ESF operational programmes, including the shifting of budgets, applying new provisions for co-financing rates, and introducing new output and result indicators and targets.

As for the REACT-EU initiative, the additional resources provided are dedicated to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) - as well as the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). Because of the possibility to allocate to various funds and the possibility to apply flexible co-financing rules, the exact scope of this budget increase for ESF/YEI cannot be determined before all amendments to ESF operational programmes (OPs) have been approved.

Additional funds made available through REACT-EU can be allocated to new dedicated priority axes, or to strengthen existing priority axes and interventions, which are not separately identifiable as such. Revisions permitted through the flexibility rules introduced

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2020/460 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 March 2020 amending Regulations (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013 and (EU) No 508/2014 as regards specific measures to mobilise investments in the healthcare systems of Member States and in other sectors of their economies in response to the COVID-19 outbreak (Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative).

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2020/2221 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 December 2020 amending Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 as regards additional resources and implementing arrangements to provide assistance for fostering crisis repair in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its social consequences and for preparing a green, digital and resilient recovery of the economy (REACT-EU), OJ L 437, 28.12.2020, p. 30–42.

under CRII/CRII+ are also not always separately identifiable at the aggregate level. Therefore, an estimation of the concrete budget effects of REACT-EU can only be done by comparing Operational Programmes before and after programme amendments are introduced⁷. Table 2.2 below presents the results of this comparison and highlights the changes in budget allocation between the latest approved versions of the OPs and those approved before COVID-19 struck (OPs 2019)

Table 2.2 below shows that an overall increase in ESF/YEI funds of EUR 7.7 billion can likely be attributed to the coronavirus response package so far. No major changes were observed for YEI programmes. The most substantial increases in budgets are recorded so far in Spain (EUR 2.0 billion), Italy (EUR 1.4 billion) and Slovakia (EUR 0.9 billion), but it is reminded once more that only around half of the programmes seems to have completed their reprogramming effort. The largest *relative* budget increases so far can be seen in Luxembourg (an addition of EUR 70 million or 63% of the total budget), Malta (EUR 147 million or 53%), Cyprus (EUR 65 million, 23%) and the Netherlands (EUR 304 million, 23%). The budget increases identified in this table include both *fresh funds* made available through REACT-EU, as well as existing budgets from ERDF that may have shifted towards ESF under the flexibility rules introduced by CRII+. Table 2.3 suggests reductions of budgets in Ireland and the United Kingdom, but these do not yet include REACT-EU amendments. Similarly, the table suggests that no such programme amendments have yet been approved in Austria (0% increase), Poland (0%), Romania (0%), Slovenia (1%), Estonia (2%), France (2%), Greece (2%), and Lithuania (2%).

Table 2.2 Development of OPs over time (2020-2021), since CRII(+)

Comparing OP 2019 against latest approved version OP (as of September 2021)										
(x€1,000)	Total ESF/YEI - OP2019 (baseline)	TO08 - YEI (incl ESF share to YEI)	TO08 - ESF	TO09 - ESF	TO10 - ESF	TO11 - ESF	TA - ESF	Total changes - ESF/YEI	% increase	
AT	€ 875 739	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	0%	
BE	€ 2 367 162	€ -	€ 67 117.5	€ 34 336.4	€ 11 002.4	€ -	€ 6 853.4	€ 119 309.7	5%	
BG	€ 1 856 427	€ -188.3	€ 37 791.2	€ 166 169.9	€ 25 596.6	€ -	€ -	€ 229 745.9	11%	
CY	€ 216 321	€ -	€ -	€ 65 000.0	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ 65 000.0	23%	
CZ	€ 4 232 156	€ -	€ 287 710.5	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ 10 429.1	€ 298 139.6	7%	
DE	€ 12 531 930	€ -	€ 328 052.7	€ 64 891.3	€ 157 534.5	€ -	€ 18 214.7	€ 568 693.2	4%	
DK	€ 410 810	€ -	€ 53 709.6	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ 1 933.5	€ 55 643.1	12%	
EE	€ 682 235	€ -	€ 9 000.0	€ 3 760.0	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ 12 760.0	2%	
ES	€ 13 240 596	€ -	€ 914 599.5	€ 401 278.4	€ 616 089.5	€ -	€ 41 983.8	€ 1 973 951.1	13%	
FI	€ 1 036 526	€ -	€ 39 398.9	€ 8 104.3	€ 20 395.8	€ -	€ 2 701.4	€ 70 600.5	6%	
FR	€ 10 798 619	€ -2 770.7	€ 65 976.5	€ 96 185.4	€ 61 727.7	€ -484.2	€ 8 210.9	€ 234 386.9	2%	
GR	€ 5 623 237	€ -2 446.8	€ -5 000.0	€ 105 000.0	€ -0.0	€ -5 000.0	€ 5 000.0	€ 102 446.8	2%	
HR	€ 1 888 910	€ -	€ 530 000.0	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ 530 000.0	22%	
HU	€ 5 707 720	€ -	€ 269 834.2	€ -	€ 42 224.1	€ -	€ -	€ 312 058.3	5%	
IE	€ 1 157 177	€ -	€ -120 000.0	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -120 000.0	-12%	
IT	€ 19 244 628	€ -10 519.3	€ -30 080.4	€ 355 214.1	€ 1 085 376.3	€ -20 460.3	€ 46 133.5	€ 1 446 702.5	7%	
LT	€ 1 481 363	€ -	€ 37 029.9	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ 37 029.9	2%	
LU	€ 40 112	€ -	€ 69 687.4	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ 69 687.4	63%	
LV	€ 825 134	€ -	€ 16 961.9	€ 60.0	€ 7 226.1	€ -	€ -	€ 24 248.1	3%	
MT	€ 132 367	€ -	€ 149 696.3	€ -	€ -6 500.0	€ 2 500.0	€ 1 437.5	€ 147 133.8	53%	
NL	€ 1 030 771	€ -	€ -	€ 282 131.2	€ -	€ -	€ 22 041.5	€ 304 172.7	23%	
PL	€ 15 781 504	€ -	€ -20 428.0	€ 35 918.1	€ -61 151.6	€ -	€ -	€ -45 661.5	0%	
PT	€ 9 176 687	€ -	€ 157 419.2	€ 2 043.6	€ 109 126.3	€ -	€ -	€ 268 589.0	3%	
RO	€ 5 768 093	€ -1 068.7	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -577.7	€ 491.0	0%	
SE	€ 1 569 091	€ -	€ 161 286.1	€ -	€ 63 993.7	€ -	€ 9 195.1	€ 234 474.9	13%	
SI	€ 919 188	€ -	€ 2 180.0	€ 11 025.0	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ 13 205.0	1%	
SK	€ 2 689 617	€ 40 804.1	€ 795 679.7	€ 178 099.3	€ -109 095.2	€ 51 146.5	€ 17 013.2	€ 892 039.4	25%	
UK	€ 9 231 277	€ 6 364.8	€ -5 495.5	€ 365 035.6	€ -503 604.0	€ -26 000.0	€ 10 101.0	€ -166 327.8	-2%	
EU	€ 130 515 397	€ 30 175.2	€ 3 812 127.0	€ 2 174 252.6	€ 1 519 942.2	€ 1 702.0	€ 200 671.0	€ 7 678 519.5	6%	

Source: SFC2014, based on latest approved versions of OP (data extracted on September 7, 2021). Amounts include EU + national co-financing.

An – even preliminary – review of these programme amendments helps reviewing the direction that the reprogramming effort is taking, in terms of specific priorities towards which REACT-EU resources are directed. Around half of the increase in budget (EUR 3.8 billion) is allocated to employment objectives (TO8), for instance supporting short-time work schemes and other types of support to workers. Social inclusion objectives also

⁷ It cannot be avoided that such a comparison also includes 'normal' amendments, which would have been proposed even without REACT-EU and the challenges offered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

received a considerable increase in budgets (EUR 2.2 billion), with most support dedicated to entities that aim to combat the effects of COVID-19, as well as the provision of healthcare services and protective gear. Under thematic objective 10, an additional EUR 1.5 billion is allocated, supporting the purchase of computers, other IT equipment, and software to facilitate distance learning. While these financial figures suggest a certain direction, a full overview can only be provided once all OP amendments are concluded.

The changes to Operational Programmes in response to CRII/CRII+ and REACT-EU are not limited to budgets, as all three Commission initiatives also increased the scope of measures and objectives that could be supported by the ESF in responding to the challenges created by COVID-19. While the programming effort is not yet complete, the choice in selecting such additional indicators helps to give another insight in the types of priorities selected by Member States so far⁸. Table 2.3 below summarises these choices across Member States, based on the suggested classifications.

Table 2.3 Reporting of COVID-19 indicators in AIR2020 – ESF indicators

MS	Nr of OP	% with COVID indicators	Actions to combat effects of COVID-19 (CV30/31/33)	Support for short-time work arrangements (CVST)	Support for healthcare professionals (CVHC)	Job maintained 6 months after COVID-19 support (CVR1)	Qualification gained in COVID-19 support (CVR2)
AT	1	0%					
BE	4	50%	x				x
BG	3	33%	x			x	
CY	1	100%	x	x		x	
CZ	3	33%	x				
DE	17	6%	x				
DK	1	100%	x			x	
EE	1	0%					
ES	23	39%	x	x	x	x	
FI	2	0%					
FR	33	64%	x				
GR	17	12%	x			x	
HR	1	0%					
HU	5	40%	x				x
IE	1	0%					
IT	29	83%	x	x	x	x	
LT	1	0%					
LU	1	100%		x		x	
LV	1	100%			x	x	
MT	1	100%		x		x	
NL	1	0%					
PL	17	88%	x	x			
PT	10	80%	x	x		x	
RO	2	0%					
SE	2	0%					
SI	1	0%					
SK	2	50%	x			x	
UK	6	33%	x		x		

X indicates that at least one indicator of this type was selected in the MS
Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

⁸ In May 2020, the European Commission issued guidance to Member States with suggestions for types of indicators which may be used to measure outputs and results related to combating or counteracting the effects of COVID-19 (see [here](#), updated in February 2021). While these are not common indicators, these suggestions follow a common logic, and Member States that programmed such indicators mostly followed the same logic and naming convention. While the tables presented in this section follow the logic of these indicators as well, we grouped all indicators (i.e. including those that were not explicitly named in line with the naming conventions) along these main categories.

The European Commission explicitly suggested investments to be directed towards short-time work schemes, support for self-employed, as well as services that help combatting COVID-19, such as healthcare or social services, or the education sector with support for distance-learning, ICT equipment, and additional training. Table 2.3 above highlights in the second column the share of OPs for which the annual implementation report 2020 already contained indicators related to fighting the effects of COVID-19 (a total of 91 OPs). In Austria, Estonia, Finland, Croatia, Ireland, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Romania, Sweden, and Slovenia no COVID-related indicators were observed. For these countries programme modifications were still ongoing.

The generic category measuring actions to combat or counteract the effects of COVID-19 may focus on either the value of actions (CV30), the number of participants in actions (CV31), or the number of supported entities (CV33), can be found in all Member States that introduced COVID-19 indicators, except for Luxembourg, Latvia and Malta. More specific categories of support were not used frequently and can be found in Cyprus, Spain, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland and Portugal for short-time work schemes (CVST), and for support to healthcare staff in Spain, Italy, Latvia and the United Kingdom as well (CVHC).

A review of the types of result indicators gives an additional insight in programming choices, with most Member States measuring the maintenance of jobs after support (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Luxembourg, Latvia, Malta, Portugal and Slovakia). So far, only in two Member States results measure whether participants gained qualifications as part of the COVID-19 response (Belgium and Hungary).

A small number of Member States also selected COVID-19 indicators that were defined for use under both ERDF and ESF, such as (the value of) purchased personal protective equipment (CV1 / CV6), (the value of) support for increasing testing capacity (CV3/CV10), the (value of) purchasing of medical equipment and increasing of hospital capacity (CV2/CV8/CV11), and finally the value of IT equipment (CV4). The results of this mapping are presented in table 2.4 below. The table underlines how Member States have generally followed the guidance quite strictly; other types of COVID-19 indicators were only used in a handful of Member States:

- Bulgaria: measuring the number of employees at risk of infection;
- France: measuring for instance the number of COVID patients cured;
- Italy: the number of people checked by the police in relation to COVID-19, as well as the use of childcare services in relation to COVID-19;
- Poland: measuring the number of PES that implemented specific COVID-19 actions; and
- Portugal: measuring the number of students per computer.

Table 2.4 Reporting of COVID-19 indicators in use for both ESF and ERDF in AIRs 2020

MS	Number of OP	% OP with COVID indicators	Purchase of Protective Equipment	Increasing testing capacity	Purchase Medical equipment	Purchase IT equipment	Other
BG	3	33%					X
FR	33	64%	x			x	X
IT	29	83%			x		X
PL	17	88%			x		x
PT	10	80%		x		x	X
SK	2	50%	x				
UK	6	33%	x				

X indicates that at least indicator of this type was selected in the MS

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

2.3 Overview of changes to Operational Programmes before the coronavirus response

The major reprogramming effort that was initiated in response to COVID-19 was not the first time that ESF/YEI budgets were increased and priorities rebalanced. Since the start of the programming period, Operational Programmes have responded to changing needs by allocating new funding or shifting priorities. Such changes occur under the influence of additional budget allocations, as well as explicit choices made by Member States due to different priorities within existing funding.

Before 2020, the main change in budget allocations was initiated following a proposal from the European Commission in September 2016 and approved by Parliament and Council in June 2017. This proposal increased the funds available to the YEI with an additional EUR 1.2 billion of European budget, to allow it to continue fighting persisting high levels of youth unemployment. By the Fund's rules this implied an extra matching share of EUR 1.2 billion of ESF funding and additional national ESF contributions as well, leading to a total increase in funds of EUR 2.8 billion in the YEI.

The particular size of REACT-EU allocations and the scope of potential changes mean that other changes in operational programmes in 2014-2019 appear relatively minor. To still be able to map developments, this section compares the changes to budget allocations for the period 2014-2020, excluding those OPs that have already included amendments related to coronavirus response⁹.

Table 2.5 Development of OPs over time (2015-2020), before the coronavirus response

(x€1,000)	TO08 - YEI	TO08 - ESF	TO09 - ESF	TO10 - ESF	TO11 - ESF	TA - ESF	Total - ESF/YEI
AT	€ -	€ -12 271.3	€ -2 556.7	€ 14 828.0	€ -	€ -	€ 0.0
BE	€ 65 861.4	€ -1 910.0	€ -792.8	€ -15 437.7	€ -	€ -3 632.0	€ 44 088.9
BG	€ 0.0	€ 40 749.8	€ 40 707.1	€ 13 391.6	€ -58 707.5	€ -22 727.7	€ 13 413.3
CY	€ 14 287.9	€ -40 901.1	€ 89 795.6	€ -17 312.9	€ 7 128.2	€ 0.0	€ 52 997.7
CZ	€ 0.0	€ -34 176.1	€ 34 176.1	€ 0.0	€ 0.0	€ 0.0	€ 0.0
DE	€ -	€ 226 251.0	€ -176 785.8	€ -81 672.7	€ -	€ -6 348.0	€ -38 555.5
DK	€ -	€ 37 588.6	€ -1 820.1	€ -24 184.0	€ -	€ -	€ 11 584.5
EE	€ -	€ -27 326.7	€ 11 457.7	€ 9 706.4	€ -2 163.8	€ -	€ -8 326.4
ES	€ 976 739.1	€ 57 039.0	€ -63 637.1	€ 453 862.0	€ -	€ 42 035.9	€ 1 466 038.8
FI	€ -	€ -971.7	€ 1 162.3	€ 2 545.1	€ -	€ 3 075.8	€ 5 811.5
FR	€ 415 629.0	€ -275 781.2	€ 122 885.4	€ -288 568.4	€ -1 132.7	€ 2 749.0	€ -24 218.9
GR	€ 192 282.5	€ 65 036.1	€ 480 565.2	€ 19 227.2	€ -42 056.3	€ -12 780.1	€ 702 274.5
HR	€ 80 481.3	€ -41 317.2	€ 14 290.4	€ 0.0	€ -14 290.4	€ 0.0	€ 39 164.1
HU	€ 0.0	€ -10 178.9	€ -53 962.7	€ 859.1	€ 17 875.4	€ -	€ -45 407.1
IE	€ 0.0	€ 68 471.2	€ -90 000.0	€ 25 687.4	€ -	€ -	€ 4 158.5
IT	€ 838 549.8	€ -840 154.5	€ 866 770.4	€ -692 807.4	€ -76 374.9	€ 26 569.3	€ 122 552.9
LT	€ 0.0	€ 151 919.0	€ 24 423.5	€ -2 508.0	€ -50 470.6	€ 0.0	€ 123 363.9
LU	€ -	€ -1 500.0	€ 2 950.0	€ -850.0	€ -	€ -600.0	€ -
LV	€ 0.0	€ -12 400.8	€ 34 186.2	€ 23 406.3	€ -310.0	€ 0.0	€ 44 881.7
MT	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
NL	€ -	€ 1 472.5	€ 4 219.3	€ -	€ -	€ 296.4	€ 5 988.2
PL	€ 37 516.3	€ -152 538.9	€ 102 703.0	€ -58 978.9	€ 25 001.2	€ 61 297.1	€ 14 999.9
PT	€ 140 123.4	€ -173 339.8	€ -200 587.8	€ 210 823.6	€ -34 530.3	€ -41 176.5	€ -98 687.5
RO	€ 98 211.7	€ -224 917.9	€ 717 432.9	€ -492 192.7	€ 12 996.2	€ -61 189.4	€ 50 340.9
SE	€ 0.0	€ 8 247.9	€ 452.8	€ -31 520.4	€ -	€ -951.7	€ -23 771.4
SI	€ 0.0	€ -7 472.3	€ 15 466.9	€ 4 825.6	€ 1 000.0	€ 0.0	€ 13 820.2
SK*	€ 12 364.6	€ 0.0	€ 0.0	€ 0.0	€ 0.0	€ 0.0	€ 12 364.6
UK	€ -61 678.5	€ 53 836.0	€ 159 933.4	€ -315 544.7	€ 49 584.0	€ 5 917.9	€ -107 951.9
EU	€ 2 810 368.5	€ -1 146 547.3	€ 2 133 435.2	€ -1 242 415.8	€ -166 451.4	€ -7 463.9	€ 2 380 925.3

* allocations are based on 2014SK05M00P001 v4.1 and 2014SK05SFOP001 v2.0

Source: SFC2014, based on latest versions of OP before REACT-EU amendments 2020. Amounts include EU + national co-financing.

⁹ An OP in Slovakia already included the first amendments made possible by CRII. For this overview, we used the latest version of the OP before these amendments.

As shown in table 2.5 above, the overall budget (EU and national co-financing) allocated to employment objectives (under which youth employment is a dedicated investment priority) increased. The YEI allocations increased by a total of EUR 2.8 billion, which more than compensates for the reduction in budgets under the ESF for the same priority (EUR 1.1 billion). The increase in YEI is particularly visible in Spain, which invests an additional EUR 1 billion in employment objectives (of which almost all is funded by the YEI increase). Greece also increased its budgets for employment objectives, both in terms of YEI allocations (EUR 0.2 billion) and ESF (EUR 0.1 billion). Italy also had increased its YEI budget by EUR 0.8 billion, but this is compensated by a reduction of a similar amount in other employment objectives; these budgets were redirected towards social inclusion. In France and Portugal, the YEI was also substantially increased (by EUR 0.4 billion and EUR 0.1 billion respectively). Like Italy, these two countries also redirected some of the allocations for TO8 priorities elsewhere, resulting in a minor budget increase for TO8 in France (EUR 0.1 billion), and a marginally lower overall allocation to employment objectives in Portugal (EUR 33 million).

3 Implementation of the YEI

3.1 Implementation against allocated budgets

The YEI provides financial support to Member States worst hit by youth unemployment, according to set percentages of youth unemployment at regional level¹⁰. Originally, YEI resources consisted of (1) a dedicated budget line (YEI specific allocation) of EUR 3.2 billion, (2) a matching ESF contribution of EUR 3.2 billion. These funds are subsequently matched with (3) national co-financing for the ESF matching allocation. The YEI specific allocation is not complemented with national co-financing¹¹. This set the total *original* EU budget allocated to YEI (YEI + matching ESF) at EUR 6.4 billion (EUR 7.7 billion if we include national co-financing to the ESF share). In view of persisting levels of youth unemployment, in June 2017, the European Parliament and the Council agreed to increase YEI funding by EUR 1.2 billion, coupled with an equivalent matching of ESF funding (EUR 2.4 billion in total). Again, this total is further complemented by the eligible Member States' national contribution to the ESF share. All in all, this means that a total budget of EUR 10.5 billion (EU + national co-financing) is available for YEI objectives, as shown in table 3.1 below¹².

Table 3.1 Progress financial implementation 2020 YEI

MS	Allocated budget – EU amount (€ million)	Total allocated budget (€ million)	Eligible costs reported (€ million)	Project selection rate (%)		Expenditure declared (€ million)	% expenditure declared	
				2020	Δ2019		2020	Δ2019
BE	128.8	193.2	226.9	117%	8	96.2	50%	12
BG	110.6	120.3	120.3	100%	-1	95.0	79%	11
CY	36.3	39.5	37.7	95%	0	25.8	65%	11
CZ	27.2	29.6	33.7	114%	5	28.6	97%	1
ES	2 784.5	3 030.2	3 928.4	130%	7	1 766.8	58%	-2
FR	964.5	1 141.8	1 389.5	122%	11	950.6	83%	18
GR	512.4	587.4	345.1	59%	-0	240.8	41%	5
HR	206.3	224.5	214.9	96%	0	177.6	79%	13
HU	99.5	108.3	92.7	86%	-7	92.7	86%	-17
IE	136.3	204.4	204.4	100%	0	180.5	88%	18
IT	1 880.2	2 362.4	1 773.4	75%	-9	1 526.2	65%	9
LT	63.6	69.2	69.7	101%	1	69.1	100%	0
LV	58.0	63.1	66.5	105%	0	64.3	102%	0
PL	539.4	586.9	598.1	102%	-5	550.6	94%	-4
PT	450.3	490.0	543.8	111%	4	459.8	94%	18
RO	303.2	330.0	42.7	13%	-0	6.0	2%	0
SE	88.3	132.5	124.4	94%	-1	112.9	85%	5
SI	18.4	20.7	21.0	101%	-0	18.6	90%	-1
SK	172.3	187.5	308.4	165%	11	166.1	89%	19
UK	370.6	532.0	393.1	74%	-3	288.2	54%	11
EU	8 950.6	10 453.7	10 534.6	101%	1	6 916.3	66%	6

Allocated budget– EU amount consists of the EU amount of the dedicated YEI budget line and the matching equivalent in ESF contribution

Total allocated budget presents the allocated budget 2020 – EU amount topped up with the national co-financing to ESF contributions allocated to YEI.

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

By the end of 2020, project selection rates confirm the focus on early implementation of YEI projects, usually only after which the ESF is used to address youth unemployment (ESF selection rates in this objective are considerably lower than YEI). This is by design, as the

¹⁰ Art. 16 ESF Regulation

¹¹ Article 22(3) ESF Regulation

¹² This total combines the EU amount of the dedicated YEI budget line, with the matching ESF share (EU contribution) and national co-financing to this matching ESF share.

European Commission actively focused on frontloading YEI resources and enabling Member States in using the YEI to fight youth unemployment. On average, over 100% of the total budget is already reported as eligible costs, with twelve out of the twenty Member States already reporting costs above 100%.¹³ The reported eligible costs in Romania (13%), Greece (59%), and the United Kingdom (74%) have remained behind the EU average over the past years and have all three remained stable in comparison to 2019. Whereas Romania had mentioned a variety of structural features that affected its implementation of the YEI, it currently reports that the considerably lower number of NEETs aged 15-24 years old in the country makes it difficult to reach this target group. To help speed up implementation, the MA responded by broadening the scope to also include 25-29 years old. The Greek managing authority for the YEI does not specify particular bottlenecks in implementation. It mentions that the pandemic had affected both programming and implementation of the YEI, but does not further specify how or what consequences can be attributed to the pandemic, nor how the issue will be addressed with the YEI specifically. For the UK, the English managing authority reports that, after a number of years facing difficulties implementing YEI programmes due to falling unemployment rates, the number of NEETs went up by a record number in 2020, after the economic fallout of COVID-19 related lockdowns. Particularly, young persons in the 16-19 age group face difficult prospects on the labour market. Despite the increased urgency, the lockdown also created challenges for the implementation of YEI projects. As the Managing Authority has restarted implementation of these projects, it has moved budgets from more developed to transition regions, as part of the added flexibility under CRII/CRII+. However, it also reports that another request to move funds to regions with the highest unemployment rates was rejected by the European Commission.

3.2 Outputs – YEI

This section assesses the number of participations reached by the YEI by the end of 2020¹⁴ and the participants' distribution by their personal characteristics. Further information and the possibility to compare such characteristics across programmes, Member States and regions are provided in the dashboard, which is available online¹⁵. The figure shows that since 2018 the number of reported participations has been increasing steadily, after considerable increases in 2016-2018. A total of 3.4 million participations are reported by the end of 2020. Since 2018, all MSs show a certain level of participations, including Romania. As can be expected, given their larger programmes and number of potential NEETs to be reached, Spain, France and Italy are catering for more than half of all participations.

¹³ Eligible costs reported will undergo a process of certification and declaration to the EC later, after which it is decided which of them are fully certified. Because not all costs tend to be fully certified, MSs tend to aim at reporting eligible costs slightly above 100%.

¹⁴ The monitoring data does not allow differentiating between unique participants and individuals who participated in ESF/YEI multiple times. Throughout this report, the number of participations is reported, which means that an individual that participates in multiple interventions is also counted multiple times.

¹⁵ See <https://ec.europa.eu/sfc/en/community/document/esf-implementation-dashboard>

Table 3.2 Total number of YEI participations (measured by ESF common indicators) per MS cumulative (compared to earlier years)

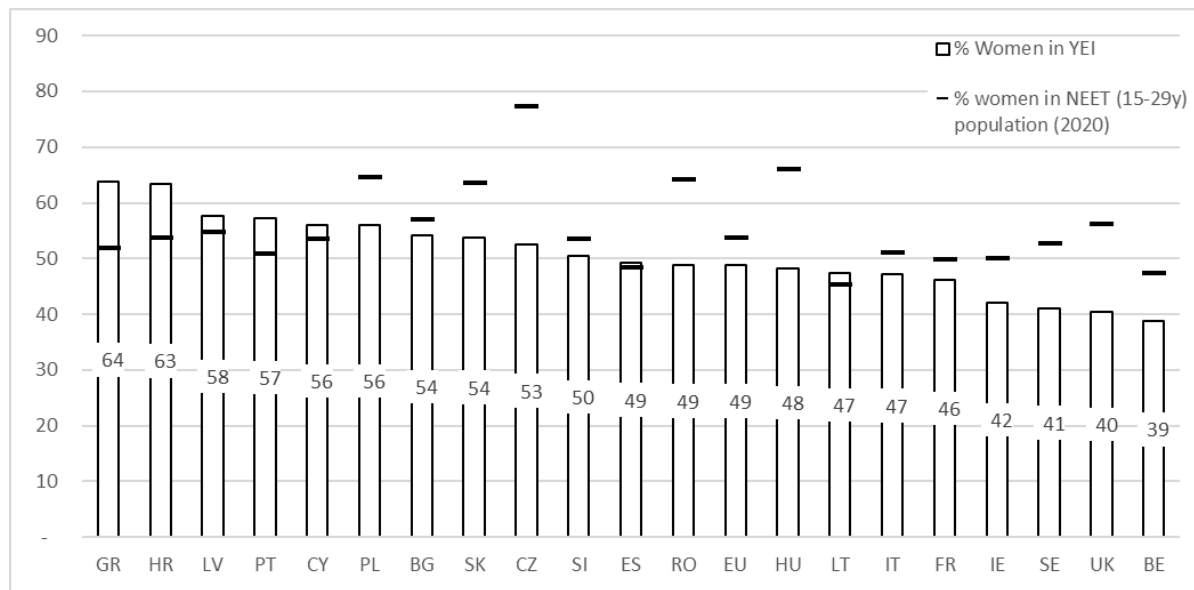
MS	Cumulative until 2014	Cumulative until 2015	Cumulative until 2016	Cumulative until 2017	Cumulative until 2018	Cumulative until 2019	Cumulative until 2020
BE	5 307	27 638	56 224	89 394	134 692	162 780	190 440
BG	-	4 735	26 538	38 341	51 426	64 217	74 439
CY	1 100	1 651	2 219	4 021	5 133	5 652	6 232
CZ	-	-	199	2 344	4 059	5 482	5 710
ES	69 613	177 412	358 722	610 169	832 674	971 930	1 041 008
FR	38 533	173 842	298 968	425 945	558 158	630 164	652 898
GR	28 923	40 078	46 514	57 250	64 162	67 610	69 248
HR	1	12 423	23 225	32 296	37 857	38 621	38 621
HU	-	19 557	35 590	40 079	40 089	40 089	40 089
IE	1 729	2 733	4 609	10 479	11 843	11 869	11 869
IT	19 203	201 566	332 301	438 060	495 738	548 398	571 698
LT	-	-	11 420	44 236	61 582	61 826	61 826
LV	4 953	10 568	18 346	25 156	29 035	29 035	29 035
PL	4 414	74 277	151 555	229 885	268 366	278 364	281 710
PT	51 086	60 103	62 147	66 503	74 520	82 420	82 508
RO	-	-	-	-	1 268	2 138	6 099
SE	856	6 490	16 792	26 843	29 039	31 762	33 278
SI	-	38	2 896	2 950	2 950	2 950	2 950
SK	9	2 897	14 814	44 379	85 007	111 283	116 273
UK	2	2 685	21 227	58 333	77 605	91 363	99 635
EU	225 729	818 693	1 484 306	2 246 663	2 865 203	3 237 953	3 415 566

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

At EU level, the share of women among all YEI participations is 49%. In view of the general overrepresentation of women in the population that is neither in employment nor education (NEET) at EU level (53.8% in 2020, for those 15-29 year old), this means that young men are slightly overrepresented in the YEI participation¹⁶. Only in some Member States the share of women in YEI participations actually exceeds the overall share of women in the young NEETs population (Croatia, Greece, Latvia, Portugal, Lithuania); in all other Member States, the share of women in YEI participations is lower than what could be expected based on the share of young women in the overall NEET population. YEI interventions in Croatia predominantly reached young women (63%, against 54% of young NEETs that are women), as well as in Greece (64% women, against 52% in the young NEET population). In Belgium, on the other end of the scale, youth unemployment initiatives reached the smallest share of women (39%, against 48% women in its NEETs population). These substantial gender disparities in YEI participation across the EU appear to be the result of programmes' focus on fighting unemployment, as opposed to mobilising inactive women.

¹⁶ Based on Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (LFSI_NEET_Q), 2020, Q4. Young people neither in employment nor in education and training, individuals 15-29 year old (seasonally adjusted).

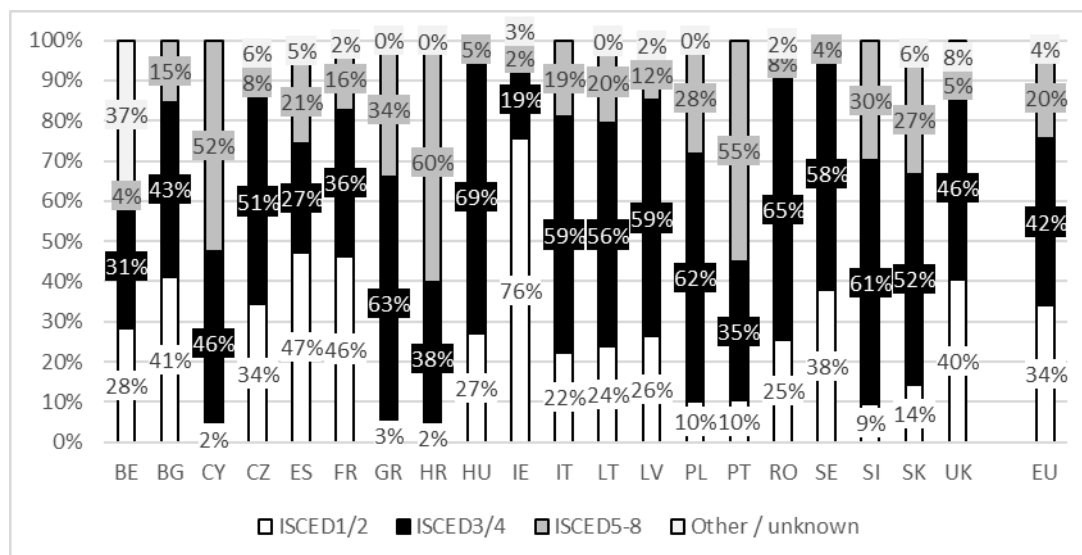
Figure 3.1 Relative share (%) of (fe)male participation across Member States over 2014-2020 YEI



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021), Eurostat data on NEETs.

Figure 3.2 below shows the substantial differences in types of target groups addressed by YEI programmes in different Member States. YEI targets predominantly youth at ISCED level 1 and 2 in Ireland (76%), and around half of participating young people in Spain (47%) and France (46%). On the other hand, in Greece (3%), Croatia (2%), and Cyprus (2%) the share of young people at this education level is only marginal. YEI programmes in Cyprus, Croatia and Portugal reached predominantly higher education youth (52%, 60% and 55% respectively).

Figure 3.2 Relative share (%) of participation in different ISCED levels across Member States over 2014-2020 YEI



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

3.3 Results – YEI

This section explores the results reported for the 35 YEI programmes across the twenty Member States where the YEI is active. Table 3.3 presents an overview of the total results achieved by the YEI in each MS, measured by the ESF common result indicators. It also presents the number of disadvantaged participants that reached a positive result, and the share of disadvantaged participants with positive results compared to the total number of participants with positive results. A number of Member States do not (yet) report YEI results for all ESF common indicators, despite reporting progress in YEI indicators (confer table 3.5 for Hungary, Italy, and Slovenia). No explanations were provided by managing authorities in their AIRs for this incomplete reporting.

Table 3.3 Overview of common indicators for immediate results by Member State until 2020 (YEI-funded interventions only)

MS	Result immediately after intervention						
	All results					Disadvantaged	
	Active in Job search	Entered education	Received qualification	Entered employment	Total	Any result	% of all results
BE	1 881	16 311	7 151	7 096	32 439	5 287	16%
BG	2 955	749	14 225	14 599	32 528	5 939	18%
CY	-	93	998	1 477	2 568	189	7%
CZ	87	170	2 207	2 138	4 602	1 071	23%
ES	24 249	42 259	214 636	334 255	615 399	100 979	16%
FR	37 219	74 389	39 630	190 326	341 564	116 933	34%
GR	-	1 414	14 791	7 308	23 513	6 207	26%
HR	-	187	1 061	14 450	15 698	247	2%
HU	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IE	387	4 148	3 894	1 968	10 397	2 808	27%
IT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LT	3 615	8 908	9 728	21 405	43 656	588	1%
LV	91	362	7 594	6 936	14 983	3 583	24%
PL	2 911	3 582	34 315	202 083	242 891	116 263	48%
PT	57	1 044	-	46 124	47 225	480	1%
RO	93	806	1 093	501	2 493	905	36%
SE	582	6 013	1 841	13 665	22 101	10 602	48%
SI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SK	10	123	16	31 434	31 583	19 630	62%
UK	1 208	12 833	5 770	18 631	38 442	20 490	53%
Total YEI	75 345	173 391	358 950	914 396	1 522 082	412 201	27%

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Table 3.4 below provides an overview of the reported longer-term results, capturing effects six months after a participant has left the operation. The table shows a number of inconsistencies with other data reported; Italy and Slovenia for instance report results six months after the intervention, even though no short-term results are reported. Hungary continues without results reported, despite its reported results in table 3.5. In Slovakia, more disadvantaged people are reported to have entered employment than the total number of participants that entered employment. Continuing revisions of the AIRs offer the possibility to address these inconsistencies.

Table 3.4 Overview of common indicators for long-term results by Member State until 2020 (YEI only)

MS	Six months after intervention				
	All results			Disadvantaged	
	Entered employment	Better LM position	Total	Entered employment	% of all that entered employment
BE	66 377	-	66 377	9 072	14%
BG	27 440	-	27 440	5 353	20%
CY	1 389	993	2 382	40	3%
CZ	3 473	-	3 473	265	8%

MS	Six months after intervention				
	All results			Disadvantaged	
	Entered employment	Better LM position	Total	Entered employment	% of all that entered employment
ES	178 226	10	178 236	40 946	23%
FR	219 240	4 212	223 452	97 744	45%
GR	17 518	-	17 518	2 238	13%
HR	28 486	-	28 486	1 640	6%
HU	-	-	-	-	-
IE	845	197	1 042	206	24%
IT	183 310	-	183 310	-	0%
LT	9 158	-	9 158	-	0%
LV	12 531	1 725	14 256	3 669	29%
PL	199 622	-	199 622	134 951	68%
PT	41 966	-	41 966	438	1%
RO	1 328	280	1 608	120	9%
SE	11 752	-	11 752	5 039	43%
SI	34	-	34	-	0%
SK	28 446	-	28 446	35 301	124%
UK	15 640	-	15 640	10 160	65%
Total YEI	1 046 781	7 417	1 054 198	347 182	33%

Indicator CR08 targets people over 54 years of age and is therefore not relevant from the perspective of the YEI. Therefore it is not included in this table

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

The table below shows the total aggregation per Member State and at EU level for each common YEI result indicator (as defined in Annex II of the ESF regulation). It also reports on the total number of female participants that have been supported, along with the target achievement per type of YEI indicator. The table below shows that:

- **The young unemployed:** Almost 1.9 million unemployed persons completed a YEI intervention, which amounts to over half the total YEI participations (3.4 million participations counted for YEI interventions, as reported in section 3.2 above). This equals on average 81% of all the target values set for this indicator. Note that many participations may continue to be supported at the moment of measurement and an additional 0.4 million inactive completed the intervention (see table 3.6 below). A total of 0.9 million unemployed persons received an offer after completing the intervention (with an average target achievement of 70%), while 1.4 million unemployed were in education or training, gained a qualification or were in employment (92 % of the target achievement).
- **The long-term young unemployed:** Almost 0.6 million long-term unemployed completed the YEI intervention (83 % of target achievement), while 0.2 million received an offer (67 % of target achievement), and 0.4 million persons were activated into education or training, gained a qualification or were in employment (90 % of target achievement).

Table 3.5 Total YEI common indicators for results, aggregated by Member State

	Unemployed participants			Long-term unemployed participants		
	who completed the YEI-supported intervention	who received an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving	in education / training, gain a qualification, or in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving	who completed the YEI-supported intervention	who received an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving	in education / training, gain a qualification, or are in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving
BE	47 034	6 324	12 636	29 104	1 629	4 037
BG	27 657	1 500	26 517	7 919	227	4 151
CY	3 824	548	3 132	685	400	418

	Unemployed participants			Long-term unemployed participants		
	who completed the YEI-supported intervention	who received an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving	in education / training, gain a qualification, or in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving	who completed the YEI-supported intervention	who received an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving	in education / training, gain a qualification, or are in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving
CZ	4 586	460	3 829	314	122	234
ES	516 684	181 403	481 340	91 405	24 547	93 433
FR	360 363	248 386	236 309	96 201	60 386	56 427
GR	59 503	13 149	22 506	46 630	9 465	14 331
HR	34 036	18 265	21 407	-	-	-
HU	30 456	39 196	29 237	7 652	9 602	6 992
IE	2 631	38	2 744	1 093	1	1 328
IT	321 423	56 246	159 215	166 348	29 625	69 844
LT	42 620	24 571	32 742	4 494	4 756	6 587
LV	16 171	12 050	8 325	3 487	4 618	3 345
PL	222 331	158 755	203 934	86 937	64 143	76 315
PT	66 622	50 956	46 792	6 026	4 761	4 510
RO	2 474	1 668	1 219	952	857	554
SE	5 960	1 335	17 120	1 835	409	4 112
SI	130	118	-	41	134	-
SK	102 411	39 055	41 137	14 310	7 322	10 446
UK	31 824	18 285	22 870	12 349	6 906	8 598
Total YEI	1 898 740	872 308	1 373 011	577 782	229 910	365 662
<i>Target achievement (weighed)</i>	81%	70%	92%	83%	67%	90%
<i>No. women</i>	972 214	457 075	694 059	300 630	123 167	187 705
<i>% of women</i>	51%	52%	51%	52%	54%	51%

Target achievement was calculated by summing all targets and cumulative numbers achieved. This means that these take the distance measured in absolute numbers into account.

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

- **The inactive young:** A total of 0.4 million inactive persons completed the YEI intervention (87% of target achievement), while 0.2 million of these inactive received an offer (76 % of the target achievement), and 0.3 million are in education or training, gained a qualification or were in employment (96 % of target achievement). In comparison to earlier years the targets were substantially reduced to account for difficulties in encountering this specific target group in various Member States; targets were often set in economically more averse conditions. It remains to be seen whether in any measures in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic may call for revisiting these targets; as currently reported in section 2.3, the corona-response packages resulted in practically no additional budgets to the YEI so far¹⁷.
- Finally, a total of 0.4 million participants are reported to be in education or training after six months (target achievement of 40 %), 1.1 million are in employment after six months (99% target achievement)¹⁸, and 0.08 are in self-employment after six months (41 % target achievement).

¹⁷ This is based on an analysis of the programme amendments in the first 63 OP that were approved by September 2021.

¹⁸ The comparatively high weighed target achievement for people in employment is particularly influenced by a target achievement of 438% in the National French YEI programme with over 200 000 participations. Without this outlier, the overall EU target achievement for this indicator is 80%.

Table 3.6 Total YEI common indicators for results, aggregated by Member State (2)

	Inactive participants			All participants, six months after leaving		
	who completed the YEI-intervention	who received an offer of employment, supported education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving	in education / training, gain a qualification, or are in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving	in continued education, training programmes leading to a qualification, an apprenticeship or a traineeship	in employment	in self-employment
BE	28 725	6 731	25 443	26 443	66 372	40
BG	14 822	11 109	3 056	974	27 440	1 245
CY	-	-	-	48	1 389	13
CZ	365	225	336	1 010	3 473	263
ES	58 934	19 042	37 339	78 980	188 244	10 663
FR	70 204	48 976	44 677	75 941	218 583	4 060
GR	-	-	-	1 705	17 518	950
HR	-	-	-	4 050	28 486	975
HU	666	872	630	506	26 101	677
IE	5 158	99	4 498	359	689	439
IT	171 054	32 602	103 680	105 685	183 310	-
LT	6 763	1 692	2 049	5 767	16 678	205
LV	6 285	2 669	3 119	2 214	11 483	86
PL	21 825	19 443	22 502	72 361	199 622	57 930
PT	333	16	17	2 000	41 966	500
RO	-	-	-	14	681	34
SE	1 650	571	3 023	5 695	11 717	35
SI	-	-	-	-	34	-
SK	83	39	8	731	28 446	1 897
UK	18 791	11 814	13 262	2 559	693	2
Total YEI	405 658	155 900	263 639	387 042	1 072 925	80 014
<i>Target achievement (weighed)</i>	87%	76%	96%	40%	99%	41%
<i>No. women</i>	183 514	72 546	115 960	190 038	521 012	37 164
<i>% of women</i>	45%	47%	44%	49%	49%	46%

Target achievement was calculated for each common indicator on the basis of average progress of indicators towards their target (weighed by the number of individuals)

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

3.4 Achievement of targets

Out of the 444 common result indicators measuring progress for the YEI (annex II), a total of 386 have set a target. By the end of 2020, 359 indicators are progressing towards their final targets. The remaining common result indicators with a target are not yet reporting progress, and can be found in Belgium, Cyprus, France, Greece, Croatia, Italy, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom. It mostly concerns longer-term result indicators (results after 6 months), and a handful of cases indicators that measure more specific target groups, such as long-term unemployed or inactive persons. As such, this does not suggest that implementation of YEI in these Member States is in any way behind other Member States. Table 3.7 below provides an overview of the median target achievement of the YEI common result indicators across Member States. By presenting *median* target achievement, the values reported in table 3.7 diverge from the target achievement presented in the previous section, which are *means*. To allow an easy comparison with results already presented in table 3.6, the weighed values are presented in the final line of table 3.7.

When interpreting the target achievement as presented in table 3.7, it is important to realise that most Member States programmed the YEI in one OP (within one priority axis), and hence defined only one target for each type of common indicator. As such, the target achievement presented for all Member States, except for Belgium, France and the United

Kingdom, are the target achievement rates of *one indicator*. For these two Member States and the UK, indicators were defined in multiple OPs; in this case the median target achievement is presented. The main element that stands out is the relatively high achievement rates, often above 100% in various Member States (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia). In most cases this is a single indicator, possibly with a conservative target setting.

YEI result indicators measure the number of participants that complete an intervention (first column for each type of participant), the number of participants that received an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving (second column) and the number of participants that actually found a job, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving (other positive result – third column for each group). Remarkably, the YEI indicators that measure the third type of result (participants finding a job, continuing education or otherwise positive) also have the highest target achievement rates, except for the last column with long-term results for all participations. Inactive participants show the highest median for such positive results (124%), followed by long-term unemployed (111%) and unemployed participants (109%). When taking into account how many individuals achieved such results, the inactive also report the highest results so far (weighed target achievement of 96%). These high results for achieving positive results are remarkable, because in theory these results would be the hardest to achieve from the three common indicators (compare against 'completing intervention' and 'receiving offer'). As such, this could have been a reflection of the better-than-expected macro-economic conditions up to 2020, leading to outperforming the previously set targets in a number of Member States. Often, managing authorities were careful in using modest targets for this type of indicators, which can explain that these targets were the first to be (over)achieved.

Table 3.7 Progress towards target achievement of common result indicators that have a target value (median % of target achievement)

MS	Median target achievement	Unemployed, after leaving			Long-term unemployed, after leaving			Inactive, after leaving			All participants, six month after leaving		
		Com-pleted	With offer	Pos. result	Com-pleted	With offer	Pos. result	Com-pleted	With offer	Pos. result	Com-pleted	With offer	Pos. result
BE*	187	164	130	266	173	41	47	720	751	2140	230	881	111
BG	116	151	82	169	155	45	108	106	631	23	541	74	402
CY	60	66	22	126	54	106	110	0	0	0	5	78	4
CZ	244	183	31	383	60	39	111	235	250	517	1010	415	417
ES	43	65	39	73	68	33	82	78	43	60	15	41	13
FR*	98	86	84	106	91	83	112	48	81	163	85	134	28
GR	37	92	37	74	99	36	64	0	0	0	5	53	7
HR	54	98	151	195				0	0	0	54	197	50
HU	144	131		259	99		194	83		158		326	
IE	27	24	1	43	14	0	27	274	10	911	28	11	220
IT	73	78	35	68	77	37	57	74	37	79	65	126	0
LT	117	104	90	120	113	187	318	261	76	276	58	61	4
LV	106	125	107	74	102	225	163	93	94	94	132	169	108
PL	110	95	83	116	92	83	129	86	127	110	64	135	99
PT	113	135	113	114	157	136	161	129	7	9	8	113	6
RO	5	4	6	3	7	15	7				0	2	8
SE	81	26	25	326	30	31	307	37	54	288	114	107	10
SI	11	5	5	!	4	16						2	0
SK	159	205	219	115	171	239	238	6	9	1	20	159	89
UK*	74	53	38	61	77	57	113	93	98	114	36	13	0
EU	89	94	75	109	80	68	111	85	62	124	61	113	10
EU (weighed)		81	70	92	83	67	90	87	76	96	40	99	41

* More than one OP per Member State. All other Member States report only one target per type of indicator
Empty fields mean that no targets have been defined in that MS for that particular investment priority
0% means that no progress has been achieved towards a particular target set for that investment priority.

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

4 Implementation of ESF

4.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the key progress of ESF implementation. It first sets out the progress achieved in terms of 'input', which includes reporting on the progress in committing and spending ESF financial allocations. Subsequently, this chapter reports on the outputs of these interventions and the results achieved. Section 4.3 on absolute outputs and results summarises the key monitoring data by the end of 2020, first for the ESF specifically, and then taking ESF and YEI together for a full overview of the achievements reached. Finally, section 4.4 is focused on progress against the targets defined by operational programmes themselves.

4.2 Financial implementation progress

4.2.1 Overview

This overview gives a first indication of whether the implementation is on track. Table 4.1 below presents the key figures, distinguishing between the **eligible costs for selected operations** (based on which the project selection rate is calculated) and the **declared expenditure** (which serves as the basis for the implementation rate). The table also presents the difference in percentage points of implementation by the end of 2020 in comparison to the values reached by the end of 2019. This helps better understand which Member States are accelerating or decelerating their implementation.

Table 4.1 Progress of financial implementation - Total (ESF)

MS	Allocated budget (€ million)	Eligible costs reported (€ million)	Project selection rate (%)		Expenditure declared (€ million)	% expenditure declared	
			2020	Δ2019		2020	Δ2019
AT	875.7	830.6	95%	15	471.4	54%	18
BE	2 166.9	2 233.7	103%	15	1 061.9	49%	11
BG	1 736.2	1 618.6	93%	14	996.2	57%	15
CY	176.8	174.3	99%	11	81.2	46%	5
CZ	4 500.7	4 328.3	96%	3	2 341.5	52%	11
DE	12 549.9	13 078.9	104%	9	8 958.3	71%	16
DK	410.8	413.5	101%	12	206.9	50%	15
EE	682.2	668.7	98%	8	397.2	58%	14
ES	10 288.8	11 992.2	117%	13	4 359.5	42%	10
FI	1 036.5	1 047.2	101%	17	678.4	65%	13
FR	9 626.0	10 606.1	110%	19	6 519.2	68%	20
GR	5 038.2	5 504.0	109%	34	3 037.4	60%	18
HR	1 664.4	1 700.2	102%	33	624.2	38%	16
HU	5 723.6	5 728.0	100%	4	3 364.3	59%	17
IE	832.7	832.7	100%	-	437.5	53%	11
IT	16 969.8	14 645.3	86%	15	7 791.8	46%	13
LT	1 412.2	1 438.4	102%	27	868.1	61%	25
LU	40.1	48.0	120%	6	28.8	72%	13
LV	762.0	745.6	98%	14	354.8	47%	14
MT	168.3	129.1	77%	-28	75.3	45%	1
NL	1 030.8	1 269.4	123%	5	794.3	77%	22
PL	15 148.9	13 485.5	89%	15	7 384.0	49%	12
PT	8 686.6	8 660.1	100%	15	5 035.1	58%	12
RO	5 438.6	5 445.3	100%	19	2 538.8	47%	18
SE	1 436.6	1 270.7	88%	13	740.4	52%	12
SI	898.5	954.3	106%	9	464.8	52%	15
SK	2 987.2	3 249.5	109%	21	1 621.3	54%	22
UK	8 533.0	8 211.6	96%	12	4 039.2	47%	15

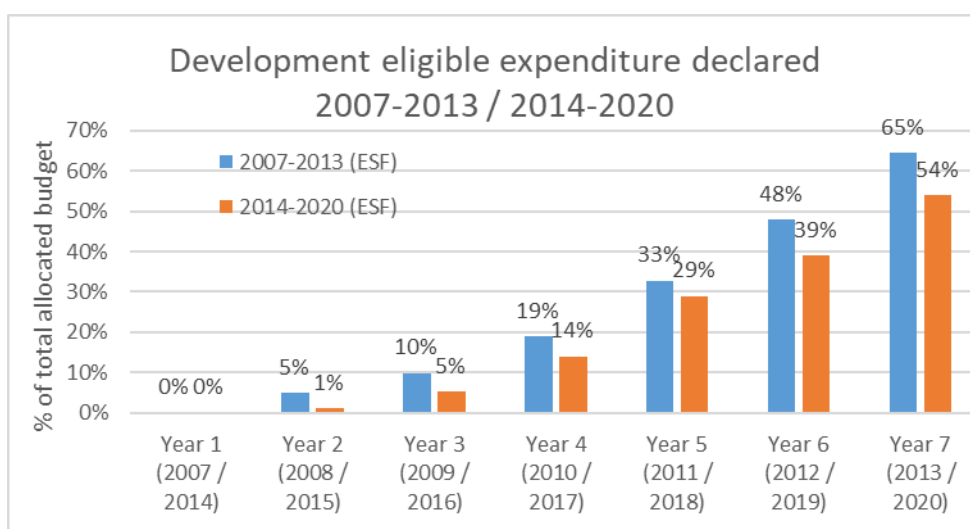
EU28	120 822.2	120 309.7	100%	15	65 271.8	54%	15
Region	Allocated budget (€ million)	Eligible costs reported (€ million)	Project selection rate		Expenditure declared (€ million)	% expenditure declared	
			2020	Δ2019		2020	Δ2019
Less dev.	59 676.5	57 727.6	97%	15	30 646.9	51%	14
More dev.	44 680.1	45 979.5	103%	15	25 661.9	57%	15
Trans.	16 465.5	16 602.7	101%	12	8 963.1	54%	13

Totals are based on latest approved version of OP by September 7, 2021, but exclude all REACT-EU allocations. Δ2019 shows the difference between 2020 and 2019 project selection rates. For AT, for instance, 15 means that the current project selection rate (95 %) increased 15 percentage points in comparison to 2019 (80 %). Negative values are reported because of budget increases (see 2.3) All values refer to the total ESF amount (EU + national share) and include TA, but exclude YEI Project selection and implementation rates are calculated at MS level; the total costs / expenditure at MS level are divided by the total allocated budget at MS level
Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

The table shows that the ESF project selection rates continue to increase, reaching 100 % at EU level already. This represents an increase of 15 percentage points compared to last year's reporting. Differences among types of regions were common in earlier years, but have almost entirely disappeared, both in terms of project selection rates as well as declared expenditure. While project selection rates are an important measure to assess the progress of ongoing ESF operational programmes, the declared expenditure rate gives a more accurate picture of financial implementation. Table 4.1 above shows that declared expenditure rates are also steadily rising, now reaching 54% at the EU level. The lowest implementation rates are reported by Croatia (38%), Spain (42%) and Malta (45%). Croatia reports that the difficulties in meeting ex-ante conditionalities at the start of the programming period continues to cascade into present-day delays.

Though overall positive and on track, it is insightful to compare implementation rates with the 2007-2013 programming period, which by this time reported implementation rates of 65%. This shows that though implementation appears to be progressing, continued attention to the implementation rates in the current programming period remains necessary to ensure that all investments can be disbursed as planned.

Figure 4.1 Expenditure declared to the European Commission (implementation rate): 2007-2013 (ESF) / 2014-2020 (ESF)



Source: AIRs 2020 – Ex Post synthesis evaluation ESF 2007-2013¹⁹ (SFC2007)

¹⁹ ESF Ex-post Evaluation Synthesis 2007-2013 - EU synthesis report (2016) <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=16862&langId=en>

4.2.2 Absorption across themes

This section explores the implementation of ESF investments from a thematic perspective. Member States allocate their OP budgets to individual Investment Priorities (IPs), which are grouped into four Thematic Objectives (TOs). To fully understand the current progress of implementation, the project selection rate (selected eligible costs) reported in the AIRs 2020 is assessed in greater detail against the allocated budgets for each thematic objective.

Table 4.2 Overview of allocated budget and project selection rate by thematic objective per MS and EU28 (in million EUR) – ESF only

MS	Employment (TO8)		Social Inclusion (TO9)		Education (TO10)		Institutional capacity (TO11)	
	Allocated	% project selection	Allocated	% project selection	Allocated	% project selection	Allocated	% project selection
AT	116.2	86.9%	271.8	97.2%	435.6	99.6%	-	-
BE	763.0	101.0%	742.3	105.7%	592.1	102.8%	-	-
BG	493.0	120.7%	542.8	83.0%	328.6	79.8%	237.0	80.7%
CY	27.2	137.7%	121.6	72.0%	13.3	225.7%	13.1	118.2%
CZ	1 834.8	89.2%	1 050.8	100.1%	1 322.3	100.7%	163.3	112.2%
DE	4 021.4	104.4%	4 031.7	105.6%	3 996.6	104.4%	-	-
DK	187.8	104.4%	78.3	94.4%	126.1	102.7%	-	-
EE	241.1	99.5%	168.8	98.4%	239.0	95.6%	33.4	102.4%
ES	3 894.8	89.0%	2 870.4	99.7%	3 214.3	166.1%	-	-
FI	468.4	97.2%	201.1	93.0%	332.8	111.0%	-	-
FR	2 836.0	104.6%	3 652.1	110.0%	2 704.7	116.7%	23.3	73.7%
GR	1 803.7	105.8%	1 499.7	121.1%	1 246.5	101.8%	319.3	106.9%
HR	430.0	105.0%	400.2	119.5%	529.4	96.4%	210.7	78.3%
HU	2 074.7	98.0%	1 239.9	114.0%	1 516.5	93.0%	892.5	97.6%
IE	274.0	100.0%	297.6	100.0%	241.1	100.0%	-	-
IT	5 798.2	85.9%	4 790.4	70.9%	4 843.7	105.0%	869.3	74.3%
LT	438.7	101.0%	283.6	111.1%	533.2	100.3%	126.4	100.5%
LU	20.2	124.6%	11.0	104.8%	7.2	133.0%	-	-
LV	124.1	95.1%	294.5	104.7%	297.2	93.8%	20.9	101.5%
MT	64.5	42.6%	40.0	104.4%	40.9	88.9%	13.5	115.4%
NL	253.5	145.3%	726.3	121.2%	-	-	-	-
PL	5 382.0	89.4%	3 398.1	90.1%	4 642.6	91.6%	227.0	69.1%
PT	1 745.2	103.3%	1 785.9	98.1%	4 790.1	99.1%	259.8	109.5%
RO	1 493.1	98.0%	2 039.6	113.0%	991.5	70.6%	625.1	118.8%
SE	616.4	88.1%	309.5	99.9%	446.1	80.3%	-	-
SI	340.7	112.4%	197.0	111.3%	266.1	95.0%	78.6	104.4%
SK	1 606.1	112.2%	563.7	109.4%	419.1	95.2%	287.8	106.6%
UK	2 746.9	99.4%	2 508.7	81.6%	2 933.9	112.1%	23.6	78.1%
EU	40 095.6	96.8%	34 117.4	98.1%	37 050.4	106.4%	4 424.7	95.4%
Region	Allocated	% project selection	Allocated	% project selection	Allocated	% project selection	Allocated	% project selection
Less	20 083.6	96.1%	14 399.3	97.5%	18 827.4	98.9%	3 581.6	96.4%
More	14 478.9	101.8%	14 732.2	98.3%	13 025.2	112.4%	700.6	90.2%
Trans	5 533.1	86.5%	4 985.9	99.5%	5 197.8	118.8%	142.5	94.9%

All values refer to the total amount (EU + national share)

Allocation to Thematic Objective based on Intervention field selected in the Operational Programme.

All REACT-EU allocations are excluded because only apply to implementation from 2021 onwards.

Table excludes all YEI allocated budgets and project selection rates, as well as ESF budgets dedicated to YEI operations. See chapter 3 for a comparison of project selection rates / allocated budgets for YEI supported operations.

Empty cells mean that no budgets are allocated

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Naturally, the same differences in implementation among Member States (see previous section) are also confirmed here and will not be further discussed. Instead, table 4.2 allows reviewing any possible differences among the thematic objectives. Overall, implementation

across different thematic objectives is relatively balanced; while education investments (TO10) report on average the highest project selection rates (106.4%), other thematic objectives are also above 90% and closing in. When assessing project selection rates by thematic objective between different types of regions, some differences become more accentuated. Particularly, operations with an education objective (TO10) have been selected more often in more developed and transition regions (112.4% and 118.8 % respectively), while the project selection rate of these types of projects is below 100% in less developed regions (98.9 %). In other thematic objectives the differences are less substantial and decreasing over time.

4.3 Outputs and results reported

4.3.1 Total outputs achieved by the ESF

This section summarises the outputs achieved by ESF projects at EU level and aims to provide a better understanding of the number and type of individuals that were reached by the ESF until the end of 2020.

Table 4.3 Total participations per MS (ESF) Cumulative until 2020

MS	Cumulative until 2014	Cumulative until 2015	Cumulative until 2016	Cumulative until 2017	Cumulative until 2018	Cumulative until 2019	Cumulative until 2020
AT	-	21 432	58 383	104 340	151 567	200 824	214 929
BE	38 362	186 420	395 364	612 467	823 767	1 056 335	1 219 241
BG	-	17 527	107 359	671 240	1 022 988	1 222 230	1 632 200
CY	1 704	4 349	5 156	6 063	6 712	7 586	8 724
CZ	-	14 304	17 244	95 776	300 394	459 775	604 794
DE	19 718	397 139	940 796	1 532 934	2 022 199	2 460 034	2 726 146
DK	72	2 589	7 288	18 589	38 889	64 144	78 291
EE	-	2 375	39 181	75 854	117 168	154 100	188 912
ES	242 635	573 425	1 422 869	2 576 642	3 802 922	4 867 574	5 231 768
FI	-	17 467	67 164	138 365	204 144	266 217	314 024
FR	193 383	851 322	1 614 217	2 494 623	3 319 628	3 902 323	4 258 077
GR	64 803	171 072	302 246	489 721	646 020	799 727	945 722
HR	-	16 103	34 391	74 381	128 754	173 813	204 717
HU	13	10 326	105 350	365 600	863 183	1 335 191	1 584 600
IE	47 220	76 359	123 875	186 337	270 129	333 169	333 169
IT	1 793	177 230	1 118 113	2 325 015	4 786 807	7 289 926	8 458 089
LT	9 480	36 289	173 743	220 689	438 574	647 166	756 786
LU	-	609	3 358	8 590	13 883	18 372	20 990
LV	-	14 707	38 083	96 330	189 194	275 011	321 944
MT	-	484	4 595	9 235	18 181	32 867	39 187
NL	44 411	158 816	269 189	420 321	504 476	556 759	589 257
PL	5 064	99 054	412 866	1 443 385	3 150 587	4 790 979	6 004 808
PT	340 498	589 138	878 124	1 271 035	1 816 677	2 213 139	2 316 520
RO	-	-	255	328	381 967	651 710	828 021
SE	-	2 062	27 554	75 204	136 339	203 643	239 473
SI	-	2	14 621	56 728	122 806	178 530	333 749
SK	18	22 435	82 116	218 164	355 618	587 313	776 931
UK	12 545	177 097	450 590	889 244	1 256 768	1 586 744	1 726 017
EU28	1 021 719	3 640 132	8 714 090	16 477 200	26 890 341	36 335 201	41 957 086
Region	Cumulative until 2014	Cumulative until 2015	Cumulative until 2016	Cumulative until 2017	Cumulative until 2018	Cumulative until 2019	Cumulative until 2020
Less	391 352	931 755	2 242 586	5 241 617	10 596 401	15 633 945	18 989 844
More	440 573	1 886 466	4 668 506	8 108 554	11 763 386	14 850 932	16 549 484
Trans	189 794	821 911	1 802 998	3 127 029	4 530 554	5 850 324	6 417 758

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Table 4.3 above shows the total number of ESF participations broken down by different types of region and shows that the ESF has reached 42 million participations²⁰. Some Member States report considerable increases in participations in the past years, such as Czechia, Denmark, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, and with particular mention of Romania, which moved from almost no reported participations in 2017 to its current 0.8 million reported participations. Relatively comparable values are reported for less developed and more developed regions (19.0 million and 16.6 million respectively), followed by a smaller number in transition regions (6.4 million). The table below presents the distribution of the common output indicators for the ESF across these three different types of regions.

Table 4.4 Totals common outputs for participations by type of region (ESF only), cumulative until 2020, by indicator

Description Common Output indicator	Less developed Total	Less developed %	More developed Total	More developed %	Transition Total	Transition %	Total ESF
Employment status							
CO01 Unemployed	4 542 727	31%	7 451 774	51%	2 554 762	18%	14 549 263
CO02 of which Long-term unemployed	1 394 707	27%	2 799 837	54%	967 096	19%	5 161 640
CO03 Inactive	8 765 133	53%	5 201 645	31%	2 579 003	16%	16 545 781
CO04 of which not in education or training	842 653	29%	1 394 778	49%	635 183	22%	2 872 614
CO05 Employed, including self-employed	5 681 984	52%	3 896 065	36%	1 283 993	12%	10 862 042
Total CO1+CO3+CO5	18 989 844	45%	16 549 484	39%	6 417 758	15%	41 957 086
Age							
CO06 Below 25 years of age	8 669 695	49%	6 138 687	35%	2 901 033	16%	17 709 415
CO06a Between 25-54 years of age	8 155 906	40%	8 910 876	44%	3 136 861	16%	20 203 643
CO07 Above 54 years of age	2 164 243	54%	1 464 133	37%	379 864	9%	4 008 240
CO08 Above 54 years of age who are unemployed, or inactive	794 833	40%	926 433	47%	256 950	13%	1 978 216
Education							
CO09 With primary or lower secondary education (ISCED 1/2)	8 700 625	42%	8 149 331	39%	3 785 890	18%	20 635 846
CO10 With upper secondary or post-secondary Education (ISCED 3/4)	5 830 548	48%	4 823 962	40%	1 447 522	12%	12 102 032
CO11 With tertiary education (ISCED 5 to 8)	3 604 830	51%	2 676 615	38%	764 530	11%	7 045 975
CO11a Other / unknown ISCED	853 841	40%	863 788	40%	419 816	20%	2 137 445
Other background characteristics							
CO15 Migrants, participants with a foreign background, minorities	1 286 555	20%	4 194 464	66%	860 080	14%	6 341 099
CO16 Participants with disabilities	966 387	33%	1 470 319	50%	504 157	17%	2 940 863
CO17 Other disadvantaged	3 160 491	40%	3 376 135	43%	1 379 221	17%	7 915 847
CO18 Homeless or affected by housing exclusion	90 294	19%	288 600	62%	88 134	19%	467 028
CO19 From rural areas	5 268 627	64%	2 099 375	25%	868 587	11%	8 236 589
<i>% of participants calculated on the basis of the sum of Unemployed (CO1), Inactive (CO3), and Employed (CO5), these 3 categories (presented in bold in the table) add up to 100 %</i>							

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

²⁰ The monitoring data does not allow differentiating between unique participants and individuals who participated in the ESF multiple times. Throughout this report, the number of participations is reported, which means that an individual that participates in multiple interventions is also counted multiple times.

Support to entities

The common output indicators also measure the number of projects and entities supported, and show, in addition to the participations, a total of 91 446 projects by social partners or non-governmental organisations, while 46 259 projects were supported that are dedicated to the sustainable participation and progress of women in employment. Another 61 401 projects targeted public administration / public services. The ESF has supported a total of 1 177 404 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) since 2014.

The number of projects fully or partially implemented by social partners or NGOs is relatively concentrated among a small number of Member States; almost half of such projects are reported by Italy. Germany and Poland are responsible for most projects dedicated to the sustainable participation and progress of women in the labour market. Almost two-thirds of the projects targeting public administrations are found in Italy (57.4 %). Finally, the number of SMEs supported is mainly reported by France and Germany.

Table 4.5 Total number of projects / SMEs at EU level over 2014-2020 (entire ESF programme)

	Sum of 2014-2017 total	Sum of 2018 total	Sum of 2019 total	Sum of 2020 total	Sum of Cumulative value
Number of projects fully or partially implemented by social partners or NGOs	33 459	36 710	11 972	9 305	91 446
Number of projects dedicated at sustainable participation and progress of women in employment;	19 633	11 608	9 024	5 994	46 259
Number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level	16 551	13 010	23 506	8 334	61 401
Number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative /social enterprises)	727 017	155 317	119 166	175 904	1 177 404

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

4.3.2 Total participation outputs ESF + YEI

This section combines the participations reported under the ESF and the YEI to get a full sense of the coverage of the two funds combined together. As reported in table 4.6 below, 49.7 million participations were reached by ESF / YEI, with sufficient information on background characteristics (such as employment status) for 45.4 million²¹. As the table shows, significant discrepancies in total values are mostly due to the lack of core characteristics of participations in Hungary (52 %) and Greece (63%); for other Member States, the difference is considerably smaller²². While it is possible that differences between the two totals are addressed in continuous revisions, these discrepancies have already been reported for a number of years, though their extent has decreased steadily (to 4% overall currently). It is important that eligible participants are allowed to participate in ESF / YEI interventions, even if they do not want to share sensitive personal information. At the same time, managing authorities and the EC have a responsibility to try to obtain as much of the background variables as possible to allow counting a participation in the monitoring system. DG EMPL's audit methodology uses 10% as a benchmark for under-reporting, above which an in-depth analysis about its causes, as well as additional efforts

²¹ Note that figures for "Grand total" reported in the AIRs are insufficiently detailed for analysis. Therefore, the synthesis report conducts all analyses on the basis of the total of 45.4 million participations, except Figure 4.3, which compares against 2007-2013.

²² Hungary shows a large variation between OPs; the Economic Development and Innovation OP reports data complete of non-sensitive characteristics for almost 100% of participations, whereas other OPs show considerably lower levels.

by managing authorities to reduce it, are necessary. Higher-than-10% under-reporting is observed in Greece, Hungary, Spain and Poland.

Table 4.6 Absolute outputs (number of participations) ESF + YEI

	ESF	YEI	ESF+YEI	Grand total reported	% Grand Total
AT	214 929	-	214 929	239 976	90%
BE	1 219 241	190 440	1 409 681	1 422 843	99%
BG	1 632 200	74 439	1 706 639	1 707 206	100%
CY	8 724	6 232	14 956	14 956	100%
CZ	604 794	5 710	610 504	610 507	100%
DE	2 726 146	-	2 726 146	2 733 294	100%
DK	78 291	-	78 291	81 265	96%
EE	188 912	-	188 912	193 908	97%
ES	5 231 768	1 041 008	6 272 776	7 312 506	86%
FI	314 024	-	314 024	326 426	96%
FR	4 258 077	652 898	4 910 975	4 886 898	100%
GR	945 722	69 248	1 014 970	1 609 341	63%
HR	204 717	38 621	243 338	244 092	100%
HU	1 584 600	40 089	1 624 689	3 124 643	52%
IE	333 169	11 869	345 038	383 616	90%
IT	8 458 089	571 698	9 029 787	9 103 897	99%
LT	756 786	61 826	818 612	818 620	100%
LU	20 990	-	20 990	20 990	100%
LV	321 944	29 035	350 979	357 220	98%
MT	39 187	-	39 187	39 187	100%
NL	589 257	-	589 257	589 306	100%
PL	6 004 808	281 710	6 286 518	7 168 313	88%
PT	2 316 520	82 508	2 399 028	2 399 031	100%
RO	828 021	6 099	834 120	834 563	100%
SE	239 473	33 278	272 751	291 378	94%
SI	333 749	2 950	336 699	336 700	100%
SK	776 931	116 273	893 204	893 207	100%
UK	1 726 017	99 635	1 825 652	1 941 755	94%
EU28	41 957 086	3 415 566	45 372 652	49 685 644	91%

Discrepancies in totals reported by Member States (last column) and totals in first 3 columns arise when Member States do not collect all non-sensitive background characteristics or when participants refuse to report on some of these characteristics

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Characteristics of participants

Table 4.7 provides information on the total number and relative share of participations per type of common indicator, showing that the share of unemployed and that of inactive persons is equal (38 % of total participations in ESF + YEI). The largest age group is 25-54-year-olds (47 %), closely followed by persons below 25 years old (44 %). This underlines how the YEI has had a substantial effect on the programming of employment interventions for young people. In terms of education level, most participants have qualifications at ISCED level 1 or 2 (48 %), followed by ISCED level 3 or 4 (30 %).

Table 4.7 Total common outputs for participations per Member State (ESF / YEI / ESF + YEI), cumulative until 2020 by indicator

Description Common Output indicator	Total ESF		Total YEI		Total (ESF + YEI)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Total participations reported (CO1+CO3+CO5)	41 957 086		3 415 566		45 372 652	
Employment status						
CO01 Unemployed, including long-term unemployed	14 549 263	35%	2 777 216	81%	17 326 479	38%
CO02 of which Long-term unemployed	5 161 640	12%	788 644	23%	5 950 284	13%
CO03 Inactive	16 545 781	39%	638 350	19%	17 184 131	38%

Description Common Output indicator	Total ESF		Total YEI		Total (ESF + YEI)	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
<i>CO04 of which not in education or training</i>	2 872 614	7%	627 271	18%	3 499 885	8%
CO05 Employed, including self-employed	10 862 042	26%	-	0%	10 862 042	24%
Age						
CO06 Below 25 years of age	17 709 415	42%	2 462 039	72%	20 171 454	44%
CO06a Between 25-54 years of age	20 203 643	48%	953 527	28%	21 157 170	47%
CO07 Above 54 years of age	4 008 240	10%	-	0%	4 008 240	9%
<i>CO08 Above 54 years of age who are unemployed, including Long-term unemployed, or inactive not in education or training</i>	1 978 216	5%	-	0%	1 978 216	4%
Education						
CO09 With primary (ISCED 1) or lower secondary education (ISCED 2)	20 635 846	49%	1 159 596	34%	21 795 442	48%
CO10 With upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary Education (ISCED 4)	12 102 032	29%	1 426 864	42%	13 528 896	30%
CO11 With tertiary education (ISCED 5-8)	7 045 975	17%	680 197	20%	7 726 172	17%
*Other / unknown ISCED level	2 137 445	5%	148 909	4%	2 286 354	5%
Other background characteristics						
CO15 Migrants, participants with a foreign background, minorities	6 341 099	15%	411 803	12%	6 752 902	15%
CO16 Participants with disabilities	2 940 863	7%	162 101	5%	3 102 964	7%
CO17 Other disadvantaged	7 915 847	19%	537 733	16%	8 453 580	19%
CO18 Homeless or affected by housing exclusion	467 028	1%	30 622	1%	497 650	1%
CO19 From rural areas	8 236 589	20%	548 473	16%	8 785 062	19%
<i>% of participants calculated on the basis of the sum of Unemployed (CO1), Inactive (CO3), and Employed (CO5), These 3 categories (presented bold in the table) add up to 100 %</i>						

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Number of participations by thematic objective and investment priority

This section assesses the reported participations at the level of individual investment priorities and shows considerable differences in participation figures between these. Most participations were recorded under the heading of active inclusion (IP 9i: 8.1 million), followed by early school leaving (IP 10i: 7.5 million) and access to employment (IP 8i: 6.7 million). This suggests that the participations are relatively well distributed across the various objectives, with lower numbers of participation in the remaining investment priorities.

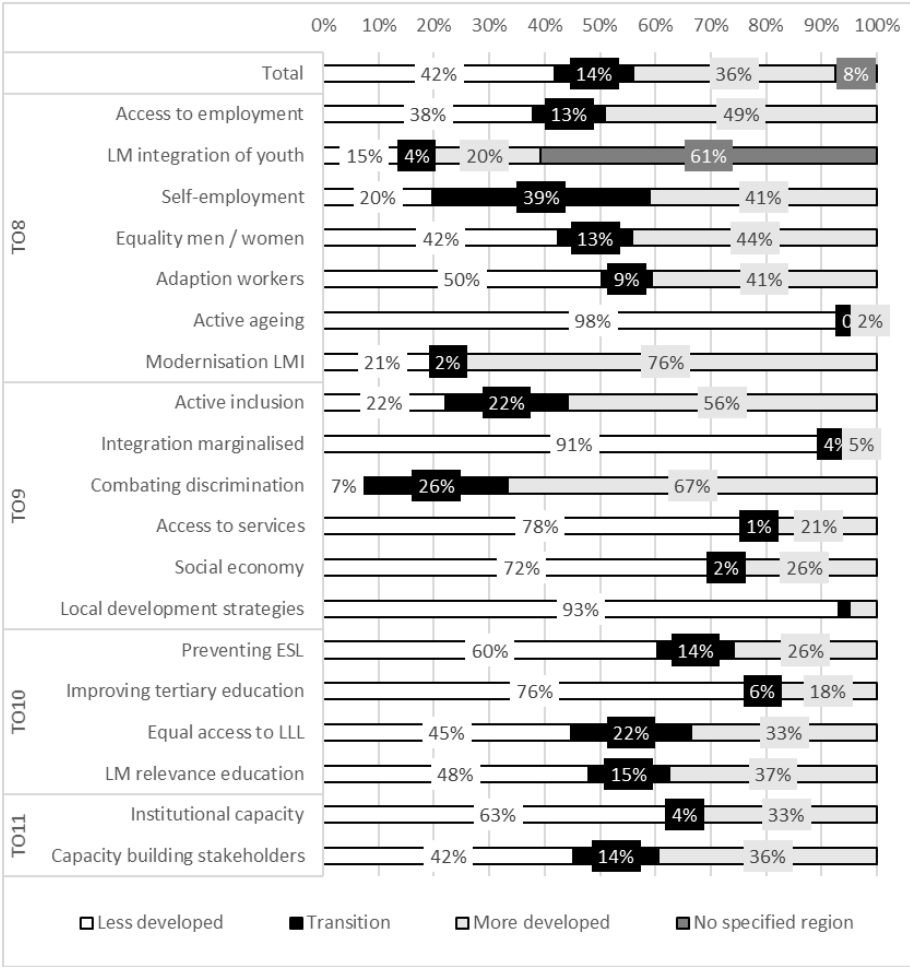
Table 4.8 Total number of participations per investment priority across MS until 2020 (sum of COO1, COO3, and COO5, ESF + YEI)

MS	Access to employment	Youth employment	Entrepreneurship	Gender equality	Adaptation to change	Active Ageing	Labour market Institutions	Active inclusion	Integration marginalised	Combating discrimination	Access to social services	Social economy	Local development	Early school leaving	Access to HE	Access to LLL	LM relevance education	Institutional capacity	Capacity building	Total	%
	8i	8ii	8iii	8iv	8v	8vi	8vii	9i	9ii	9iii	9iv	9v	9vi	10i	10ii	10iii	10iv	11i	11ii		
AT	1 952	-	-	2 035	-	-	-	91 229	-	-	-	-	-	96 103	-	23 610	-	-	-	214 929	0
BE	256 901	376 393	6 648	-	5 663	-	-	349 538	618	-	-	410	-	10 923	-	402 587	-	-	-	1 409 681	3
BG	48 359	90 175	7 005	-	87 129	-	1 293	21 716	172 083	-	180 929	5 214	-	498 904	24 380	450 233	54 428	64 791	-	1 706 639	4
CY	2 993	7 895	-	-	-	-	-	1 458	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 937	673	-	-	14 956	0
CZ	190 500	5 710	-	75 534	109 707	-	2 740	55 867	6 337	1 116	24 184	-	30 371	89 059	7 115	-	-	12 264	-	610 504	1
DE	22 204	133 266	61 896	57 497	505 430	-	-	687 983	-	535	-	-	-	480 835	14 840	229 318	532 342	-	-	2 726 146	6
DK	-	-	24 264	-	12 858	-	-	6 476	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7 310	27 383	-	-	78 291	0
EE	88 262	-	-	-	-	-	-	9 995	-	-	23 270	-	-	12 301	-	52 639	-	2 445	-	188 912	0
ES	902 847	1 054 531	453 398	170 270	83 478	-	171	1 051 563	31 258	255 258	55 032	27 576	-	869 157	10 757	793 553	513 927	-	-	6 272 776	14
FI	81 681	-	-	4 017	46 360	-	-	48 222	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	133 744	-	-	-	314 024	1
FR	494 252	704 174	267 908	-	286 323	77	10 242	2 458 217	4 844	6 451	1 829	1 723	-	119 393	3 196	534 859	17 477	10	-	4 910 975	11
GR	122 552	69 248	12 289	237 957	41 960	-	1 996	229 914	84	5 847	3 063	-	-	50 595	18 050	21 027	108 117	92 271	-	1 014 970	2
HR	20 487	52 067	-	-	-	-	16 365	43 276	-	-	14 179	993	-	-	30 450	40 368	5 321	5 908	13 924	243 338	1
HU	326 578	158 575	-	-	4 784	-	-	107 275	72 217	-	75 821	164	373	107 071	22 575	516 857	14 340	218 059	-	1 624 689	4
IE	25 672	11 869	-	-	-	-	-	66 501	-	60	-	-	-	-	50 572	190 364	-	-	-	345 038	1
IT	1 943 590	1 442 519	239	43 304	240 362	3 483	83 812	1 135 778	44 776	-	282 034	14 881	5 808	2 970 003	184 187	67 247	460 294	93 077	14 393	9 029 787	20
LT	100 606	71 246	-	-	-	-	-	15 302	-	-	227 610	25 505	20 214	197 948	27 610	75 091	-	57 480	-	818 612	2
LU	3 137	7 322	-	-	-	-	-	2 774	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7 757	-	-	-	20 990	0
LV	84 545	29 035	-	-	487	-	-	38 335	-	-	104 041	-	-	19 446	1 813	40 099	16 653	16 525	-	350 979	1
MT	4 835	4 087	-	-	-	-	-	6 576	-	-	2 537	-	-	1 754	1 093	15 032	-	3 098	175	39 187	0
NL	49 950	-	-	-	-	-	-	539 307	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	589 257	1
PL	736 939	776 973	45 378	54 106	242 888	612 373	4 334	285 201	-	-	500 076	84 359	23 338	1 453 325	352 304	373 920	664 849	75 604	551	6 286 518	14
PT	145 612	82 508	1 061	497	602 550	-	-	328 977	-	6 652	29 546	55	623	132 073	207 872	524 421	332 915	3 666	-	2 399 028	5
RO	124 446	62 827	86 569	-	47 537	-	-	-	84 784	-	25 043	8 705	138	211 717	10 828	121 865	22 561	27 100	-	834 120	2
SE	27 633	53 395	-	-	-	-	-	22 067	-	-	-	-	897	-	-	168 759	-	-	-	272 751	1
SI	32 194	21 094	-	-	-	10 388	-	8 988	-	-	-	742	-	-	-	203 562	42 382	17 146	203	336 699	1
SK	298 772	116 273	-	15 648	-	-	748	32 571	147 748	-	32 783	-	-	189 529	4 493	22 379	28 930	3 330	-	893 204	2
UK	524 880	291 105	-	3 968	-	-	-	450 212	-	-	-	-	5 152	37 429	-	452 213	60 693	-	-	1 825 652	4
Total	6 662 379	5 622 287	966 655	664 833	2 317 516	626 321	121 701	8 095 318	564 749	275 919	1 581 977	170 327	86 914	7 547 565	972 135	5 470 751	2 903 285	692 774	29 246	45 372 652	
%	15	12	2	1	5	1	0	18	1	1	3	0	0	17	2	12	6	2	0		

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

There are relevant differences in regard to the share of participations in each type of region, compared across different investment priorities. In the education-related investments and some specific social inclusion investments (IP 9ii – integration of marginalised groups, 9iv – access to services, 9v – social economy, and IP 9vi – local development strategies), less developed regions report considerably higher shares of participation than what their average would lead to expect, mainly because these operations are set up to be considerably larger in these regions than in more developed regions. At the same time, two social inclusion investment priorities (IP 9i – active inclusion, 9iii – combating discrimination) see lower-than-average participation in less developed regions (22 %, and 7 % respectively, against an average overall share of 42% of participations in less developed regions). Other priorities that seem to be considerably more often selected in less developed regions are active aging (98% of all participations recorded in less developed regions), and improving tertiary education (76% of all participations recorded in less developed regions).

Figure 4.2 Relative share of participations per investment priority and category of region (cumulative until 2020)



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

4.3.3 Total results of ESF

This section reports the total aggregation of the common result indicators for the ESF. Table 4.9 shows the immediate results of participants upon leaving an ESF-supported operation for each MS and at EU level. The table shows the total absolute numbers of results achieved for each of the types of common result indicators. Moreover, it presents the number of disadvantaged participants that reached any positive results, and the share of disadvantaged participants with positive results compared to the total number of participants with positive results. In total 4.4 million participants found employment, 7.1 million participants gained a qualification, 1.0 million participants became engaged in job searching, and 2.1 million

persons entered education. Of these results, a total of more than 4.6 million were achieved by persons with a disadvantage (roughly 31 % of the total results).

Table 4.9 Overview of the immediate result indicators, by MS and region until 2020 (ESF only)

MS	Result immediately after intervention						
	All results					Disadvantaged	
	Actively Job searching	Entered education	Received qualification	Entered employment	Total	Any result	% of all results
AT	6 543	12 561	36 051	13 439	68 594	48 581	71%
BE	8 154	119 159	114 278	185 830	427 421	126 078	29%
BG	10 873	462 206	146 885	16 481	636 445	120 493	19%
CY	-	387	1 543	3 389	5 319	342	6%
CZ	2 268	13 723	162 819	133 221	312 031	72 297	23%
DE	47 690	257 502	1 182 065	204 372	1 691 629	427 262	25%
DK	512	1 382	5 502	2 080	9 476	3 596	38%
EE	457	14 209	56 758	17 191	88 615	30 914	35%
ES	185 784	220 921	1 935 576	686 944	3 029 225	774 636	26%
FI	1 756	7 704	5 773	14 933	30 166	9 967	33%
FR	371 017	253 596	426 845	844 893	1 896 351	1 159 586	61%
GR	30 471	24 705	225 400	44 466	325 042	51 569	16%
HR	2 699	1 879	13 894	18 091	36 563	8 873	24%
HU	9 437	36 936	504 311	233 195	783 879	86 221	11%
IE	4 095	80 350	114 291	20 005	218 741	63 726	29%
IT	130 989	242 207	383 558	689 850	1 446 604	219 606	15%
LT	997	8 469	122 739	61 408	193 613	15 110	8%
LU	335	-	-	1 351	1 686	89	5%
LV	803	13 911	21 647	24 501	60 862	20 687	34%
MT	309	1 786	8 411	2 307	12 813	2 684	21%
NL	11 256	9 943	16 633	101 398	139 230	116 832	84%
PL	69 619	39 713	747 154	635 877	1 492 363	658 244	44%
PT	47 243	73 713	183 067	208 496	512 519	22 294	4%
RO	13 107	11 059	40 700	69 653	134 519	19 634	15%
SE	1 777	11 923	11 109	13 143	37 952	23 685	62%
SI	147	3 902	44 851	18 432	67 332	2 960	4%
SK	564	2 805	7 121	4 772	15 262	6 533	43%
UK	39 656	131 754	570 287	178 417	920 114	474 171	52%
EU28	998 558	2 058 405	7 089 268	4 448 135	14 594 366	4 566 670	31%

Region	Result immediately after intervention						
	All results					Disadvantaged	
	Actively Job searching	Entered education	Received qualification	Entered employment	Total	Any result	% of all results
Less dev	205 534	867 247	2 283 562	1 588 235	4 944 578	1 118 470	23%
More dev	564 055	849 406	2 831 767	2 057 936	6 303 164	2 513 055	40%
Transition	228 969	341 752	1 973 901	801 964	3 346 586	935 145	28%

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

There are some interesting differences among Member States in the share of disadvantaged participants who achieved results. For some, these are only marginal shares of the total results (Cyprus – 6%, Lithuania – 8%, Luxembourg – 5%, Portugal – 4%, Slovenia – 4%), while in others these represent the largest part of the results achieved (Austria – 71%, France – 61%, the Netherlands – 84%, Sweden – 62%). These differences also persist at the regional level, with 23% of all results focused on disadvantaged participants in less developed regions, against 40% of the results in more developed regions.

Member States have to report on progress of longer-term results (i.e. those achieved 6 months after concluding an intervention) only in 2019 (AIR2018) and at the end of the programming period. Because reporting of these results is not mandatory for AIR2020, this year's figures may not fully reflect the actual situation on the ground. So far, a total of 4.7 million participants are reported to have entered employment six months after leaving an ESF-supported operation, while 1.0 million participants that were already employed were able to improve their labour market situation. A total of 0.3 million participants above 54 years old

entered employment six months after leaving an ESF-supported operation, while 1.8 million disadvantaged persons entered in employment 6 months after leaving an ESF-supported operation.

Table 4.10 Overview of longer-term result indicators, by Member State until 2020 (ESF only)

MS	Longer-term result indicators (6 months after intervention)						
	All results			Above 54 years of age		Disadvantaged	
	Entered employment	Better LM position	Total	Entered employment	% of all employed	Entered employment	% of all employed
AT	29 067	3 044	32 111	2 872	10%	25 451	88%
BE	317 210	25 008	342 218	3 569	1%	73 068	23%
BG	27 450	129 211	156 661	4 985	18%	6 303	23%
CY	2 494	840	3 334	279	11%	167	7%
CZ	126 137	17 146	143 283	15 642	12%	43 636	35%
DE	108 942	114 829	223 771	4 295	4%	45 360	42%
DK	1 579	2 464	4 043	131	8%	706	45%
EE	18 795	2 827	21 622	4 174	22%	11 610	62%
ES	246 522	32 095	278 617	14 747	6%	110 029	45%
FI	24 765	19 499	44 264	1 935	8%	11 612	47%
FR	1 545 766	224 906	1 770 672	71 624	5%	873 045	56%
GR	104 744	36 005	140 749	4 619	4%	18 707	18%
HR	18 820	1 159	19 979	1 826	10%	3 097	16%
HU	84 385	45 443	129 828	7 508	9%	16 129	19%
IE	8 978	3 679	12 657	2 217	25%	6 313	70%
IT	1 091 082	52 832	1 143 914	88 331	8%	252 674	23%
LT	33 931	11 426	45 357	8 674	26%	4 376	13%
LU	2 372	-	2 372	65	3%	415	17%
LV	25 224	12 649	37 873	4 383	17%	11 283	45%
MT	1 822	2 007	3 829	132	7%	957	53%
NL	110 941	56 196	167 137	5 335	5%	101 503	91%
PL	475 914	69 228	545 142	24 302	5%	137 294	29%
PT	121 083	44 173	165 256	4 401	4%	3 907	3%
RO	4 367	380	4 747	284	7%	600	14%
SE	12 735	44 828	57 563	833	7%	11 698	92%
SI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SK	186	711	897	23	12%	88	47%
UK	138 633	70 794	209 427	10 832	8%	77 092	56%
EU28	4 683 944	1 023 379	5 707 323	288 018	6%	1 847 120	39%

MS	Longer-term result indicators (6 months after intervention)						
	All results			Above 54 years of age		Disadvantaged	
	Entered employment	Better LM position	Total	Entered employment	% of all employed	Entered employment	% of all employed
Less dev	1 116 933	372 477	1 489 410	85 223	8%	239 718	21%
More dev	2 780 987	483 277	3 264 264	171 147	6%	1 252 318	45%
Transition	786 024	167 625	953 649	31 648	4%	355 084	45%

The reporting of longer-term result indicators is only mandatory in 2019 and at the end of the programming period. The reported values are therefore not always comparable across Member States and may lag behind the actual situation on the ground

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Most results reported by Member States were recorded for TO10, mainly due to the high number of people that gained a qualification upon leaving (4.3 million). ESF support through access to employment (TO8) most often resulted in entering the labour market (2.8 million participants), which reinforces its primary objective. ESF support with attention for social inclusion (TO9) also reports most results for individuals finding a job (1.2 million). The lower aggregated achievements shown for investment in institutional capacity (TO11) must be interpreted in light of the considerably lower financial allocations with respect to the other objectives. Moreover, operations under this objective are often focused on entities and public administration organisations and the results are not best captured by counts of results achieved by individuals. Instead, these interventions more often lead to positive results in entities, as well as actions such as development of new tools, change management, studies, awareness raising activities, and partnerships.

Table 4.11 Total aggregated results reported by the AIRs per type of common result indicator, by Thematic Objective

Common result indicator (immediate)	TO8	TO9	TO10	TO11
CR01 - Inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving	205 665	529 028	263 605	260
CR02 - Participants in education/training upon leaving	386 512	491 683	1 162 458	17 752
CR03 - Participants gaining a qualification upon leaving	1 737 667	786 085	4 336 201	229 277
CR04 - Participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving	2 840 418	1 218 275	386 835	2 607
Total (CR1-4)	5 170 262	3 025 071	6 149 099	249 896
CR05 - Disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/ training, gaining a qualification, or in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving	1 408 945	2 098 062	1 052 609	7 054
Common result indicator (longer-term)	TO8	TO9	TO10	TO11
CR06 - Participants in employment, including self-employment, 6 months after leaving	2 525 316	1 573 897	584 005	726
CR07 - Participants with an improved labour market situation 6 months after leaving	369 260	246 779	347 449	59 891
Total (CR6-7)	2 894 576	1 820 676	931 454	60 617
CR08 - Participants above 54 years of age in employment, including self-employment, 6 months after leaving	184 379	90 322	13 265	52
CR09 - Disadvantaged participants in employment, including self-employment, 6 months after leaving	667 264	1 040 502	139 204	150

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

4.3.4 Total results of ESF + YEI

This section combines the results reported for the ESF (section 4.3.3), with the results reported for the YEI (section 3.3), to show total aggregations of results. Table 4.12 below shows that the highest number of immediate results are reported in Spain, France, Germany, Poland and Italy.

Table 4.12 Overview of common result indicators, by Member States (ESF + YEI)

MS	Result immediately after intervention						
	All results					All results	
	Active in Jobsearch	Entered education	Received qualification	Entered employment	Total	Any result	% of all results
AT	6 543	12 561	36 051	13 439	68 594	48 581	71%
BE	10 035	135 470	121 429	192 926	459 860	131 365	29%
BG	13 828	462 955	161 110	31 080	668 973	126 432	19%
CY	-	480	2 541	4 866	7 887	531	7%
CZ	2 355	13 893	165 026	135 359	316 633	73 368	23%
DE	47 690	257 502	1 182 065	204 372	1 691 629	427 262	25%
DK	512	1 382	5 502	2 080	9 476	3 596	38%
EE	457	14 209	56 758	17 191	88 615	30 914	35%
ES	210 033	263 180	2 150 212	1 021 199	3 644 624	875 615	24%
FI	1 756	7 704	5 773	14 933	30 166	9 967	33%
FR	408 236	327 985	466 475	1 035 219	2 237 915	1 276 519	57%
GR	30 471	26 119	240 191	51 774	348 555	57 776	17%
HR	2 699	2 066	14 955	32 541	52 261	9 120	17%
HU	9 437	36 936	504 311	233 195	783 879	86 221	11%
IE	4 482	84 498	118 185	21 973	229 138	66 534	29%
IT	130 989	242 207	383 558	689 850	1 446 604	219 606	15%
LT	4 612	17 377	132 467	82 813	237 269	15 698	7%
LU	335	-	-	1 351	1 686	89	5%
LV	894	14 273	29 241	31 437	75 845	24 270	32%

MS	Result immediately after intervention						
	All results					All results	
	Active in Jobsearch	Entered education	Received qualification	Entered employment	Total	Any result	% of all results
MT	309	1 786	8 411	2 307	12 813	2 684	21%
NL	11 256	9 943	16 633	101 398	139 230	116 832	84%
PL	72 530	43 295	781 469	837 960	1 735 254	774 507	45%
PT	47 300	74 757	183 067	254 620	559 744	22 774	4%
RO	13 200	11 865	41 793	70 154	137 012	20 539	15%
SE	2 359	17 936	12 950	26 808	60 053	34 287	57%
SI	147	3 902	44 851	18 432	67 332	2 960	4%
SK	574	2 928	7 137	36 206	46 845	26 163	56%
UK	40 864	144 587	576 057	197 048	958 556	494 661	52%
EU28	1 073 903	2 231 796	7 448 218	5 362 531	16 116 448	4 978 871	31%

Not reported by region, because YEI indicators are not labelled to one type of region

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Table 4.13 presents the aggregated results 6 months after interventions. The same caveat for longer-term results as before also applies here; **Member States may not have updated these figures, as this will be only mandatory for the final implementation report due at the end of the programming period (in 2023)**. Still, when combining ESF and YEI, a reported total of 5.7 million participants were able to find a job within 6 months, and another 1.0 million employed participants were reported with improved positions on the labour market.

Table 4.13 Overview of the common result indicators, by Member States (ESF + YEI)

MS	Longer-term result indicators (6 months after intervention)						
	All results			Above 54 years of age		Disadvantaged	
	Entered employment	Better LM position	Total	Entered employment	% of all employed	Entered employment	% of all employed
AT	29 067	3 044	32 111	2 872	10%	25 451	88%
BE	383 587	25 008	408 595	3 569	1%	82 140	21%
BG	54 890	129 211	184 101	4 985	9%	11 656	21%
CY	3 883	1 833	5 716	279	7%	207	5%
CZ	129 610	17 146	146 756	15 642	12%	43 901	34%
DE	108 942	114 829	223 771	4 295	4%	45 360	42%
DK	1 579	2 464	4 043	131	8%	706	45%
EE	18 795	2 827	21 622	4 174	22%	11 610	62%
ES	424 748	32 105	456 853	14 747	3%	150 975	36%
FI	24 765	19 499	44 264	1 935	8%	11 612	47%
FR	1 765 006	229 118	1 994 124	71 657	4%	970 789	55%
GR	122 262	36 005	158 267	4 619	4%	20 945	17%
HR	47 306	1 159	48 465	1 826	4%	4 737	10%
HU	84 385	45 443	129 828	7 508	9%	16 129	19%
IE	9 823	3 876	13 699	2 220	23%	6 519	66%
IT	1 274 392	52 832	1 327 224	88 331	7%	252 674	20%
LT	43 089	11 426	54 515	8 674	20%	4 376	10%
LU	2 372	-	2 372	65	3%	415	17%
LV	37 755	14 374	52 129	4 383	12%	14 952	40%
MT	1 822	2 007	3 829	132	7%	957	53%
NL	110 941	56 196	167 137	5 335	5%	101 503	91%
PL	675 536	69 228	744 764	24 302	4%	272 245	40%
PT	163 049	44 173	207 222	4 401	3%	4 345	3%
RO	5 695	660	6 355	284	5%	720	13%
SE	24 487	44 828	69 315	833	3%	16 737	68%
SI	34	-	34	-	0%	-	0%
SK	28 632	711	29 343	23	0%	35 389	124%
UK	154 273	70 794	225 067	10 832	7%	87 252	57%
EU28	5 730 725	1 030 796	6 761 521	288 054	5%	2 194 302	38%

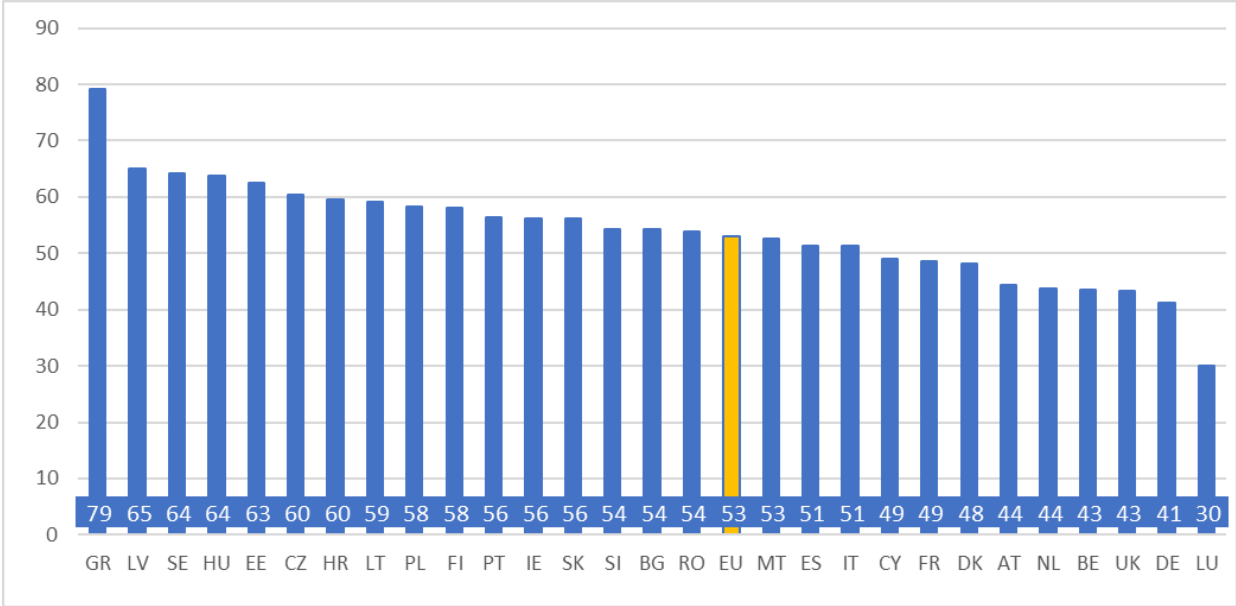
Not reported by region, because YEI indicators are not labelled to one type of region

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

4.3.5 Gender equality in outputs and results

The participation of women and men in ESF interventions is relatively equally distributed when aggregated at EU level (53%). There are, however, significant differences among Member States. In Greece, 79 % of participations are female, against only 30% in Luxembourg. Luxembourg indicates that its ESF projects are designed in a gender-neutral way, but that some sectors of activity are inherently gender-sensitive, such as sectors including public works and construction, which are particularly targeted by the ESF and are mainly male-dominated sectors.

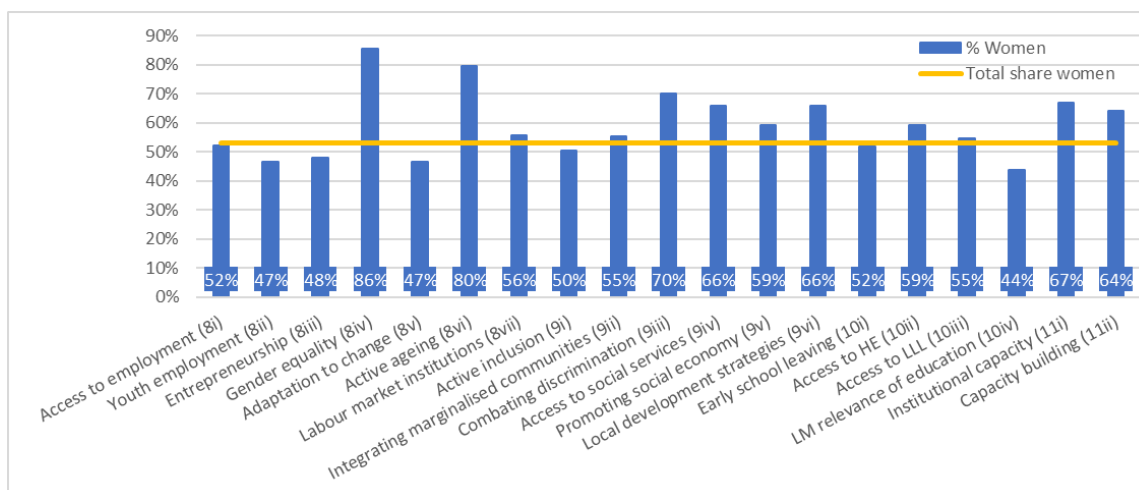
Figure 4.3 Relative share (%) of female participation across Member States (all investment priorities) ESF only



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

The distribution of men and women is also not equal across the different investment priorities. As can be expected, investments in gender equality (IP8iv) and combating discrimination (IP9iii) reached an above-average share of women (86% and 70% respectively). Additionally, figure 4.6 also shows high shares of women among recorded participations in investment priorities where this is not immediately obvious, such as among active ageing measures (80%). It is worth noting, however, that this is exclusively due to Poland, where a high number of participations are recorded for active ageing investments that focus on health check-ups (over 612 thousand). These check-ups were mostly focused on women (over 491 thousand participations). In other investment priorities the differences are less pronounced, such as in local development strategies (66%: IP9vi) and investments in institutional capacity (67%). There are few investment priorities where women are a minority among the participation records; from this perspective only investments focusing on the labour market relevance of education (IP10iv) stand out, with 44% of female participations. This figure is particularly influenced by the German regional programmes, where the share of women in this investment priority varies from 18%-42% across the different regions. The regional AIRs do not provide explanations for these lower shares; possibly the measures focus on (vocational) education programmes in male-dominated sectors.

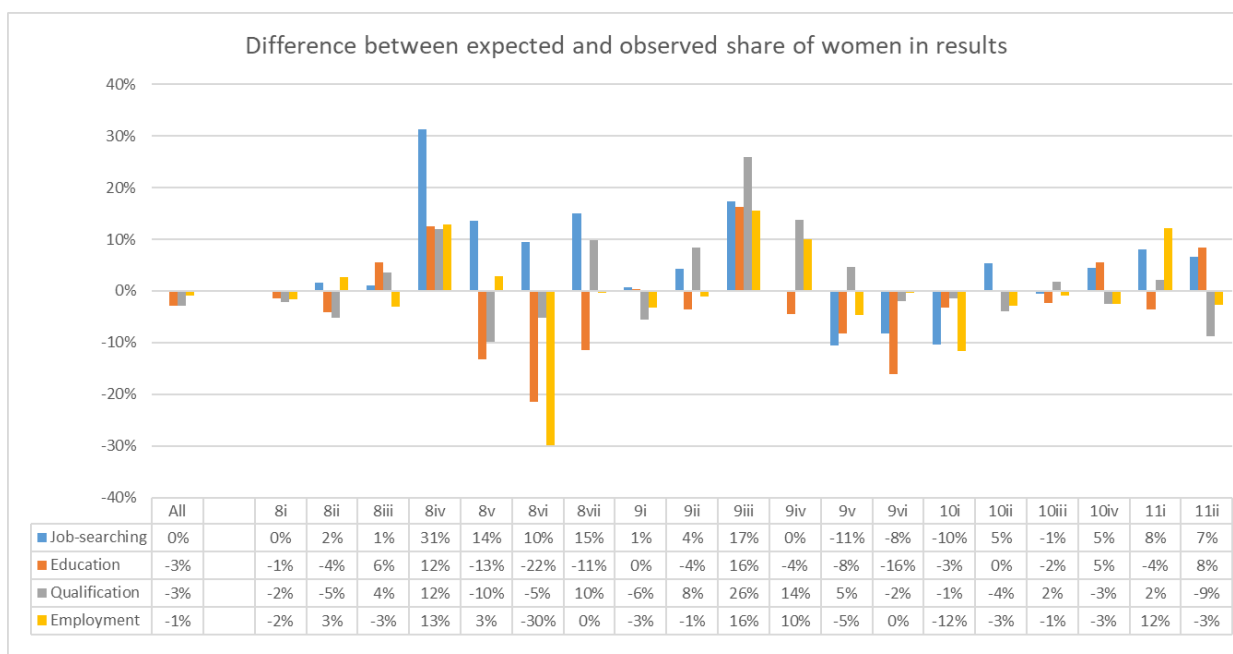
Figure 4.4 Relative share (%) of female participation – by investment priority (ESF only)



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

The review also assessed the share of women among the four types of results captured by the common indicators. These were compared against the share of women in the relevant output figures and reported across the different investment priorities, as shown in figure 4.7 below.²³ When comparing across all investment priorities, there is no substantial difference for the number of women that were activated into job searching. Women made up 50% of all participants that entered education or obtained a qualification on average, while women made up 53% of all reported participations (hence -3% in figure 4.7). Against a share of 51% of women that were without a job before interventions, a total of 50% of women found employment after the intervention. These differences are almost negligible, which is an important and reassuring finding. However, these mask more considerable differences across the different investment priorities and Member States which are discussed in more detail here.

Figure 4.5 Difference in percentage points between observed share of women per result and share of women in reference population – by investment priority



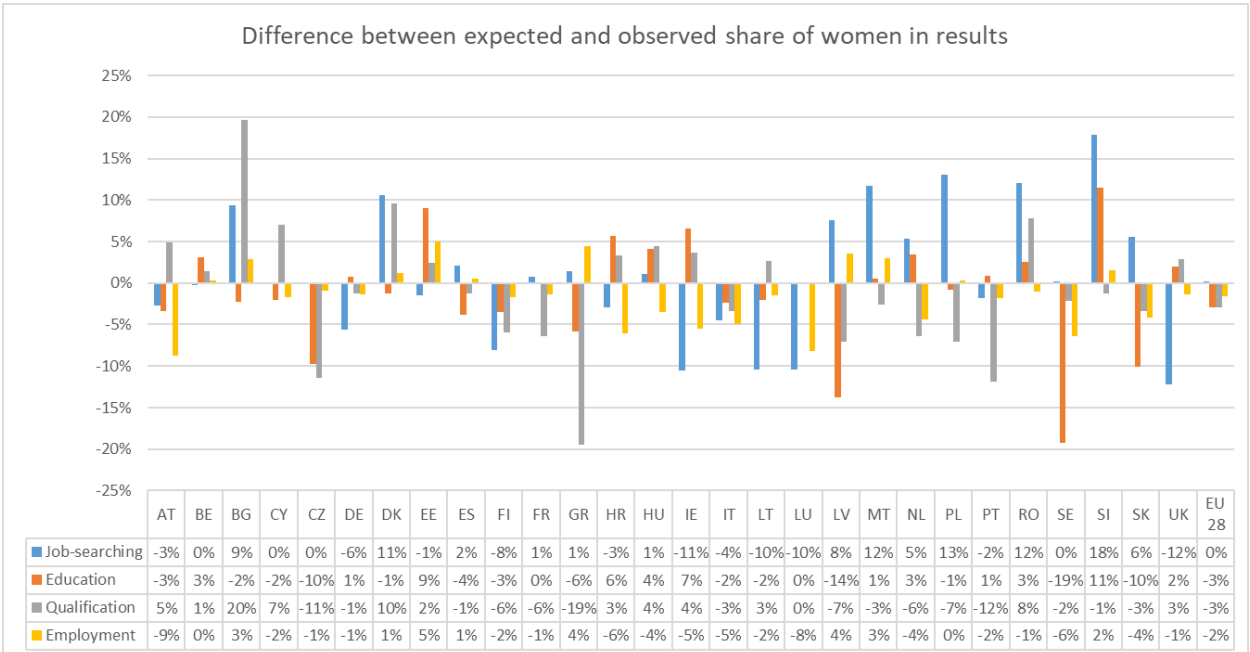
Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

²³ By relevant, we mean the reference population for result indicators as defined in EC Guidance, Annex D - Practical guidance on data collection and validation, which identifies inactive people (CO03) as reference population for the common result of starting job-searching (CR01), all participations (CO01/CO03/CO05) for people entering education (CR02) or obtaining a qualification (CR03) and all unemployed and inactive participations for people (CO1/CO3) entering employment (CR4).

Most importantly, the different types of investment priorities show considerable variation. Women for instance appear highly overrepresented in the results of investments that focus on gender equality (8iv) and combating discrimination (9iii). We have already seen above that women make up substantial majorities of the total participation in these investment priorities (86% and 70% of all participations in these investment priorities), but figure 4.7 shows that its results are even further tilted towards women. In gender equality measures (IP8iv) for instance 98% of the individuals that were activated into job searching were women, while women made up 'only' 67% of the inactive participations reported (hence the reported difference of 31% for this result). The same can be observed for other types of results in these investment priorities. The considerable overrepresentation of men in the results of active ageing measures also calls for attention. While women make up the vast majority of participations of these measures (80%, mainly due to programmes in Poland, see above), the share of women that entered education is considerably lower (58%). Again, the types of measures in Poland highly influence this number; most women were targeted by health check-ups, none of which were focused on changing labour market status or moving towards education. The possible results achieved among women in these Polish interventions (better diagnostic care, diseases avoided) are not captured by the common result indicators.

The same analysis was also performed for each Member State, as shown in figure 4.8. A number of Member States report considerably lower shares of women with results than what could be expected based on the recorded share of women among participations in that Member State. In Czechia, Finland, Greece, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Slovakia, and Sweden particularly, women represent a considerably smaller share of results than their participation figure would lead to expect. On the other hand of the scale are Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Romania and Slovenia, where women appear particularly over-represented among the results achieved compared to their participation figures. In other Member States, the picture is more diverse, with over-representation of women in one particular type of result while reporting an underrepresentation of women in other types of result. Such a mixed picture by Member States can simply be the result of different types of interventions; a programme may for instance consist of activation measures that focus particularly on women (supporting childcare in combination with career guidance), while training measures are focused particularly on unemployed men (see for instance various regional Operational Programmes in Poland). From that perspective it is re-assuring to find that there is no structural difference in the share of women across different types of results.

Figure 4.6 Difference (in percentage points) between observed share of women per result and share of women in reference population – by Member State



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

4.4 Achievement of targets

4.4.1 Comparing target achievement rates

While the absolute values presented in the previous section offer an overview on the breadth and outreach of the ESF, these do not allow for comparison (e.g. across Member States with different budget allocations or different thematic concentrations and scope of ESF interventions). This section assesses progress of output and result achievements against the final targets set in each programme. This assessment can be done with three different methods, each with their advantages and challenges.

- **Average target achievement:** The average target achievement would take the target achievement values for all indicators within a group and simply take the average. This is intuitive, and in theory can provide a good insight in the achievement rates at MS or EU level. However, due to the nature of target achievement rates (one directional, no upper limit), these are easily distorted by a small number of (extreme) outliers. Such outliers are not uncommon for target achievement rates, which makes it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about the progress of a group of indicators. In earlier years of programming, these outliers were relatively minor, but as implementation progresses, average target achievements are increasingly distorted by values (far) above 100%, which does not allow representing the overall progress towards targets. This means that this measure is not particularly insightful in the later stages of the programming period.
- **Weighed target achievement averages.** By weighing the target achievement rates based on their size, it is possible to reduce the distortion created by the most extreme outliers from the average target achievement. Remaining outliers are in fact meaningful; outliers for indicators with higher numbers (often participations) are more important than outliers for an indicator measuring a small number of participants. However, this assumption only holds true when comparing *similar types of indicators*, such as comparing the weighed target achievements of indicators only measuring individuals, or that of entities separately.
- **Median of target achievement.** The median shows essentially the 'middle' value in a series of data points. It is not distorted by outliers in the same way as the average and shows the target achievement value that half of the indicators have already reached, and the other half still needs to reach. As such, it gives a good measure of the 'typical' target achievement in a given set of indicators. In the specific context of ESF implementation, its use as a measure in the early years is not particularly insightful, as it returns 0 as long as less than half of the indicators report results. However, as the target achievements climb and more indicators report progress, it becomes increasingly relevant to use the median for cross-country comparisons to get a better sense of progress in a programme.

Based on the advanced implementation stage of ESF operational programmes at this stage, this year's reporting introduced the use of the median target achievement for comparisons. Whenever the weighed target achievement can be used (when comparing similar types of indicators), this continues to be done, but particularly when combining different types of indicators, this report will instead refer to the median target achievement.

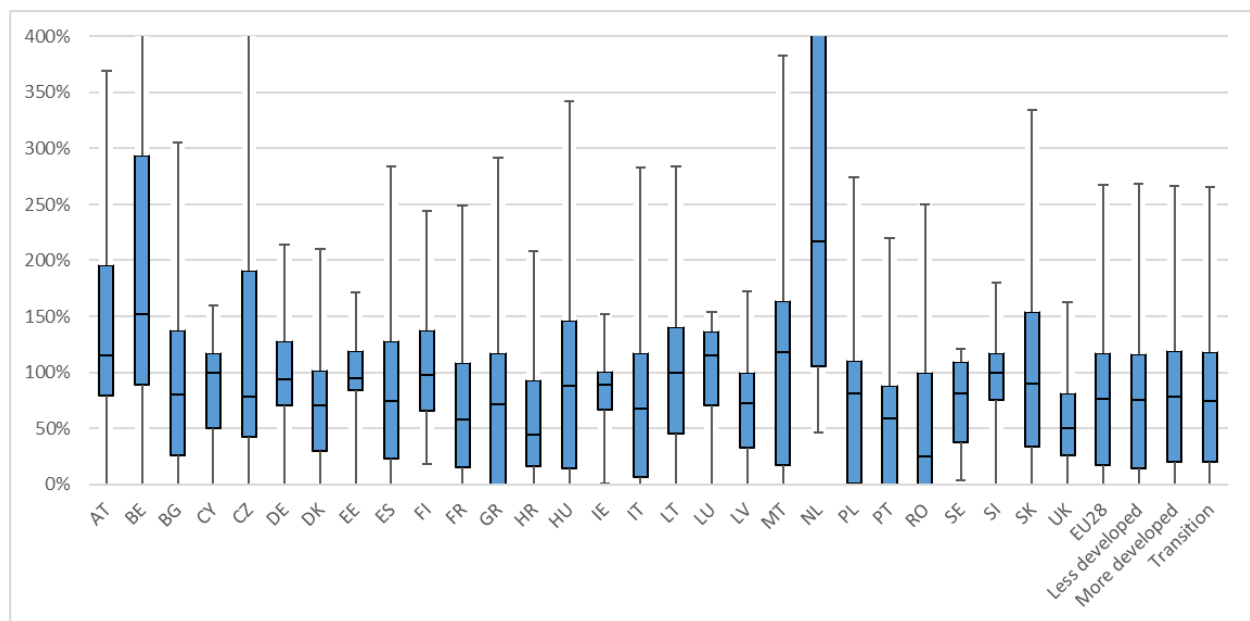
4.4.2 Target achievement of output indicators

This section starts with an assessment of the **target achievement** for output indicators. Across all AIRs, a total of 38 044 common output indicators and 4 952 programme specific output indicators are reported. Targets are defined for a total of 1 523 common output indicators (4%). A total of 4 539 programme specific output indicators have a target (92%). In order to get a good overview of progress towards targets and compare this across the EU, it is therefore important to combine these different types of indicators together

In the AIRs 2020, a considerable increase in the number of indicators can be observed (compared with 3 715 programme specific indicators in the programmes used when reporting in the AIRs 2019). This is a direct result of the reprogramming efforts under REACT-EU in the spring and summer of 2021, which is still ongoing at the time of writing this report. In next year's monitoring, a further increase can be expected.

Figure 4.9 presents the range of output target achievement for each Member State in a graphic way, and clearly shows how only using the average would no longer provide adequate insight in target achievement. All Member States report target achievement of output indicators far above 100%, while also still reporting indicators at 0%; only in Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Sweden no indicator is at 0% anymore. The black line separating the two blue boxes shows the median values for each Member State, which varies from 25% in Romania, to 217% in the Netherlands and anything in between. At EU level, the median target achievement for output indicators is currently 76%; the distribution of target achievement rates across different regions looks remarkably similar. A number of Member States, and particularly Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, Malta, and the Netherlands stand out with median values at or above 100%. This means that at least half of the output targets in these MSs were already achieved and overachieved.

Figure 4.7 Range and median of output target achievement – by Member State



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021). Whiskers show a maximum of 1.5 times interquartile range. Outliers beyond these marks exist and are not displayed. Excluding indicators in technical assistance priority axes.

While the table above gives an insightful overview of target achievement at Member State level, there are also relevant differences between the target achievements of different types of indicators. When assessing the target achievement of similar types of indicators – regardless of how many of them – the weighed target achievement value is preferable. For this reason, table 4.14 presents the weighed target achievement rates for various types of output indicators that measure individuals. Each of the categories presented contain both common and programme-specific indicators²⁴.

²⁴ Note that the indicators are presented based on a classification developed by the contractor. While some of the categories appear similar to the Annex I indicators, the categories used are deliberately broader, in order to also include similar types of programme-specific indicators. See Annex II of this document for an overview of how indicators were classified into these categories.

Table 4.14 Progress towards target achievement of common and programme-specific indicators measuring individual outputs (ESF)

MS	Unemployed	Inactive	Employed	Young	Old	Vulnerable groups	Professionals	Other individuals
No. Indicator	505	131	267	468	161	784	302	704
AT	91%	116%	188%	87%		126%		147%
BE	352%	85%	91%	143%	231%	263%		150%
BG	72%		158%	136%	72%	107%	74%	57%
CY	100%			83%		112%		0%
CZ	92%	160%		81%	59%	462%	389%	76%
DE	116%	73%	89%	92%	97%	107%	66%	84%
DK								81%
EE			75%	91%		117%	123%	153%
ES	117%	96%	64%	158%		101%	4%	26%
FI	90%	95%		87%	91%	101%	98%	147%
FR	84%	95%	80%	63%	23%	167%	1%	88%
GR	82%		106%	84%		31%	78%	142%
HR	56%	0%	16%	64%	83%	51%	56%	113%
HU	157%	50%		249%		92%	170%	196%
IE	102%			55%		85%		
IT	103%	114%	57%	69%	175%	101%	110%	42%
LT	149%		111%	76%	103%	117%	145%	105%
LU			112%	138%	70%	135%		67%
LV	78%		48%	74%	102%	47%	53%	129%
MT				143%	341%	0%		52%
NL						217%		673%
PL	85%	116%	53%	128%	142%	123%	95%	59%
PT	75%		62%	88%		70%	44%	40%
RO	2377%		10%			23%	13%	53%
SE	3%		81%	55%				101%
SI			111%	94%	96%	61%	111%	101%
SK	53%		81%	169%	136%	182%	64%	72%
UK	73%	45%	71%	41%	73%	76%	0%	62%
EU	95%	90%	69%	92%	98%	87%	72%	81%
Less	77%	95%	62%	103%	116%	77%	73%	90%
More	104%	92%	80%	80%	81%	100%	72%	76%
Trans	110%	79%	70%	77%	79%	90%	64%	59%

Empty fields mean that no target was defined in that MS / region for that type of indicator. 0% means that no progress has been achieved towards a particular target set for that particular group of indicators.

Percentages calculated as 'weighed' average target achievement; larger absolute targets have a larger impact on aggregated target achievement.

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Splitting out the target achievement of different types of output indicators allows to review whether progress on indicators of particular interest is on track, regardless of any other specific indicators. The target achievement for unemployed people for instance, as shown above in table 4.14, is currently reported at 95%, with some difference between less developed regions (77%) and more developed and transition regions (104% and 110% respectively). The inverse relation is found for achieving targets of indicators that focus on age groups, with 103% of the targeted young people and 116% of the targeted old people reached in less developed regions, while this is considerably lower in more developed regions (80% and 81% respectively). The importance of targeting unemployed in the first years of ESF support is also evident from table 4.14; the target achievement of these types of indicators is higher than the target achievement of output indicators that measure progress in other areas, such as employed (69% target achieved) and professionals (72%).

Table 4.15 below shows the same for a second set of output indicators, the indicator for companies, entities and other types of organisations and projects. It shows highest target achievement rates for indicators measuring the number of companies in less developed

regions (100% compared to 89% in more developed regions), while in this type of regions the target achievement of indicators that measure public purpose entities (schools, healthcare, community organisations) and public entities is behind compared to the progress of the same indicators in more developed regions (90% against 121% and 103% against 331% respectively).

Table 4.15 Progress towards target achievement of most often used indicators measuring various outputs (ESF)

MS	Companies	Public purpose entity	Public entity	Projects (not public administration)	Public administration projects	Structures	Products
No. Indicator	229	436	132	344	265	131	543
AT	85%			408%			
BE		111%	104%	196%	156%	320%	150%
BG	124%	94%	46%	137%	141%		100%
CY		135%		108%	131%		43%
CZ	406%	513%		271%	41%		341%
DE	87%	160%	100%	56%	117%	73%	103%
DK	678%	0%					
EE		114%	100%	83%	89%		74%
ES	18%	67%		56%	18%	139%	135%
FI	142%	100%		257%			
FR	103%	0%		52%	2855%	33%	86%
GR	48%	349%	57%	55%	106%	104%	75%
HR	18%	126%	0%	67%	128%	0%	61%
HU	76%	190%	92%	36%	50%		82%
IE					88%		
IT	66%	4%	357%	29%	44%	33%	66%
LT	40%	28%	50%	125%	38%		129%
LU							
LV	14%	98%	95%	0%			25%
MT					122%		96%
NL	121%			46%			
PL	94%	60%	28%	50%	3%	89%	71%
PT	82%	47%		4%	58%		149%
RO	418%	3%	87%	163%	95%	0%	19%
SE				121%			
SI	101%	108%	134%	119%			65%
SK	170%	65%	73%	63%	206%	838%	802%
UK	71%	172%	0%	0%	25%		0%
EU	89%	105%	156%	86%	93%	104%	71%
Less	100%	90%	103%	3%	46%	310%	126%
More	89%	121%	331%	91%	165%	65%	68%
Trans	72%	182%	375%	150%	217%	206%	71%

Empty fields mean that no target was defined in that Member State / region for that type of indicator. 0% means that no progress has been achieved towards a particular target set for that particular group of indicators.

Percentages calculated as 'weighed' average target achievement; larger absolute targets have a larger impact on aggregated target achievement.

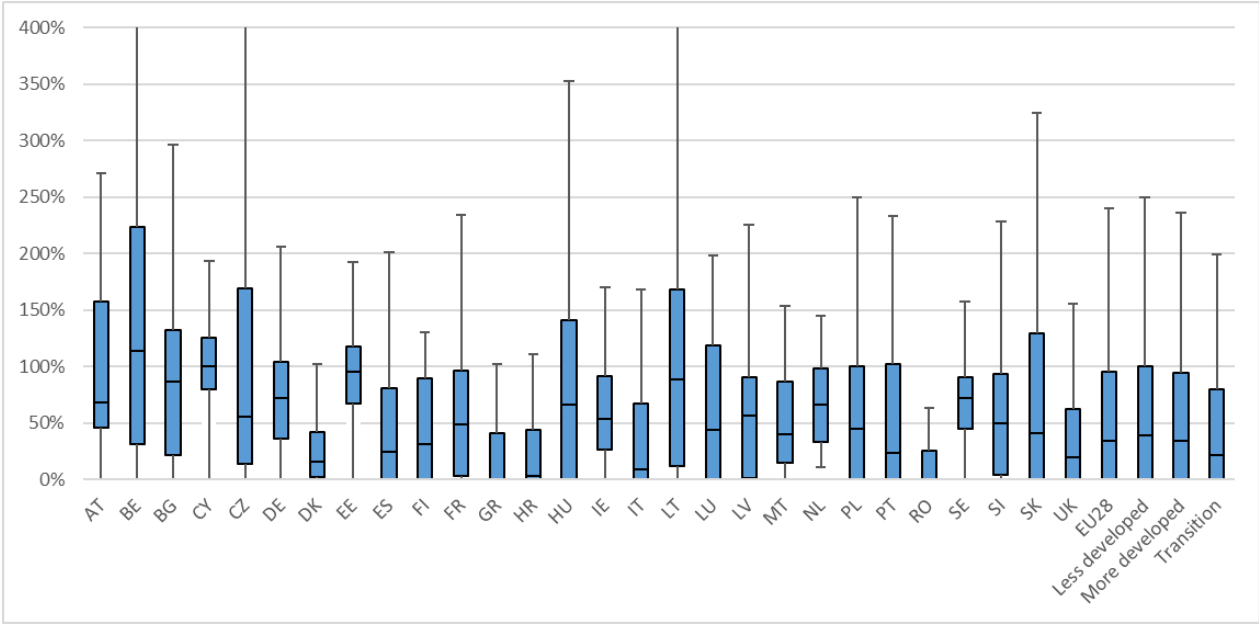
Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

4.4.3 Target achievement of result indicators

The same assessment of progress towards targets can be conducted for result indicators. Across all programmes, a total of 16 250 common result indicators and 4 268 programme specific indicators are defined. Targets are defined for a total of 819 of common results indicators (5%). In order to get a good overview of progress towards result targets and compare this across the EU, it is therefore important to combine these different types of indicators together.

Figure 4.9 presents the range of result target achievement for each Member State. It shows a considerable range of target achievement, generally from 0% towards at least 100%, and often considerably above that. Romania is the only Member State where not a single result indicator has reached 100% of its target. At EU level, the median target achievement for result indicators is currently 34%, with minor differences in the range of target achievement between different types of regions; targets for result indicators in transition regions are slightly lower than those in more and less developed regions. As expected, target achievements reported for result indicators often lie below those of output indicators at this stage and remain broadly within expectation in view of the implementation rates reported in section 4.2. Progress of result indicators is often reported later than that of outputs, even for the same interventions; target achievement is therefore also likely to increase towards the target achievements of output indicators.

Figure 4.8 Range of result target achievement – by Member State



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021). Whiskers show 1.5 times interquartile range. Outliers beyond these marks exist and are not displayed. Excluding technical assistance.

While the table above gives an interesting overview of target achievement at Member State level, possible differences between different types of indicators are also investigated. To analyse this, all common and programme-specific indicators were classified into new categories and presented in the table below²⁵. The target achievement rates reported combine both programme-specific and common indicators (the categories are defined in such a way as to allow grouping these different types together).

Table 4.16 Progress towards target achievement of most often used indicators measuring individual results (ESF) (weighed)

MS	Entered employment after leaving	Entered employment after some time	Improved position on labour market	Qualification obtained	In Education	Improved skills	Other individual result
No. Indicators	652	170	122	825	188	240	572
AT	27%		54%	53%	0%		177%
BE	73%	149%	320%	118%	686%		36%

²⁵ Note that the indicators are presented based on a new classification. While some of the categories appear similar to the Annex I indicators, the categories used are deliberately broader, in order to also include similar programme-specific result indicators.

MS	Entered employment after leaving	Entered employment after some time	Improved position on labour market	Qualification obtained	In Education	Improved skills	Other individual result
BG	33%	132%	3485%	103%	63%	55%	73%
CY	162%			36%	107%		181%
CZ	147%	7%	151%	69%	139%	251%	104%
DE	47%	38%	109%	74%	48%	149%	57%
DK	22%	20%		15%	84%	46%	47%
EE	4%	126%		92%		111%	98%
ES	73%	6%	45%	74%	50%	38%	39%
FI	89%		0%	114%	38%		12%
FR	68%	81%	71%	94%	87%	11%	117%
GR	54%	0%	0%	64%	14%	292%	67%
HR	38%	22%	6%	62%	0%	4%	60%
HU	160%	135%		109%	170%	96%	62%
IE				98%			37%
IT	54%	92%	18%	27%	35%	47%	82%
LT	170%	8%	4271%	118%	124%	114%	2051%
LU		198%		0%			75%
LV	34%	122%	0%	106%		81%	62%
MT	6%			80%		0%	55%
NL	120%	103%					
PL	80%	28%	9%	95%	105%	49%	45%
PT		49%		53%	98%		58%
RO	28%			15%	16%		19%
SE	47%		77%		114%		70%
SI	44%			106%		95%	63%
SK	7%			30%	7%	95%	173%
UK	30%	3%	4%	73%	29%	33%	49%
EU	68%	75%	47%	73%	60%	51%	92%
Less	72%	75%	54%	71%	46%	57%	97%
More	65%	81%	50%	76%	68%	37%	89%
Trans	66%	32%	31%	74%	44%	39%	36%

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

The main finding from table 4.16 is the relatively similar target achievement rates for the main categories of indicators. Result indicators measuring progress towards targets such as entering employment after an intervention (68%), entering education (60%), or obtaining a qualification (73%) are at quite similar levels in terms of target achievement. Results measuring a variety of different types of results (other individual results), such as number of people starting apprenticeships, people receiving a certain kind of support, or persons that improve certain aspects of their lives stand out positively with a weighed target achievement of 92%.

Table 4.17 below shows target achievement rates for grouped indicators that measure various types of positive results in organisations or other types of results. Indicators measuring positive results for institutions score relatively high (on average 135% of target achieved). The average target achievement of indicators measuring positive results for companies and education providers lies somewhat between other types of indicators (100% and 64% respectively). Indicators measuring positive results for authorities score remarkably low target achievement rates (2%), both in less developed regions (3%) and in more developed regions (1%).

Table 4.17 Progress towards target achievement of most often used indicators measuring other types of results (ESF) (weighed)

MS	Projects completed	Positive result - Authorities	Positive result - Education entities	Positive result - companies	Positive result - institutions	Positive result – Welfare services	Jobs created	Other positive result
No. Indicators	254	209	198	151	209	285	181	258
AT	60%			134%				
BE	125%			54%		113%	119%	260%
BG	0%	43%	50%	140%		226%	64%	35%
CY		100%						0%
CZ	35%		73%		221%	160%	51%	1392%
DE	104%	100%	94%	42%	28%		150%	108%
DK		0%		0%			416%	0%
EE	78%	100%	109%				96%	
ES	1%	0%	2%	45%	0%	157%	2%	51%
FI	50%		2%	0%				
FR	57%	118%		84%	8%	65%	16%	45%
GR	0%	10%	19%	0%	10%	4%	15%	
HR	6%	2%	18%		8%	0%		0%
HU	0%	115%		0%	81%	120%	89%	2%
IE								
IT	49%	45%	12%	43%	184%	46%	3%	129%
LT	26%	2%	17%	0%	0%	74%	95%	61%
LU							0%	
LV	17%		20%	64%	100%	49%	0%	920%
MT		15%	1%					142%
NL	128%							
PL	33%	49%	44%	123%	82%	70%	86%	22%
PT	57%				37%	41%	0%	38%
RO	0%	0%	0%	21%	271%	0%	12%	7%
SE	51%							
SI	83%	29%	0%		0%	0%		477%
SK	0%	93%	46%	2%	239%	11%	80%	9%
UK	0%			59%	0%	0%	0%	45%
EU	22%	2%	64%	100%	135%	74%	43%	72%
Less	2%	3%	79%	116%	147%	78%	62%	71%
More	74%	1%	21%	84%	85%	56%	52%	118%
Trans	103%	40%	17%	28%	123%	1%	5%	51%

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

5 Assessment of unit costs

The unit costs of programmes, both within and across Member States and policy themes can be a relevant indicator for monitoring implementation of programmes. This chapter explores the variation in unit costs across Member States, thematic objectives and regions, which helps to estimate the extent to which expenditure and participations are recorded in a balanced way. The section 5.1 starts by exploring the costs per individual output, and section 5.2 further explores the costs per result.

Project selection rates allow to compare the progress in implementation across programmes from a financial point of view (see section 4.2 above). However, these do not allow to compare against the number of participations or results, as the costs of project selection are often recorded before the participations are entered. This chapter analyses and compares unit costs and does so by referring only to the declared expenditure. Nevertheless, unit costs could still not represent the full picture, since some operational programmes may record participants only after operations are fully implemented, while others do so even when operations are partly implemented. Moreover, unit costs as a measure for efficiency are not able to account for system-level interventions, for which other measures of efficiency need to be applied. Comparisons, to the extent that this is possible in the first place, should then be limited between similar types of intervention, for instance those in a single investment priority. However, the share of costs spent on other units (e.g. entities), not represented by the given indicator, remains unknown. As a result, it is recommended that unit costs are only used as a measure for efficiency at the final stage of implementation of programmes, when more operations are fully implemented, and findings are less distorted by different proportions of fully and partially implemented operations. Only then can unit costs be better compared and used for assessing the efficiency of programmes.

5.1 Comparison of spending and outputs

The comparisons in the number of individual participants registered against the total eligible expenditure declared are presented in the table below²⁶.

Table 5.1 Eligible expenditures declared to EC per participation

MS	Total participation	Expenditure declared (€ million)	Overall unit cost	Employment TO8 ESF (€)	Employment TO8 YEI (€)	Social inclusion TO9 (€)	Education TO10 (€)
AT	214 929	459.2	2 136	12 550		1 477	2 292
BE	1 409 681	1 120.7	795	809	505	1 272	508
BG	1 706 639	1 010.3	592	2 302	1 276	764	151
CY	14 956	105.4	7 049	5 293	4 135	25 637	3 208
CZ	610 504	2 303.0	3 772	2 582	5 006	4 438	7 139
DE	2 726 146	8 683.4	3 185	3 574		4 362	2 300
DK	78 291	193.0	2 465	2 636		6 618	1 507
EE	188 912	397.2	2 103	1 463		2 874	2 332
ES	6 272 776	6 036.0	962	999	1 697	743	728
FI	314 024	646.5	2 059	2 138		2 663	1 762
FR	4 910 975	7 284.3	1 483	1 655	1 456	1 181	2 325
GR	1 014 970	3 186.6	3 140	2 368	3 477	4 203	4 222
HR	243 338	765.8	3 147	2 800	4 598	4 075	2 136
HU	1 624 689	3 457.0	2 128	2 746	2 312	2 618	1 286
IE	345 038	616.4	1 786	5 395	15 207	1 518	815
IT	9 029 787	9 017.0	999	891	2 670	1 036	782
LT	818 612	922.8	1 127	3 189	1 118	623	910
LU	20 990	27.7	1 320	1 401		2 643	738
LV	350 979	409.0	1 165	1 011	2 215	857	1 565
MT	39 187	71.9	1 836	1 638		2 607	1 489
NL	589 257	794.3	1 348	3 499		1 149	

²⁶ The total number of participants is calculated by summing common output indicators 1, 3, and 5, which present exclusive and complete types of output indicators for individuals participating in an intervention.

PL	6 286 518	7 159.3	1 139	1 343	1 955	1 609	756
PT	2 399 028	5 452.6	2 273	1 129	5 572	2 521	2 620
RO	834 120	2 450.8	2 938	2 782	977	9 476	662
SE	272 751	810.4	2 971	6 830	3 393	7 770	1 143
SI	336 699	473.2	1 406	2 782	6 294	9 077	648
SK	893 204	1 712.4	1 917	3 198	1 428	1 306	541
UK	1 825 652	4 246.9	2 326	1 836	2 893	2 495	2 726
EU28	45 372 652	69 813	1 539	1 623	2 025	1 703	1 225
Region	Total participation	Expenditure declared (€ million)	Overall unit cost	Employment TO8 ESF (€)	Employment TO8 YEI (€)	Social inclusion TO9 (€)	Education TO10 (€)
Less dev.	18 989 844	29 288	1 542	1 934		1 757	1 126
More dev.	16 549 484	24 896	1 504	1 364		1 710	1 478
Trans.	6 417 758	8 712	1 357	1 533		1 573	1 090
No region	3 415 566	6 916	2 025		2 025		

Empty fields indicate that no interventions are programmed for that thematic objective in that Member State or category of region. Note that YEI interventions are not assigned to a particular category of region.

Thematic objective 11 not included in this table, because relatively low number of participations and share of entities.

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Overall, the table shows a cost per participation of EUR 1 539, which is considerably above the unit costs that were found in the ex-post evaluation of ESF 2007-2013²⁷. This aggregated figure does no justice to relevant differences across Member States and thematic objectives. Though the variation between figures reported appears high, most of these differences are not as substantial as they seem; large differences can be the result of the ongoing nature of entering monitoring data and may vary considerably each year. No particular reasons were mentioned in these AIRs that could help to explain these relatively high figures. Various managing authorities report that the actual number of participations is higher than reported so far, often because interventions are still ongoing. Another explanation is that managing authorities received the data from intermediary bodies or project managers and are still reviewing the participation figures. The same holds true for low values (for instance in Belgium or Bulgaria); it is also possible that Member States recorded the number of *participations* accurately in SFC, but still need to file declarations of expenditures. To further review progress from a thematic point of view, table 5.2 below also summarises the aggregated unit costs per investment priority, both for all regions as well as by types of region.

Table 5.2 Eligible expenditures declared to EC per participation – by investment priority

Investment priority	Unit costs (€)			
	More developed	Transition	Less developed	All regions
Access to employment (8i)	977	1 216	2 223	1 481
Youth employment (8ii - ESF)	1 537	1 131	2 588	1 973
Entrepreneurship (8iii)	1 461	1 096	5 584	2 132
Gender equality (8iv)	1 212	1 056	2 753	1 846
Adaptation to change (8v)	2 312	4 191	873	1 760
Active ageing (8vi)	12 421	28 526	120	418
Labour market institutions (8vii)	1 527	5 991	7 255	2 856
Thematic Objective 8	1 364	1 533	1 934	1 704
Active inclusion (9i)	1 665	1 532	1 592	1 620
Integrating marginalised communities (9ii)	2 856	1 313	1 519	1 584
Combating discrimination (9iii)	642	543	4 354	893
Access to social services (9iv)	2 835	14 117	1 975	2 239
Promoting social economy (9v)	1 255	1 339	3 136	2 605

²⁷ The synthesis report of the ex-post evaluation of ESF 2007-2013 report an overall cost per participants of EUR 897, with EUR 1 113 for Access to Employment, EUR 681 for Human Capital & Adaptability, and EUR 1 763 for Social Inclusion.

Local development strategies (9vi)	4 491	11 548	829	1 225
Thematic Objective 9	1 710	1 573	1 757	1 703
Early school leaving (10i)	1 050	923	731	840
Access to higher education (10ii)	2 786	3 612	2 656	2 734
Access to lifelong learning (10iii)	1 553	721	843	1 054
LM relevance of education (10iv)	1 909	2 198	2 099	2 042
Thematic Objective 10	1 478	1 090	1 126	1 225

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

5.2 Comparison of spending and results

A similar analysis has been performed to analyse the costs of achieving immediate individual results (finding a job, obtaining a qualification, entering education or searching jobs)²⁸. Also for this analysis the declared expenditure is compared with the immediate individual results reported. For this analysis, it is again important to note that large variations among Member States may not necessarily reflect differences among actual costs per results, but are more likely to represent differences in the extent to which costs and results are recorded at this point in time during implementation. Some Member States may already report costs before reporting results, while others may already report results while costs are still being scrutinized by audit and/or certifying authorities. The results of this analysis are presented in table 5.2 below, where the costs declared for investment priorities are compared with the *immediate* results reported.

Table 5.3 Eligible expenditure declared to the EC per immediate result achieved

MS	Number of individual results	Expenditure declared (€ million)	Overall unit cost	Employment TO8 ESF (€)	Employment TO8 YEI (€)	Social inclusion TO9 (€)	Education TO10 (€)
AT	68 594	459.2	6 694	23 090		4 507	7 512
BE	459 860	1 120.7	2 437	2 109	2 966	3 616	1 624
BG	668 973	1 010.3	1 510	15 991	2 921	3 543	306
CY	7 887	105.4	13 367	8 874	10 034	78 526	4 052
CZ	316 633	2 303.0	7 273	3 532	6 211	28 168	101 258
DE	1 691 629	8 683.4	5 133	5 093		8 873	3 589
DK	9 476	193.0	20 368	17 033		26 423	24 796
EE	88 615	397.2	4 482	4 601		21 988	2 718
ES	3 644 624	6 036.0	1 656	2 534	2 871	1 707	899
FI	30 166	646.5	21 430	14 841		27 211	36 705
FR	2 237 915	7 284.3	3 255	3 699	2 783	2 861	4 145
GR	348 555	3 186.6	9 142	12 001	10 239	45 052	6 023
HR	52 261	765.8	14 654	5 401	11 313	41 907	39 265
HU	783 879	3 457.0	4 410	5 093		11 203	2 127
IE	229 138	616.4	2 690	6 492	17 360	3 541	1 163
IT	1 446 604	9 017.0	6 233	2 950		19 160	7 217
LT	237 269	922.8	3 889	3 351	1 584	9 578	6 092
LU	1 686	27.7	16 439	10 380		35 768	82 992
LV	75 845	409.0	5 392	2 306	4 292	15 012	8 087
MT	12 813	71.9	5 615	2 135		7 366	12 332
NL	139 230	794.3	5 705	23 267		4 703	
PL	1 735 254	7 159.3	4 126	3 845	2 267	6 320	4 342
PT	559 744	5 452.6	9 741	6 032	9 735	25 987	9 318

²⁸ The total number of individual results was calculated by summing common result indicators 1-4, which all present mutually-exclusive types of results in terms of improved labour market position of individual participants that may be reached. CR05 was not included as it is not an exclusive category from common result indicators 1-4; it would introduce double counts and therefore taint the analysis. Nevertheless, the figures presented should be read with some caution, since participants could achieve more results at the same time.

RO	137 012	2 450.8	17 887	9 031	2 391	189 498	14 746
SE	60 053	810.4	13 495	14 712	5 109	20 126	27 884
SI	67 332	473.2	7 028	11 150		36 452	3 203
SK	46 845	1 712.4	36 555	305 219	5 258	114 316	13 933
UK	958 556	4 246.9	4 431	3 160	7 497	8 053	4 160
EU 28	16 116 448	69 813	4 332	4 258	4 544	6 064	3 365
Reg ion	Number of individual results	Expenditure declared (€ million)	Overall unit cost	Unit costs Employment TO8 ESF (€)	Unit costs Employment TO8 YEI (€)	Unit costs Socia inclusion TO9 (€)	Unit costs Education TO10 (€)
Less dev.	4 944 578	29 288	5 923	5 580		12 883	4 406
More dev.	6 303 164	24 896	3 950	3 467		5 033	3 629
Tran sition	3 346 586	8 712	2 603	3 421		3 847	1 683
No regi on	1 522 120	6 916	4 544		4 544		

Empty fields indicate that no interventions are programmed for that thematic objective in that Member State or category of region. YEI interventions are not assigned to a category of region. Thematic objective 11 not included in this table, because relatively low number of participations and share of entities

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

At the EU level, the costs for a single short-term result in the analysis amount to EUR 4 332. Behind this value there are substantially larger variations among Member States and among Thematic Objectives. These variations are influenced by the fragmented way of reporting individual short-term results in SFC, which should improve in the final years of implementation and reporting, as reporting becomes more complete. However, a unit cost analysis of results (similar to an analysis of the unit costs per participation), can be insightful to compare the extent to which results and eligible expenditure are registered into SFC in relatively equal shares across Member States. When used for this purpose, unit costs do not necessarily tell us much about efficiency, but rather about the balance in reporting between results and financial progress.

Table 5.2 above shows how many Member States still report relatively small numbers of results in relation to their budgets, particularly in Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Croatia, Luxembourg, Romania, Sweden and Slovakia. This is further reflected in substantial differences by region; for one reported result in less developed regions EUR 5 923 of declared expenditure is reported, against EUR 3 950 in more developed regions, and EUR 2 603 in transition regions. To further review the costs per result from a thematic point of view, table 5.4 below also summarises the aggregated unit costs per investment priority, both for all regions as well as by types of region. It highlights some outliers in investment priorities active ageing (8vi) and access to social services (9iv). This is in line with expectations, as both priorities have anticipated results that are more often focused on entities and not the type of results that are captured in the immediate personal results (in job search, in education, with qualification or in employment). The same applies to other investment priorities that show comparatively high costs, but are not outliers, such as gender equality (8iv), labour market institutions (8vii), promoting social economy (9v), and local development strategies (9vi).

Table 5.4 Eligible expenditure declared to the EC per immediate result achieved – by investment priority

Investment priority	Costs per individual (immediate) result (€)			
	More developed	Transition	Less developed	All regions
Access to employment (8i)	2 593	2 899	4 516	3 475
Youth employment (8ii - ESF)	3 441	1 838	5 383	4 308
Entrepreneurship (8iii)	3 538	2 431	19 773	5 305
Gender equality (8iv)	8 047	7 267	25 586	14 019
Adaptation to change (8v)	4 838	8 276	4 922	5 342

Active ageing (8vi)	919 084	399 358	4 735	16 657
Labour market institutions (8vii)	6 976	16 001	104 264	14 970
Thematic Objective 8	3 467	3 421	5 580	4 323
Active inclusion (9i)	4 543	3 648	7 843	4 736
Integrating marginalised communities (9ii)	11 610	1 998	9 722	8 806
Combating discrimination (9iii)	3 373	4 720	25 399	5 273
Access to social services (9iv)	34 465	151 426	54 950	48 616
Promoting social economy (9v)	5 582	4 614	27 916	17 884
Local development strategies (9vi)	12 586	19 529	8 439	10 133
Thematic Objective 9	5 033	3 847	12 883	6 064
Early school leaving (10i)	3 420	1 946	5 274	3 672
Access to higher education (10ii)	7 057	11 293	18 416	13 752
Access to lifelong learning (10iii)	3 200	966	2 028	2 062
LM relevance of education (10iv)	4 181	2 613	5 047	4 138
Thematic Objective 10	3 629	1 683	4 406	3 365

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

6 ESF support to EU policies

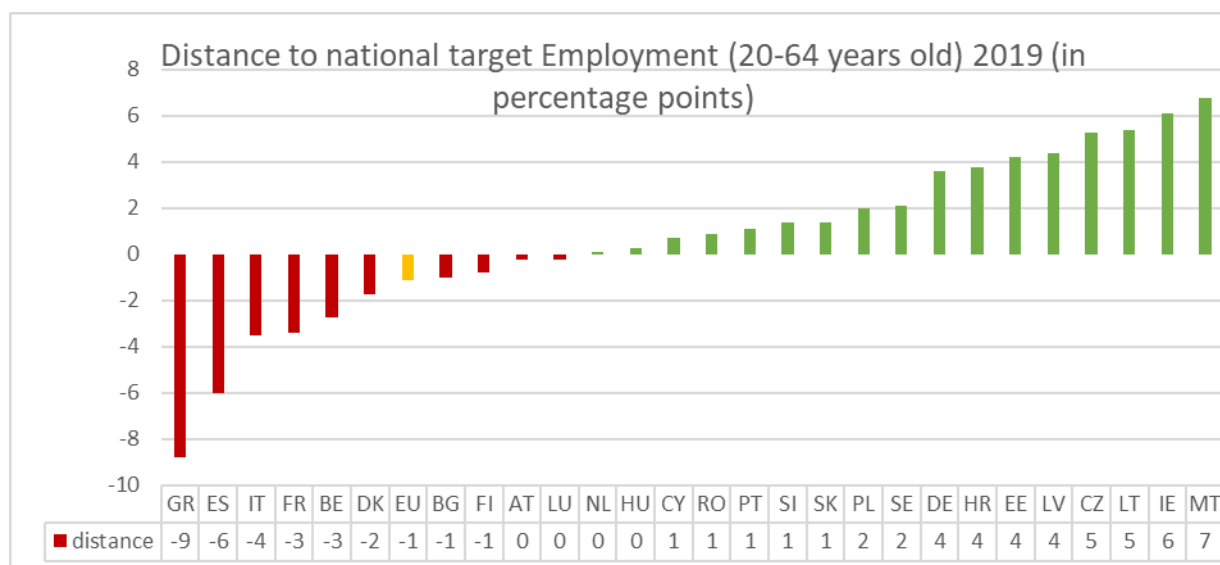
6.1 Thematic Objective 8: Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility

6.1.1 Objectives

The EU2020 headline target aims to bring the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64 to 75 % by 2020, including the greater participation of youth, older workers and low-skilled workers, and the better integration of migrants. This headline target was translated into more specific national targets per Member State. By promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility under thematic objective 8 (TO8), the ESF seeks to contribute to the EU 2020 objectives for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. This section assesses the ESF contribution to this objective. As part of the EU2020 strategy, national targets have been set for individual Member States, who have the possibility of using the ESF to complement their national efforts towards meeting these targets.

When assessing performance on progress towards national targets for the employment rate (see figure 6.1), most Member States had closed in on their targets before 2020. With the sudden economic shocks related to the COVID-19 measures, some of this progress was reversed in 2020. As there was a clear break in the series in 2020 because of the Covid-19 situation, figure 6.1 below shows the 2019 values, which better reflect the situation relating to the employment rate in Member States. At that point Greece, Spain, Italy, France, and Belgium were still relatively far from reaching their national targets.

Figure 6.1 Headline national targets for Employment (20-64 years old) - 2019 – distance from national targets (%) (in percentage points)



Source: Eurostat (LFSI_EMP)

6.1.2 ESF interventions under thematic objective 8

The ESF can be used to complement national efforts in combatting unemployment, to attempt meeting their national employment targets. For this purpose, a number of specific investment priorities are defined in the ESF Regulation, further narrowing down the objective and type of operations. Article 3 in the ESF regulation restricts operations under Thematic Objective 8 to the following categories:

- (8i). Access to employment for jobseekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility;

- (8ii). Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee;
- (8iii). Self-employment, entrepreneurship and business creation including innovative micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises;
- (8iv). Equality between men and women in all areas, including in access to employment, career progression, reconciliation of work and private life and promotion of equal pay for equal work;
- (8v). Adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change;
- (8vi). Active and healthy ageing;
- (8vii). Modernisation of labour market institutions, such as public and private employment services, and improving the matching of labour market needs, including through actions that enhance transnational labour mobility as well as through mobility schemes and better cooperation between institutions and relevant stakeholders.

Most operations in investment priority 8i relate to mainstream active labour market policy (ALMP) activities such as providing individual guidance to job seekers, providing integrated approaches, vocational education and training (VET), and providing hiring incentives to employers or supporting apprenticeships / traineeships and self-employment. The programme-specific indicators selected for operations under this investment priority show a wide range of target groups such as unemployed people in general, long-term unemployed, disadvantaged, older persons, inactive persons, women, young unemployed, low-skilled, and migrants.

Employment of young people has received a substantial level of policy attention, not least through the additional allocations under the Youth Employment Initiative. Operations under this investment priority (IP8ii) seek to improve labour market access for young people, mainly by reaching out to non-registered young people that are not in employment.

Invest priority 8.iii consists of actions that seek to support start-ups / self-employment (financial support, guidance and training); offer career support and guidance for individuals; foster social innovation and the development of new programmes, tools and instruments. These operations mainly focus on the unemployed (starting up their own enterprise), women, disadvantaged persons, enterprises, long-term unemployed, older workers, the inactive, migrants, young unemployed and workers.

Investment priority 8iv combines ESF investments that seek to improve equality between men and women in all areas, including access to employment, career progression, reconciliation of work and private life, and promotion of equal pay for equal work. These operations mainly target women, the unemployed, enterprises and employees.

Investment priority 8.v includes a wide diversity of actions addressing employers (and managers of enterprises) on the one hand and employees on the other. With regard to employers, the ESF mainly supports actions that facilitate the introduction and management of change in organisations, so as to prevent or mitigate the consequences of economic restructuring (e.g. guidance and training support, making the diagnosis and developing restructuring / action plans for introducing more innovative, more productive and greener models of labour organisation, including safe and healthy working conditions, managing the changing demographic structure of the company, etc.).

Investments under IP8vi mainly support the development of tools and instruments for organisations, raising awareness about healthy ageing and providing incentives for companies to hire older workers. As such, these operations are directed to relatively similar target groups as those targeted by IP8v, which includes employees, older workers, employees at risk, and enterprises.

Investment priority 8vii consists of operations that seek to modernise labour market institutions such as public and private employment services and improve the matching of labour market needs. Such operations may consist of actions that enhance transnational

labour mobility through mobility schemes and better cooperation between institutions and relevant stakeholders.

6.1.3 Implementation of employment investments

The total allocated ESF investments under thematic objective 8 amounts to EUR 40.1 billion under the ESF 2014-2020 (EU + national co-financing), of which 96.8% was committed (for selected operations) by the end of 2020. The table below summarises key implementation figures of TO8 investments for each Member State. As already shown elsewhere in the report, the project selection rate across Member States is relatively uniform for this thematic objective, showing an overall steady pace of implementation at EU level. By the end of 2020, TO8 project selection rates in Italy, Spain, Malta, and Sweden are slightly behind the EU average. Despite these lower-than-average project selection rates reported, managing authorities do not report particular implementation challenges. At the same time, in other Member States (more than) the entire budget has already been committed (Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, Denmark, France, Greece, Croatia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and Slovakia).

Table 6.1 Overview of Implementation under TO8 – by Member State, excl. YEI

MS	Allocated budget	Eligible costs	% project selection	Participations	Median output achievement	Individual results	Median result achievement	Average success rate
	(x€ million)							
AT	116.2	101.0	86.9%	3 987	83.9%	2 167	68.3%	54%
BE	763.0	770.6	101.0%	455 165	197.8%	174 715	121.9%	38%
BG	493.0	594.9	120.7%	159 522	61.0%	22 959	32.8%	14%
CY	27.2	37.5	137.7%	4 656	99.8%	2 777	140.8%	60%
CZ	1 834.8	1 636.9	89.2%	378 481	100.0%	276 717	134.3%	73%
DE	4 021.4	4 198.2	104.4%	780 293	94.8%	547 509	74.0%	70%
DK	187.8	196.0	104.4%	37 122	65.4%	5 745	14.4%	15%
EE	241.1	239.9	99.5%	88 262	102.4%	28 072	95.6%	32%
ES	3 894.8	3 466.1	89.0%	1 623 687	48.4%	640 053	24.9%	39%
FI	468.4	455.1	97.2%	132 058	79.7%	19 026	24.0%	14%
FR	2 836.0	2 966.7	104.6%	1 110 078	50.8%	496 653	44.3%	45%
GR	1 803.7	1 907.4	105.8%	416 754	56.5%	82 222	12.5%	20%
HR	430.0	451.5	105.0%	50 298	29.3%	26 076	44.4%	52%
HU	2 074.7	2 033.8	98.0%	449 848	94.2%	242 552	95.9%	54%
IE	274.0	274.0	100.0%	25 672	105.2%	21 334	39.2%	83%
IT	5 798.2	4 983.0	85.9%	3 185 611	68.9%	961 899	11.0%	30%
LT	438.7	443.0	101.0%	110 026	103.9%	104 702	146.9%	95%
LU	20.2	25.1	124.6%	10 459	126.2%	1 412	92.6%	14%
LV	124.1	118.0	95.1%	85 032	92.9%	37 285	78.3%	44%
MT	64.5	27.5	42.6%	8 922	159.4%	6 845	45.3%	77%
NL	253.5	368.3	145.3%	49 950	121.1%	7 512	75.4%	15%
PL	5 382.0	4 812.8	89.4%	2 191 281	83.5%	765 483	54.4%	35%
PT	1 745.2	1 803.5	103.3%	749 720	60.6%	140 331	0.0%	19%
RO	1 493.1	1 462.9	98.0%	315 280	0.0%	97 132	7.4%	31%
SE	616.4	543.0	88.1%	47 750	77.6%	22 167	73.0%	46%
SI	340.7	382.9	112.4%	60 726	87.3%	15 152	48.1%	25%
SK	1 606.1	1 802.2	112.2%	315 168	62.1%	3 302	0.9%	1%
UK	2 746.9	2 729.7	99.4%	720 318	61.2%	418 463	26.5%	58%
Total EU	40 095.6	38 831.5	96.8%	13 566 126	75.7%	5 170 262	43.8%	38%
Region	Allocated budget	Eligible costs	% project selection	Participations	Median output achievement	Individual results	Median result achievement	Average success rate
	(x€ million)							
Less dev.	20 083.6	19 309.9	96.1%	5 637 416	78.6%	1 953 637	49.5%	35%
More dev.	14 478.9	14 732.7	101.8%	6 149 217	79.7%	2 419 489	41.9%	39%
Transition	5 533.1	4 788.9	86.5%	1 779 493	66.1%	797 136	28.6%	45%

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

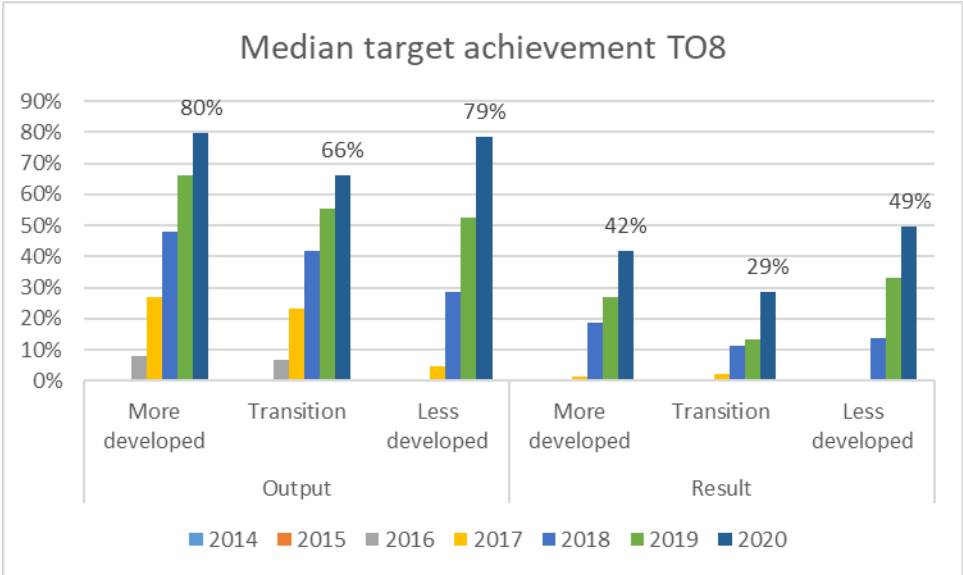
The achievement of output indicators largely follows the implementation rates in individual Member States (see also section 4.2). Median target achievements in Spain, France, Greece, Croatia and Romania are considerably below the EU median achievement for TO8, where particularly Romania stands out with more than half of its output indicators still at 0%. Most

often, these Member States point at a cascade effect of delays in the first years, which contributed to lower target achievement of output indicators. Croatia specifically indicates that the speed with which calls were launched improved in comparison to earlier years, though the COVID-19 pandemic also caused different bottlenecks in planning and publication of new calls later in the year. It also specifies that it continues to require additional strengthening of its management capacities, as the process of preparing calls for proposals is an extensive process with numerous steps, high number of stakeholder consultations, which add to their complexity. Despite the fact that Romania still reports 0% as median target achievement, its AIR highlights progress in implementation in most priority axes that focus on TO8. The AIR remarks on the flexibility measures in response to the adverse conditions created by COVID-19, for instance broadening the target group of active aging measures to cover employees affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Only for the measures focusing on youth unemployment, Romania does point to difficulties experienced by beneficiaries in meeting requirements on the targets and the composition of target groups. The main challenge reported by beneficiaries is that the costs of reaching young NEETs are not eligible for ESF funding and thus need to be financed by beneficiaries themselves. As a result of both factors, less than anticipated projects were submitted.

The positive results consist of people that find a job, gain a qualification or are able to improve their labour market position thanks to ESF interventions. The target achievement of result indicators is moving along, except in Portugal, Romania, and Slovakia. Slovakia reports that so far its reporting on common indicators is not complete due to technical issues; it is in contact with the relevant stakeholders to remove discrepancies and shortcomings. Portugal did not report any specific explanation.

Since 2015, median target achievement has been steadily increasing. The median target achievement of output indicators now reaches 80% in more developed and 79% in less developed regions. Transition regions are slightly behind with a median of 66%. Particularly for less developed regions a considerable improvement can be observed since 2018. For result indicators achievement rates are lower, though improving particularly rapidly in less developed regions, from a median still at 0% in 2017 to 49% in 2020. In more developed and transition regions a considerable improvement of target achievement can also be observed in 2020.

Figure 6.2 Evolution of median target achievement for TO8 – by region



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Overall progress under Thematic Objective 8 can be further analysed at the level of individual investment priorities. Table 6.2 below shows that interventions that support access to employment (IP8i) combine by far the largest financial allocations under this thematic objective, and already report selected costs for more than the allocated budget (101.7%). A total of more than 6.7 million participations were reported in interventions under this priority.

The median target achievements for outputs (85.5%) and results (66.7%) are considerably above the overall median target achievement reported for TO8 (75.7% and 43.8% respectively). This is a particularly relevant finding, because this priority is responsible for 40 % of the entire budget under the thematic objective.

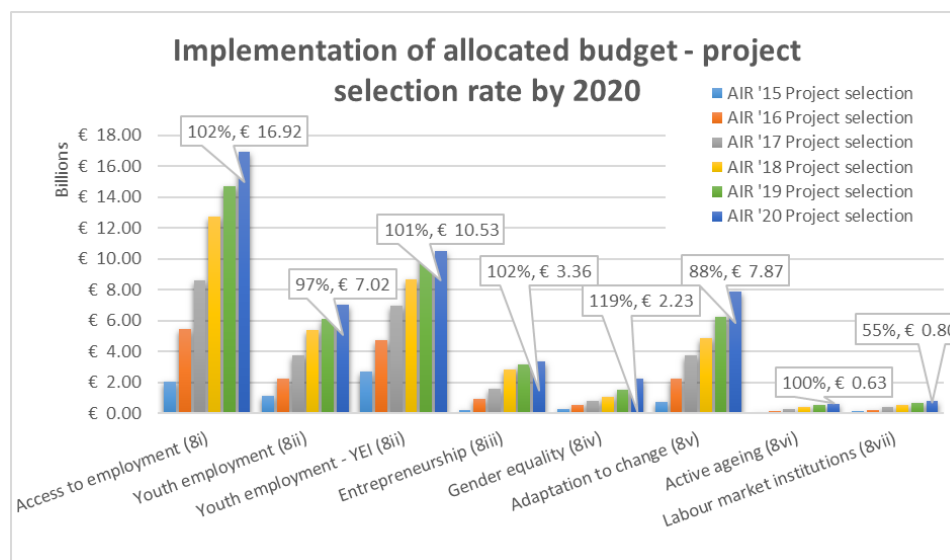
Table 6.2 Overview of TO8

IP	Allocated budget (x€million)	Eligible costs (x€million)	% project selection	Participations	Median output achievement	Individual results	Median result achievement
8i	16 633.9	16 915.5	101.7%	6 662 379	85.5%	2 839 013	66.7%
8ii-no YEI	7 255.6	7 016.2	96.7%	2 206 721	62.2%	1 052 807	41.9%
8iii	3 301.5	3 358.4	101.7%	966 655	55.2%	388 580	24.7%
8iv	1 882.7	2 234.9	118.7%	664 833	80.7%	87 531	39.7%
8v	8 921.8	7 873.2	88.2%	2 317 516	70.7%	763 408	30.6%
8vi	635.1	633.0	99.7%	626 321	86.5%	15 702	21.1%
8vii	1 465.1	800.4	54.6%	121 701	25.1%	23 221	1.3%
TO8	40 095.6	38 831.5	96.85%	13 566 126	75.7%	5 170 262	43.8%

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Figure 6.3 and 6.4 below illustrate how implementation has developed over time and show how the project selection rate has steadily increased. The project selection rates and progress towards targets show that Member States tended to first concentrate on the larger investment priorities (IP8i – Access to employment, 8ii – Youth employment, 8iii – Self-employment). The implementation of smaller investment priorities, such as 8iv (Gender equality – 119%), 8vi (Active ageing – 100%), and 8vii (Modernisation of labour market institutions – 55%) started later, but is currently actively catching up and with the exception of the latter even passing these project selection rates.

Figure 6.3 Absorption of budget under investment priorities with employment objective (TO8)



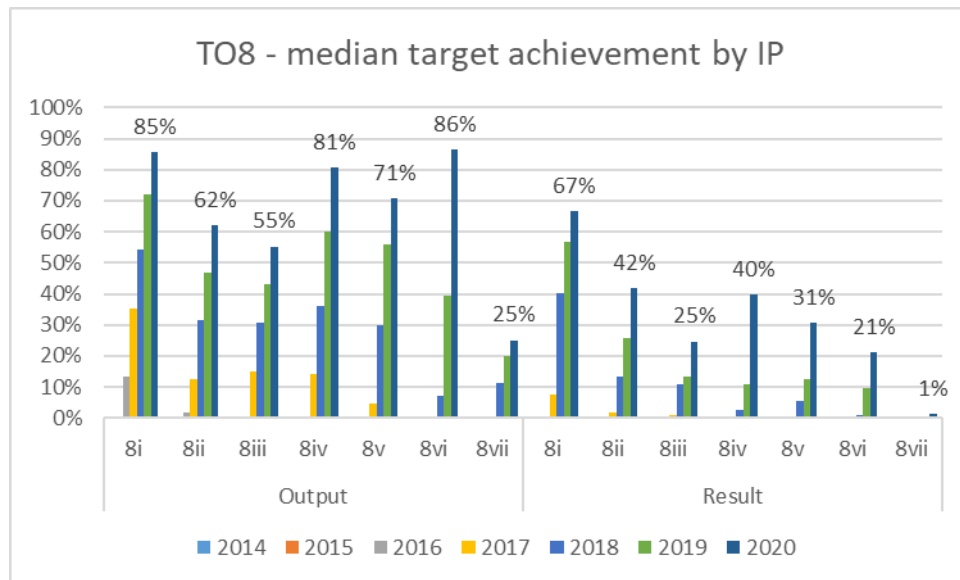
Source: AIRs 2015-2020²⁹

According to different metrics, such as both the costs reported (figure 6.3) and the target achievement (figure 6.4) for output and result indicators, interventions that focus on modernising labour market institutions (IP8vii) progressed the least by the end of 2020. Often these interventions do not focus on reaching individuals, but instead defined targets that are more likely to be only reported toward the end of the programming period (such as number of systems implemented, number of structures revised, etc.). However, this alone does not

²⁹ YEI presented as separate funding for IP8ii. IP 8ii-YEI includes (1) the dedicated EU budget line, (2) mirrored by the ESF share dedicated to YEI, and (3) national co-financing to this ESF share. Investments reported under IP8ii (non-YEI) are not related to YEI, and only consist of ESF funding.

explain the fact that this investment priority is lagging behind also in terms of eligible costs reported. This therefore suggests that its implementation is lagging behind compared to other investment priorities.

Figure 6.4 Evolution of median target achievement under TO8 – by investment priority



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

So far TO8 investments have supported almost 13.6 million participations, which led to almost 5.2 million positive results. These positive results consist of people that find a job, gain a qualification or are able to improve their labour market position thanks to ESF interventions. Such results are represented in table 6.3 below, which presents the key individual results measured by common indicators, as well as a selection of programme-specific indicators. Programme-specific indicators that measure individual results following ESF interventions in TO8 tend to closely follow the common indicators, particularly in investment priorities 8i, 8ii, and 8iii, where the expected results are generally measured in common categories, such as employment / jobs created, qualifications gained, or labour market positions improved.

Investment priorities with smaller financial allocations report lower participation and result figures for individuals. For these priorities, it is therefore insightful to take a closer look at progress and results as measured by programme-specific indicators. Under IP8iv (gender equality), for instance, results are measured in terms of successful projects, or the number of equality measures implemented. No less than 23 971 measures seeking to improve gender equality across nine different Member States can be counted. Interventions in investment priority 8v and 8vi (adaptation of workers and active ageing) across various Member States often measure output and results not only in terms of participations, but also for instance the number of (small- / medium-sized) companies supported. Positive results were reported for a total of 81 599 enterprises. These can vary from concluding training sessions, developing a strategic action plan or put in place specific gender equality measures. Such results can be found across 15 Member States.

Table 6.3 Overview of key result indicators under T08 (common / programme specific)

Categorising key results employment investments as measured by Common indicators	Total achieved	Number of OPs covered	Number of MSs covered
Individual results	5 170 262	152	28
Of which inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving (CR01)	205 665	152	28
Of which participants in education/training upon leaving (CR02)	386 512	152	28
Of which participants gaining a qualification upon leaving (CR03)	1 737 667	152	28
Of which participants in (self-)employment, upon leaving (CR04)	2 840 418	152	28
A selection of key results in employment investments as measured by Programme-specific indicators	Total achieved	Number of OP covered	Number of MS covered
Achievements: Measures on gender equality completed	23 971	16	9
	DE, CZ, ES, FI, FR, LT, PL, SK, UK		
	81 599	53	15
Entities – number of enterprises with positive results³⁰	AT, BG, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GR, HU, IT, LV, PL, PT, RO, SK		
Of which defined explicitly as SME	60 190	29	6
	AT, DE, GR, LV, PL, SK		
Individual results: other positive result after intervention:	485 736	14	1
Number of people supported through preventive health examinations	PL		
Entities – number of Labour Market Institutions with positive results	3 070	18	7
	BG, DK, ES, GR, HR, IT, PL		

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

One specific result that is highlighted in the table is for Polish operational programmes, where active aging projects encouraged older workers to participate in preventive health examinations. A total of 485 736 individuals were reached across the various Polish regional programmes. Note that these projects were set up before COVID-19, and consist of health programmes covering prevention, diagnostics and health promotion provided to individuals in order to maintain good health and extend the age of professional activity, with a particular focus on citizens over 50 years old. They include prevention of a wide variety of possible diseases, including various types of cancer, respiratory diseases as well as mental disorders. A number of regions have started to use these investments to also include COVID-19 tests, but most of such investments are found under Thematic Objective 9 (access to healthcare services).

Investments that focus on modernising labour market institutions (IP8vii) are also not adequately measured by common indicators. A total of 3 070 labour market institutions were reported to have some type of positive result (upgraded systems, key staff members trained, new tools deployed, knowledge exchanged), from across seven Member States. In Spain for instance, the ESF supported improvements to the online portal of the public employment service, to optimise the support provided to local agents. This newly-developed portal serves as a central space for relations between its actors, while enhancing the capacities of professionals, providing them with adequate methodologies, technical assistance and support tools to boost local socio-economic support projects.

6.2 Thematic Objective 9: Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty, and any discrimination

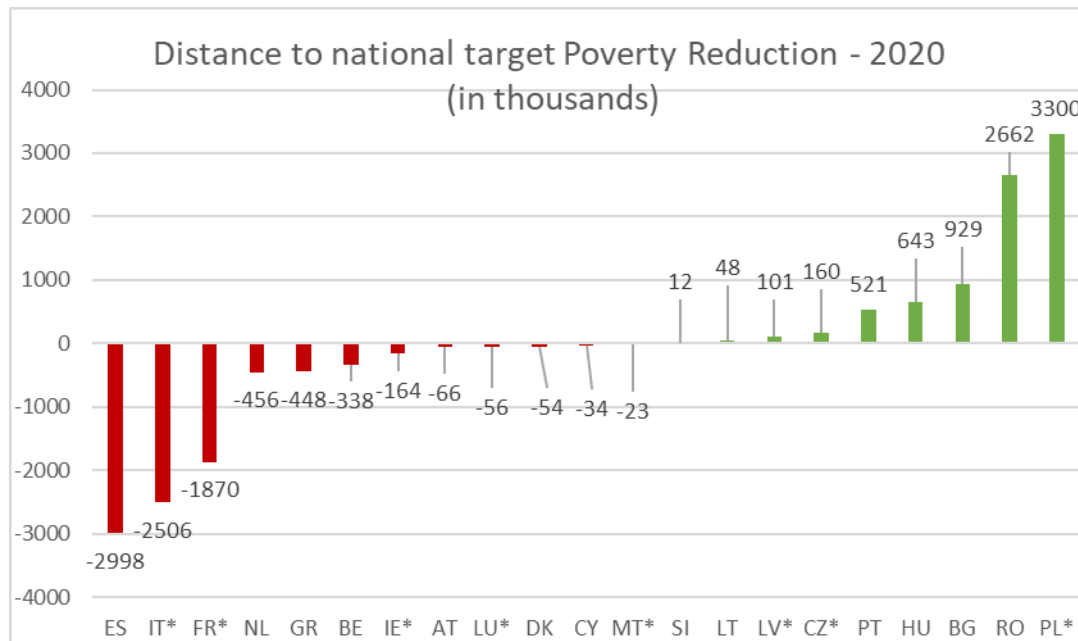
In order to reduce poverty in the EU, the EU 2020 headline target aims to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty. The flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, including the Social Investment Package and the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, support efforts to achieve these targets. In addition, the European

³⁰ Excluding number of enterprises in France reported for IP8vii (2014FR05SFOP001), due to unrealistically high fluctuations (4.6 million enterprises reported in 2015, 200 in 2017).

Commission underlined the importance of also addressing child poverty in order to break the cycle of disadvantage at an early stage³¹. For all these policy initiatives, the ESF is an important pillar for implementation. At least 20 % of ESF resources should be allocated to the promotion of social inclusion. This section assesses the ESF contribution to this objective.

6.2.1 Objectives

Figure 6.5 Distance to national poverty reduction targets (2020, in thousands)³²



Source: Eurostat (ilc_peps01)

Progress towards the national headline targets has been varied, particularly as the economic and financial crisis posed challenges towards meeting these targets, as shown in figure 6.5. Slightly under half of EU Member States met their target, while the other half still has some distance to cover. In Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Czechia, Portugal, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and Poland targets were met, showing that particularly in Romania and Poland the national target has been significantly overachieved. So far, Italy, Spain and France show the largest distance to target, with together over 6.4 million individuals still to be lifted out of poverty. The Netherlands, Greece, Belgium, Ireland, Austria, Luxembourg, Denmark, Cyprus, and Malta have not yet reached their targets either, but are considerably closer (in absolute terms)³³. At EU level, the aggregated target of lifting 20 million persons out of poverty remains distant. In 2018 the number of persons in poverty was for the first time reduced to below the number measured in 2008. At the moment there are no official statistics for 2020 at EU level yet. Based on an unofficial mapping of recent data for Member States that reported 2020 values, and the previous year for Member States that did not (marked with *), it seems that the number of people lifted out of poverty has further increased in 2020 to roughly 12.2 million, against 12.0 million in 2019. If this finding was corroborated with the official statistics, this would be quite a considerable achievement that defies the expectation that the COVID-19 crisis would instead raise poverty levels in the EU.

Against this background, the need for additional efforts to ensure the effectiveness of social protection systems is clear, to counter the effects of the crisis, promote social inclusion and prevent poverty by activating inclusion strategies (including efficient and adequate income support, measures to tackle poverty, as well as broad access to social services). EU Member

³¹ Commission Recommendation of 20 February 2013. Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage (2013/112/EU).

³² The score with Member States with an asterisk (*) is based on 2019, as no data is available for 2020 at the time of writing this report.

³³ For Germany, Estonia, Croatia, Slovakia, Finland, and Sweden no targets have been included in Eurostat for a comparable definition.

States spend varying shares of GDP on social protection, and also achieve different results in terms of reducing poverty.

6.2.2 ESF interventions under thematic objective 9

The ESF 2014-2020 represents an important contribution that helps complement national efforts in achieving the Europe 2020 poverty headline target. In order to ensure that a sufficient share of resources is allocated to promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, Article 4(2) of the ESF Regulation requests that at least 20 % of the total ESF resources in each Member State is allocated to this thematic objective. Although higher social spending is generally associated with stronger poverty reduction, important differences in poverty across Member States remain and allow sufficient room for further improvement. For this purpose, for instance, the link between social assistance and activation measures needs to be further strengthened by developing more personalised services and efforts to improve the uptake of measures among vulnerable groups. More specifically, the ESF supports the promotion of social inclusion and combating poverty through the following investment priorities:

- (9i). Active inclusion including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability;
- (9ii). Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities, such as the Roma;
- (9iii). Combating all forms of discrimination and promoting equal opportunities;
- (9iv). Enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, including health care and social services of general interest;
- (9v). Promoting social entrepreneurship and vocational integration in social enterprises and the social and solidarity economy in order to facilitate access to employment;
- (9vi). Community-led local development strategies.

Most operations under investment priority 9i relate to reducing barriers to employment and integration for groups at the margins of the labour market, or those at risk of poverty and social exclusion; these groups are closely related to the investment priorities falling under TO8. Operations support for instance pathways to employment, including integrated individualised approaches (combining needs assessments / diagnosis, individual counselling, accreditation of prior learning and working experience, basic education, training, work experience places, job counselling, anti-discrimination measures and information / awareness-raising activities, hiring support for companies, job coaching / support at the workplace).

In addition to the broad category of active inclusion in IP9i, a second investment priority focuses more broadly on the socio-economic integration of marginalised communities. Operations under this investment priority address the improvement and accessibility in educational provision, as well as improving employment, social and health services, and housing, along with reducing existing segregation practices. As such, this priority seeks to combat discrimination and reduce disadvantages and poverty. Directly and indirectly, such measures also target children of marginalised communities and in poverty. The priority includes actions that seek to improve the prospects of people with a foreign / migrant background, but also otherwise marginalised communities such as the Roma, by supporting measures to improve vocational training and increase labour market participation of these target groups.

Investment priority 9iii offers another form in which Member States can improve the position of vulnerable groups and promote equal opportunities. It addresses actions supporting the promotion of equal opportunities and fighting all types of discrimination by supporting entities in charge, combatting discrimination and developing awareness-raising programmes and training amongst a variety of stakeholders.

Under IP9iv, Member States can set up operations that seek to enhance access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, including health care and social services of general interest. These operations mostly support actions for entities (social service providers in the field of education, employment, healthcare, and others) adjusting their policies, working

arrangements, and developing programmes, tools and instruments. In a limited number of cases, actions under this investment priority directly support individuals.

Investment priority 9v includes interventions that seek to promote social entrepreneurship and vocational integration in social enterprises and the social economy. It does so by subsidising specific costs for running social enterprises, provision of micro credits and/or wage subsidies for employees, developing business plans, mentoring, providing legal and accounting support, and more. Management and supporting staff of social enterprises are also trained to improve their capacity for effective management of social enterprises. This should facilitate access to employment for vulnerable groups.

Finally, active inclusion is being promoted under IP9vi through supporting community-led local development strategies. Operations under this investment priority support the involvement of local communities with the aim of solving local unemployment, supporting SMEs and social enterprises, providing education possibilities for the disadvantaged, access to social services, community-based social work and more.

6.2.3 Implementation of social inclusion investments

Thematic Objective 9 has been allocated a total of EUR 34.1 billion (EU + national co-financing), of which 98.1% had been selected for projects by the end of 2020. This project selection rate suggests that progress is relatively well underway, with only limited differences between Member States.

Table 6.4 Overview of Implementation under TO9 – by Member State

MS	Allocated budget	Eligible costs	% project selection	Participations	Median output achievement	Individual results	Median result achievement	Average success rate
	(x€ million)							
AT	271.8	264.2	97.2%	91 229	154.1%	29 900	200.0%	33%
BE	742.3	784.8	105.7%	350 566	139.3%	123 281	63.1%	35%
BG	542.8	450.7	83.0%	379 942	89.3%	81 906	92.5%	22%
CY	121.6	87.5	72.0%	1 458	112.2%	476	103.3%	33%
CZ	1 050.8	1 052.3	100.1%	117 875	72.5%	18 570	48.9%	16%
DE	4 031.7	4 258.1	105.6%	688 518	101.3%	338 471	73.2%	49%
DK	78.3	73.9	94.4%	6 476	38.1%	1 622	18.7%	25%
EE	168.8	166.1	98.4%	33 265	95.0%	4 348	135.4%	13%
ES	2 870.4	2 862.6	99.7%	1 420 687	84.8%	618 637	11.9%	44%
FI	201.1	187.0	93.0%	48 222	94.9%	4 720	20.0%	10%
FR	3 652.1	4 017.2	110.0%	2 473 064	42.5%	1 021 094	16.5%	41%
GR	1 499.7	1 816.7	121.1%	238 908	76.7%	22 286	0.0%	9%
HR	400.2	478.1	119.5%	58 448	51.6%	5 684	0.9%	10%
HU	1 239.9	1 413.4	114.0%	255 850	106.0%	59 786	10.1%	23%
IE	297.6	297.6	100.0%	66 561	34.6%	28 543	26.3%	43%
IT	4 790.4	3 396.0	70.9%	1 483 277	50.0%	80 178	0.0%	5%
LT	283.6	315.0	111.1%	288 631	133.7%	18 769	80.0%	7%
LU	11.0	11.5	104.8%	2 774	77.1%	205	3.2%	7%
LV	294.5	308.3	104.7%	142 376	46.8%	8 127	48.4%	6%
MT	40.0	41.8	104.4%	9 113	89.4%	3 225	19.6%	35%
NL	726.3	880.3	121.2%	539 307	268.6%	131 718	65.5%	24%
PL	3 398.1	3 063.0	90.1%	892 974	71.1%	227 311	33.0%	25%
PT	1 785.9	1 751.6	98.1%	365 853	44.0%	35 488	0.0%	10%
RO	2 039.6	2 304.7	113.0%	118 670	0.3%	5 934	0.0%	5%
SE	309.5	309.4	99.9%	22 964	73.2%	8 866	77.4%	39%
SI	197.0	219.2	111.3%	9 730	89.3%	2 423	22.6%	25%
SK	563.7	616.4	109.4%	213 102	71.2%	2 434	95.9%	1%
UK	2 508.7	2 047.7	81.6%	455 364	39.2%	141 069	15.5%	31%
Total EU	34 117.4	33 475.2	98.1%	10 775 204	75.0%	3 025 071	21.0%	28%
Region	Allocated budget	Eligible costs	% project selection	Participations	Median output achievement	Individual results	Median result achievement	Average success rate
	(x€ million)							
Less dev.	14 399.3	14 035.3	97.5%	3 769 208	68.3%	513 959	24.8%	14%
More dev.	14 732.2	14 480.5	98.3%	5 120 181	81.4%	1 739 787	25.0%	34%
Transition	4 985.9	4 959.4	99.5%	1 885 815	75.3%	771 325	7.8%	41%

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

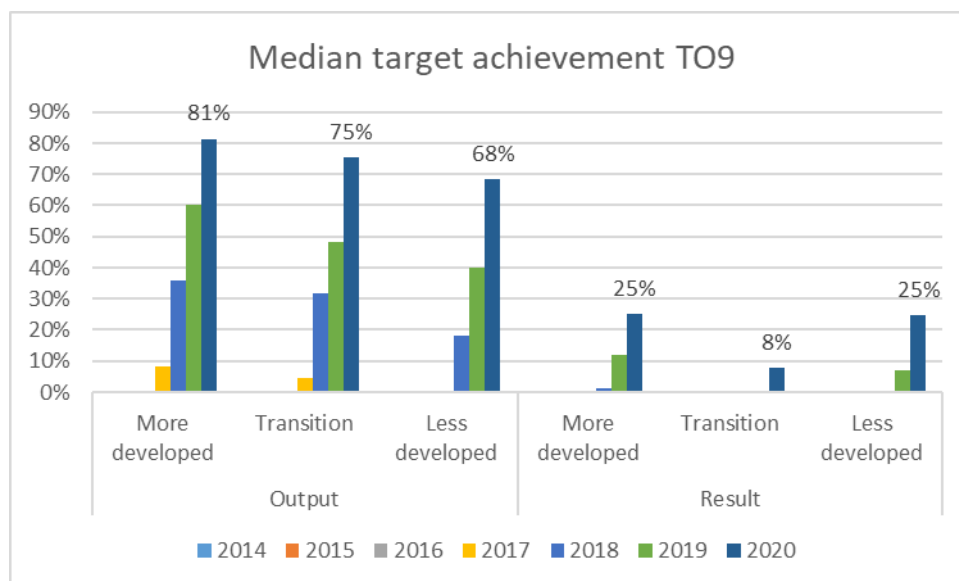
In terms of individual results achieved, less developed regions reached only around one-third of the number of results achieved in more developed regions (0.5 million in less developed against 1.7 million in more developed regions). When looking at this data, one must take into account that the EU2020 poverty headline target draws attention to the considerable effort needed in more developed regions, where particular attention to pockets of poverty continues to require policy action. However, the differences in number of participations and results are worth noting; while similar budgets are allocated and spent, considerably more participations and results are reported in more developed regions and transition regions. While it is hard to pinpoint specific reasons for this trend, it is conceivable that Member States with less developed regions more often dedicated social inclusion investments towards entities, services and support structures, which are not counted in participation, nor in immediate individual results.

The median target achievement for output indicators in less developed regions also lags behind other categories of regions. In terms of the target achievement of results, the median achievement in Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Romania continues at 0%, which means that at least half of their result indicators still do not yet report any progress towards their targets. The final column of table 6.4 shows that the number of results reported so far in Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Romania and Slovakia remains low, when compared against the number of participations reached (less than 10%, compared against an EU average of 28%). Particularly in Member States where this is combined with a relatively low achievement rate of result indicators (in Croatia, Luxembourg, Romania), this suggests that considerable improvements in results achievement need to materialize in the final years of implementation. Luxembourg confirms there is high demand for the remaining projects in the area of social inclusion and expects increased results. The managing authorities responsible for programmes in Croatia and Romania do not explicitly indicate whether they expect increased results for the same interventions.

For all figures on implementation (project selection, outputs, results or target achievement rates) it is important to highlight that these are still moving targets. At the time of writing this report, COVID-19 related reprogramming of OPs is still ongoing for half of the OPs, whereas the AIRs 2020 only report on COVID-19 responses of the ESF in a small number of programmes. The large majority of reprogramming efforts are taking place under Thematic Objective 9, and particularly under the investment priority (9iv) which supports enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, including health care. As these (re)programming efforts are going to be finalised in the course of 2021, new targets, with considerably different target achievement rates, can be expected.

Figure 6.6 shows relatively comparable target achievement rates by the end 2020 across different types of region, with a median target achievement for output indicators in less developed regions (68%) slightly behind that of more developed and transition regions (81% and 75% respectively). For result indicators, median target achievement continues to be relatively low, but can be expected to increase towards the final years. In more developed regions the first progress in the median was reported in 2018, with the median target achievement now reaching 25%, similar to that in less developed regions, and above that of transition regions (8%).

Figure 6.6 Evolution of median target achievement under TO9 – by region



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

The progress in implementation was further analysed at the level of individual investment priorities. At this level, it is reassuring that the dominant investment priority (IP9i) also shows the highest project selection rates (106.5%) and produced a considerable number of observable results towards the EU poverty-reduction objectives (2.8 million). Investment in the area of community-led local development (IP9vi) continues to be the investment priority with the lowest progress in implementation, both in terms of project selection, as well as output and result target achievement. However, due to its relatively small size, it has only a marginal effect on the overall figures for the overall thematic objective.

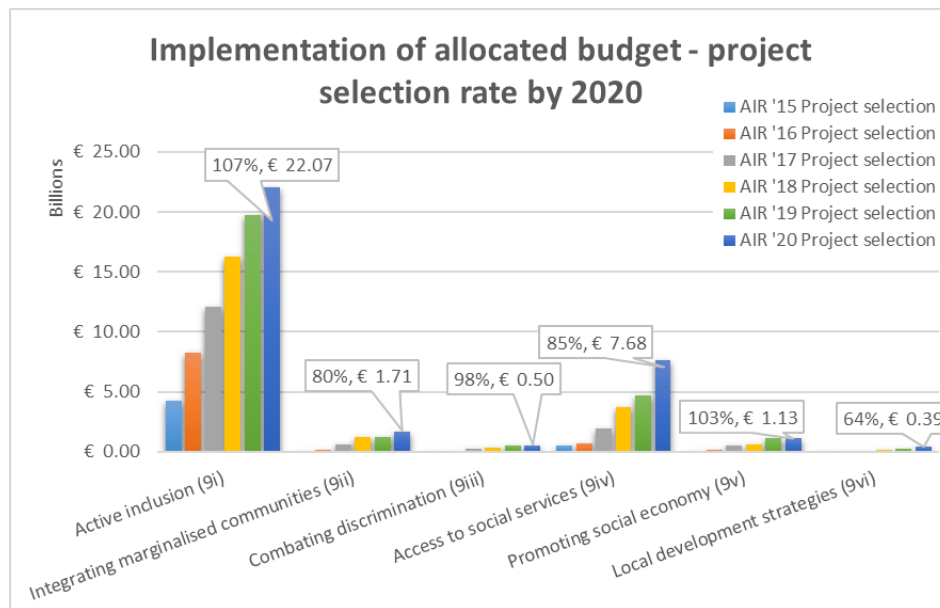
Table 6.5 Overview of TO9

IP	Allocated budget (x€million)	Eligible costs (x€million)	% project selection	Participations	Median output achievement	Individual results	Median result achievement
9i	20 713.2	22 068.2	106.5%	8 095 318	93.7%	2 768 553	41.5%
9ii	2 119.0	1 705.6	80.5%	564 749	68.7%	101 603	0.0%
9iii	513.8	504.1	98.1%	275 919	100.0%	46 746	28.6%
9iv	9 063.8	7 675.4	84.7%	1 581 977	43.7%	72 854	4.5%
9v	1 092.0	1 129.3	103.4%	170 327	56.2%	24 809	6.7%
9vi	615.6	392.7	63.8%	86 914	22.4%	10 506	1.8%
TO9	34 117.4	33 475.2	98.1%	10 775 204	75.0%	3 025 071	21.0%

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Despite the relatively limited progress towards result targets, the trend in project selection shows that overall implementation at the level of the thematic objective is ongoing. Under Thematic Objective 9, implementation efforts by Member States are predominantly focused around active inclusion (IP9i). Member States allocated a variety of interventions to this broad investment priority, also evidenced by its highest allocated budget.

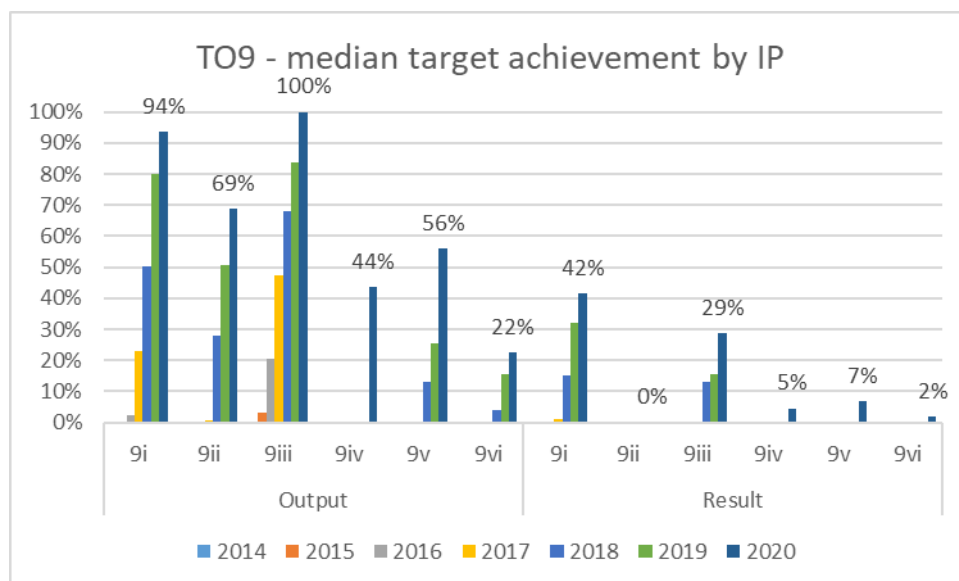
Figure 6.7 Absorption of budget under investment priorities with social inclusion objective (TO9)



Source: AIRs 2015-2020

Target achievement rates for output indicators have been substantially improving since 2018, and further increased in 2020. The median output target achievement rate in the area of combating discrimination (9iii) even reached 100%, followed by active inclusion (9i – 94%), and integrating marginalised communities (9ii – 69%). As already noted above, the progress towards result targets under this thematic objective continues to be relatively low, with at least half of indicators in four investment priorities below 7% of their target achievement. Possibly, this lag in progress for result indicators is related to the more structural indicators defined for these investment priorities (welfare services, social enterprises, local development plans, etc.), where results may only be achieved some time after concluding the interventions, much unlike employment initiatives, where an effect is measured soon after concluding the intervention. For investments in enhancing access to services (9iv), the additional programming of new indicators associated with REACT-EU reprogramming (see section 2.2) is likely to influence target achievement rates in the coming years. This calls for careful monitoring of progress in this area towards the final years of implementation.

Figure 6.8 Evolution of median target achievement under TO9 – by investment priority



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Individual background characteristics (either economic status, education, or family backgrounds) are captured by the common indicators and show for instance how investments under thematic objective 9 target specific target groups, such as low-skilled, (long-term) unemployed, elderly, disabled, and people with a migrant / foreign background. In addition, programme-specific indicators allow programmes to measure in greater detail characteristics that are more specific to certain interventions and show, for instance, how programmes also targeted prisoners and ex-offenders, drug users, people with mental disorders, individuals on specific social support programmes, children in vulnerable situations, specific ethnic minorities, and residents – and their children – from priority neighbourhoods. By the end of 2020, a total of 3.0 million individual results were recorded by the ESF common indicators for these 10.8 million participations, among which the number of participants that found employment upon leaving the intervention is the largest (slightly over 1.2 million, see table 6.6 below). In addition to this aggregation of results in common categories, which are largely oriented towards the economic status of participants, TO9 investments also achieved various other types of results. These are better captured by the programme-specific indicators tailored to the specific objectives of each programme and are also presented in the table below.

Table 6.6 Overview of key result indicators under T09 (common / programme specific)

Categorising key results social inclusion investments measured by Common indicators	Total achieved	Number of OP covered	Number of MS covered
Individual results	3 025 071	145	28
Of which inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving (CR01)	529 028	145	28
Of which participants in education/training upon leaving (CR02)	491 683	145	28
Of which participants gaining a qualification upon leaving (CR03)	786 085	145	28
Of which participants in (self-)employment, upon leaving (CR04)	1 218 275	145	28
Categorising key figures social inclusion investments measured by Programme-specific indicators	Total achieved	Number of OP covered	Number of MS covered
Individual result: other positive result after intervention: The number of people who took advantage of new, innovative measures for the implementation of social inclusion	780 193	47	20
	AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, GR, HR, HU, IT, LT, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK		
Achievements: Capacity increased of health / social welfare	482 174	60	16
	BG, CZ, ES, FR, GR, HR, HU, IT, LV, LT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, UK		
Achievements: Capacity increased for childcare	82 601	20	5
	BE, BG, IT, SK, UK		
Entity: enterprise / economic operator – Social enterprises	18 027	40	11
	BG, CZ, ES, GR, HU, IT, LT, NL, PL, RO, SI		
Achievement – jobs created in social enterprises	11 417	21	5
	CY, CZ, FR, PL, UK		
Achievement – jobs preserved in social enterprises	7 717	7	2
	ES, LT		

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Beyond standard results measured by common indicators on job status or qualification, typical results achieved by investments under TO9 consist, for instance, of broad positive effects (reported at more than 780 000), such as an increased quality of life, better life opportunities, reduction of dependence on certain services, or integration in communities. Such indicators can be found in 20 Member States, across 47 different operational programmes. These ESF programmes sometimes do not further define the positive effects of interventions, for instance where participation by itself is counted as a positive result of the intervention (i.e., reaching hard-to-reach target groups).

Another typical focus of many interventions supported under TO9 consisted in expanding the capacity of a variety of social services in the field of healthcare, social welfare, or childcare,

for instance. Such services are an important means to address the multi-faceted character of poverty, and more specifically of child poverty in the EU. While a specific investment priority (IP9iv) is dedicated to access to services, various interventions across other investment priorities also contribute to this objective. There are interventions with a general focus on active inclusion (IP9i), or supporting marginalised communities (IP9ii), combating discrimination (IP9iii), and community-led local development (IP9vi). Each of these priorities can be achieved by improving the capacity of social services. So far, this type of investments has contributed to increasing the capacity of such services by almost 500 000 users. For example, Slovakia launched a project focusing on the implementation of measures for the social protection of children, as well as another project focusing on the effective re-socialisation of drug users. Latvia concentrates its operations on access to health promotion and disease prevention services, in particular for people at risk of territorial, poverty and social exclusion at national and regional level. Already before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Latvian ESF OP facilitated the training of doctors, and measures to attract doctors to regions where these were most needed. In Bulgaria, the ESF supported improving access to services for more than 52 000 participants (elderly and with disabilities) that are not able to make use of automated (self-service) service provision.

Within TO9, investment priority 9v brings together projects that focus on promoting the social economy. While the common result indicators on job status give some indication on the results of these interventions, assessing the programme-specific indicators allows a deeper understanding of ESF achievements in this area. By the end of 2020, 18 027 social enterprises benefited from ESF support. For these 18 027 enterprises, 11 417 jobs were created, while another 7 717 jobs were preserved in such entities with support from ESF. Moreover, a total of 18 941 projects were implemented at least partially by civil society organisations. Particularly in the development of community-led local development strategies (IP9vi) and interventions combating discrimination (IP9iii), further increases in the number of such projects can be expected in the final years of ESF implementation.

6.3 Thematic Objective 10: Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning

6.3.1 Objectives

Education is one of the main pathways to achieve the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The Europe 2020 strategy sets out a target for 'reducing the share of early leavers of education and training to less than 10 % and increasing the share of the population aged 30 to 34 having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40 %' by 2020.

In addition to the EU2020 goals on education (that remain the cornerstone of European strategy in this field), "Education and Training 2020" (ET 2020) provides complementary common strategic objectives for Member States, including a set of principles for achieving these objectives, as well as common working methods with priority areas for each periodic work cycle³⁴. This strategy framework consists of European benchmarks in the fields of: participation in early childhood education; skills in reading, mathematics and science; the rate of early leavers from education and training; education attainment in higher education; higher education graduates spending some time studying or training abroad; and the share of employed graduates. The ESF contributes to these objectives through four dedicated investment priorities.

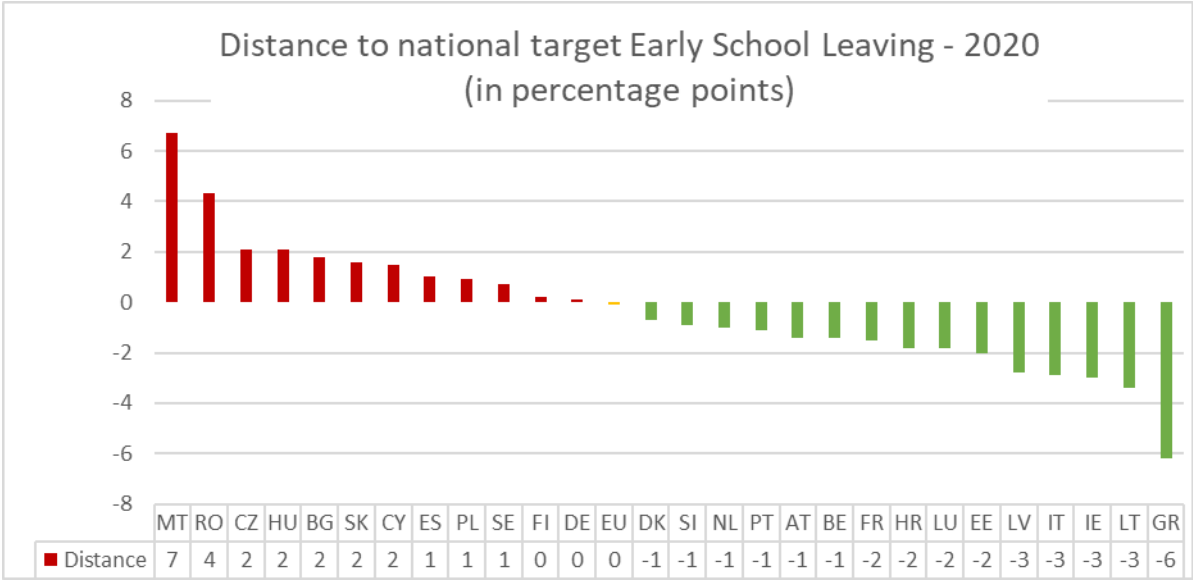
The EU 2020 target for reducing early school leaving has been met³⁵. National targets were reached by Denmark, Slovenia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Austria, Belgium, France, Croatia, Luxembourg, Estonia, Latvia, Italy, Ireland, Lithuania, and Greece (see figure 6.9 below). Another group of Member States is made up of countries that did not reach the national targets, but came relatively close, such as Czechia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Cyprus,

³⁴ It should be mentioned however that the CPR is not directly linked to the ET2020 strategy

³⁵ Early School Leaving is defined by the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with, at most, lower secondary education and who are not in further education or training;

Spain, Poland, Sweden, Finland and Germany. Malta and Romania remained further away from their targets, with over 2 percentage points away from their national target.

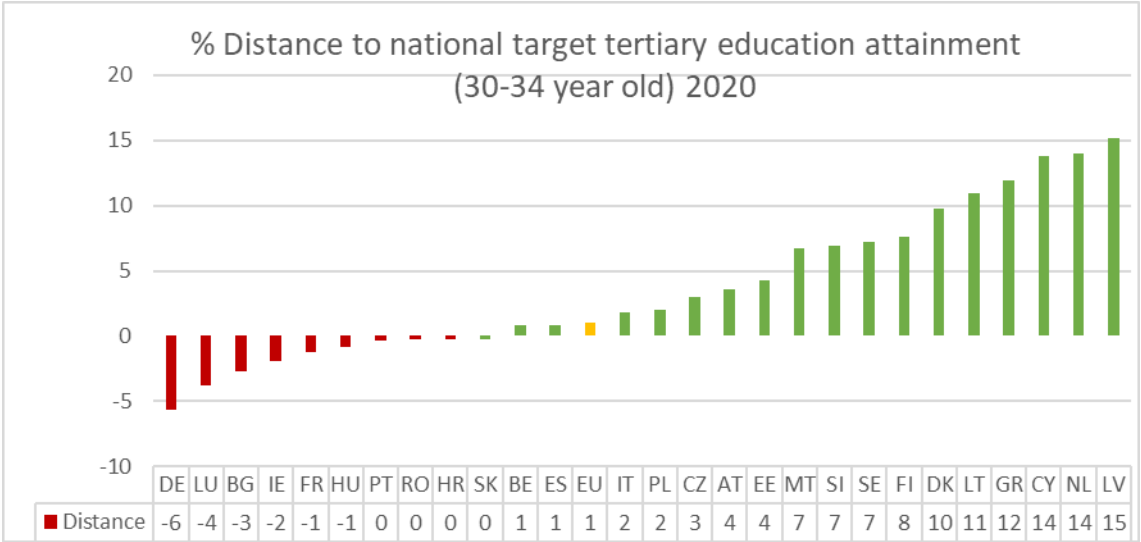
Figure 6.9 Headline target on Early School Leaving – distance from national targets in 2020 (in percentage points)



Source: Eurostat (EDAT_LFSE_14)

The second EU2020 target for education refers to tertiary educational attainment for the 30-34 age group, which was also met at EU level in 2020. Two-thirds of EU Member States reached their national targets in time; a second group is very close to reaching their national targets (Portugal, Romania, Croatia). In Germany, Luxembourg, Bulgaria, Ireland, France and Hungary increases in educational attainment were not enough to meet their national targets³⁶.

Figure 6.10 Headline target on tertiary education attainment (30-34-year-old) 2020 – distance from national targets (in percentage points)



Source: Eurostat (T2020_41)

³⁶ Also note that DE's national target includes post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) graduates, who however are not included in the attainment rate measured for 2016; LU set the highest national target in the EU (66%), also reflecting the high share of tertiary educated people in its young population, regardless of their place of study (its attainment rate in 2016 neared 55%).

6.3.2 ESF interventions under thematic objective 10

National efforts to reach the EU headline targets are substantially complemented by ESF funding, which is recognised as one of the crucial implementation mechanisms for the EU2020 objectives. The ESF 2014-2020 concentrates investments in education under the following four investment priorities:

- (10i). Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for reintegrating into education and training;
- (10ii). Improving the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged groups;
- (10iii). Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways, including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences;
- (10iv). Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes.

Investment priority 10i combines various types of actions and operations with the objective of reducing and preventing early school-leaving. This also includes projects that promote equal access to good quality early-childhood education, primary and secondary education including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways to support reintegration. The overwhelming majority of targets and programme-specific indicators consist of young people in education. Other frequently-targeted groups are schools, low-skilled individuals and school personnel.

The second headline target of Europe 2020 addresses the share of population that is enrolled in tertiary education. Investments towards this target are mainly categorised under IP10ii. The objective of this priority is to improve the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged groups. As such, it brings together various aspects in the sphere of education, but also elements that may be targeted under Thematic Objective 9, under fighting against discrimination and promoting equal opportunities.

Whereas IP10i focuses on general education and IP10ii on higher education, IP10iii includes operations that seek to improve quality and access to lifelong learning, including all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings. It contributes to upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways, including career guidance and validation of acquired competences.

Finally, IP10iv brings together operations that seek to improve the overall education and training systems, improve the transition from education to work, and strengthen vocational education and training systems and their quality. This is being carried out through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes. Target groups defined by the programme-specific indicators range from schools, low-skilled individuals and school personnel and also include enterprises (employers, companies, and organisations).

6.3.3 Implementation of education and training investments

A total of EUR 37.1 billion has been allocated to thematic objective 10 (EU + national co-financing), which makes it the second largest thematic objective under the ESF, only slightly lower than TO8. Table 6.7 below shows that project selection for TO10 is at or above 100% in most Member States and types of region. In terms of participation and target achievement rates, the different types of region are remarkably similar; the only differences appear in the

success rates, which show that the share of results per output is considerably lower in less developed regions (26%) than elsewhere.

All Member States report participations and results. However, differences persist among individual Member States. When considering the share of project selection costs (225.7%) reported by Cyprus, its participation figures remain relatively low (67.3% median target achievement). In its AIR, Cyprus indicates that it is due to lower-than-expected interest from employees, unemployed and employers in vocational training programmes. In Romania, despite a considerable increase in participation figures, the median target achievement in 2020 continues to be the lowest across Europe, at 9.4%. Romanian authorities report challenges related to COVID-19 measures, but these challenges are not further specified. No specific challenges are reported for the implementation of its TO10 interventions, but in earlier years authorities had pointed to staffing challenges at the Ministry of Education. Progress towards result targets reached a median achievement of 41.8%, but also remains relatively low in Denmark, Croatia, Luxembourg, and Romania. In Denmark, this is explained by a lower-than-expected demand for long-term education courses at the start of the programme, which led to lower-than-expected outputs by end-2020. These projects are still ongoing and have not reported any results yet. Luxembourg indicated that it had not been able to include all data related to all common indicators at this stage, which will be revised in the next AIR.

Table 6.7 Overview of Implementation under TO10 – by Member State

MS	Allocated budget	Eligible costs	% project selection	Participations	Median output achievement	Individual results	Median result achievement	Average success rate
	(x€ million)							
AT	435.6	433.6	99.6%	119 713	117.9%	36 527	67.1%	31%
BE	592.1	608.8	102.8%	413 510	141.6%	129 425	110.8%	31%
BG	328.6	262.3	79.8%	1 027 945	49.5%	507 700	87.2%	49%
CY	13.3	30.0	225.7%	2 610	67.3%	2 066	95.7%	79%
CZ	1 322.3	1 331.1	100.7%	96 174	90.7%	6 781	50.0%	7%
DE	3 996.6	4 171.6	104.4%	1 257 335	82.2%	805 649	71.8%	64%
DK	126.1	129.4	102.7%	34 693	96.2%	2 109	8.5%	6%
EE	239.0	228.5	95.6%	64 940	95.2%	55 703	85.8%	86%
ES	3 214.3	5 340.1	166.1%	2 187 394	79.3%	1 770 535	51.4%	81%
FI	332.8	369.6	111.0%	133 744	120.2%	6 420	44.0%	5%
FR	2 704.7	3 157.1	116.7%	674 925	76.6%	396 299	56.0%	59%
GR	1 246.5	1 269.5	101.8%	197 789	113.1%	138 658	20.0%	70%
HR	529.4	510.4	96.4%	76 139	49.0%	4 141	0.0%	5%
HU	1 516.5	1 409.8	93.0%	660 843	62.6%	399 659	11.1%	60%
IE	241.1	241.1	100.0%	240 936	78.9%	168 864	91.6%	70%
IT	4 843.7	5 087.2	105.0%	3 681 731	80.3%	399 048	20.6%	11%
LT	533.2	534.7	100.3%	300 649	89.8%	44 899	72.5%	15%
LU	7.2	9.5	133.0%	7 757	88.3%	69	0.0%	1%
LV	297.2	278.7	93.8%	78 011	96.6%	15 100	29.7%	19%
MT	40.9	36.4	88.9%	17 879	122.8%	2 159	41.8%	12%
NL								
PL	4 642.6	4 252.1	91.6%	2 844 398	92.7%	495 042	50.0%	17%
PT	4 790.1	4 746.4	99.1%	1 197 281	67.9%	336 700	56.0%	28%
RO	991.5	700.2	70.6%	366 971	9.4%	16 477	0.0%	4%
SE	446.1	358.2	80.3%	168 759	80.9%	6 919	26.3%	4%
SI	266.1	252.8	95.0%	245 944	108.8%	49 737	82.7%	20%
SK	419.1	399.2	95.2%	245 331	86.8%	9 526	28.6%	4%
UK	2 933.9	3 289.4	112.1%	550 335	50.6%	360 582	28.6%	66%
Total EU	37 050.4	39 437.8	106.4%	16 893 736	83.4%	6 166 794	41.8%	37%
Region	Allocated budget	Eligible costs	% project selection	Participations	Median output achievement	Individual results	Median result achievement	Average success rate
	(x€ million)							
Less dev.	18 827.4	18 625.0	98.9%	9 130 263	84.3%	2 332 752	42.6%	26%
More dev.	13 025.2	14 637.7	112.4%	5 039 184	80.8%	2 069 755	41.4%	41%
Transition	5 197.8	6 175.1	118.8%	2 724 289	89.9%	1 764 287	40.2%	65%

Empty fields indicate that no interventions are programmed for the thematic objective in that Member State.

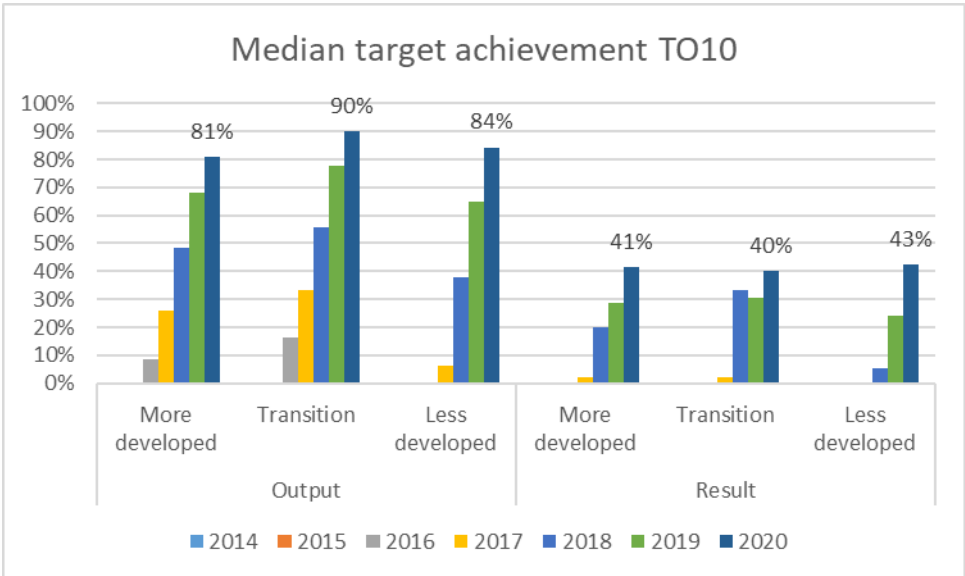
Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

All Member States indicate that COVID-19 measures had an impact on progress in implementation of education investments, but vary in the level of detail when describing how

exactly TO10 investments were impacted. Many education providers were unable to offer training, there were less face-to-face lessons, and difficulties in the planning and execution of projects due to the multitude of unforeseen events. Member States also highlight how projects adapted to these consequences, through adapting training offer and education programmes, introducing distance-learning, the design of e-learning modules and other responses.

Investments under thematic objective 10 have led to considerable increases in target achievement of output indicators, as shown by the median values reported across different regions in figure 6.11. Unlike most other thematic objectives, median output target achievement has been steadily increasing since 2016, and has now reached 81% in more developed regions, 84% in less developed regions, and 90% in transition regions. The median achievement rate of result indicators is also relatively uniform, around 40%.

Figure 6.11 Evolution of median target achievement under TO10 –by region



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Table 6.8 below summarises the progress for each of the four investment priorities under TO10 in terms of eligible costs reported, participations and short-term individual results achieved, and progress towards targets set for output and result indicators. It shows how implementation of operations focusing on the quality of higher education (IP10ii) remained behind other types of interventions (97.9% project selection rate against overall 106.4%). Reported costs selected for investment in early school leaving (IP10i) and improving labour market relevance (IP10iv) have already exceeded the allocated amount (116.5% and 105.9% respectively). These interventions also exceeded the median target achievement rates of other investment priorities. This further confirms the substantial ESF contribution to the EU headline target on early school leaving, and the advanced state of implementation suggests that the ESF has significantly contributed to achieving this objective. ESF interventions (mostly found under IP10ii) that support progress towards the other headline target (attainment of higher education) show considerably lower numbers of participations and individual results than the other investment priorities under TO10, even when accounting for the lower budget dedicated to such investments. To some extent these are a reflection of the more structural nature of operations, which do not necessarily reach and count individuals, but focus on education providers and count the number of curricula and structural changes. Such broader achievements are not fully captured in quantitative indicators, even if these are tailored programme-specific indicators. However, the achievement rate of result indicators (which are tailored to the specificity of the interventions) is also comparatively low (a median target achievement of 13.8% is reported, compared to 41.8% for the entire thematic objective).

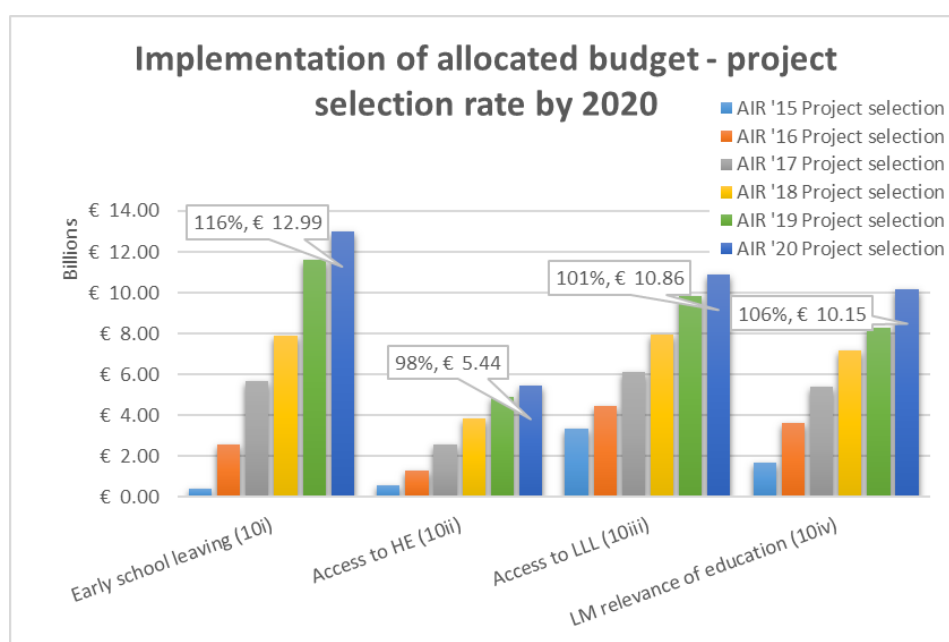
Table 6.8 Overview of TO10

IP	Allocated budget (x€million)	Eligible costs (x€million)	% project selection	Participations	Median output achievement	Individual results	Median result achievement
10i	11 149.9	12 987.2	116.5%	7 547 565	92.7%	1 726 058	48.3%
10ii	5 553.7	5 436.7	97.9%	972 135	73.6%	193 292	13.8%
10iii	10 759.3	10 859.6	100.9%	5 470 751	83.6%	2 814 545	55.3%
10iv	9 587.5	10 154.2	105.9%	2 903 285	75.4%	1 432 899	36.6%
TO10	37 050.4	39 437.8	106.4%	16 893 736	83.4%	6 166 794	41.8%

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Figure 6.12 below shows how the project selection rate of TO10 investments has steadily improved over time. For each investment priority a relatively stable progress is reported; only for early school leaving (IP10i) a comparatively bigger improvement was reported from 2018 to 2019, possibly in relation to the upcoming EU2020 target.

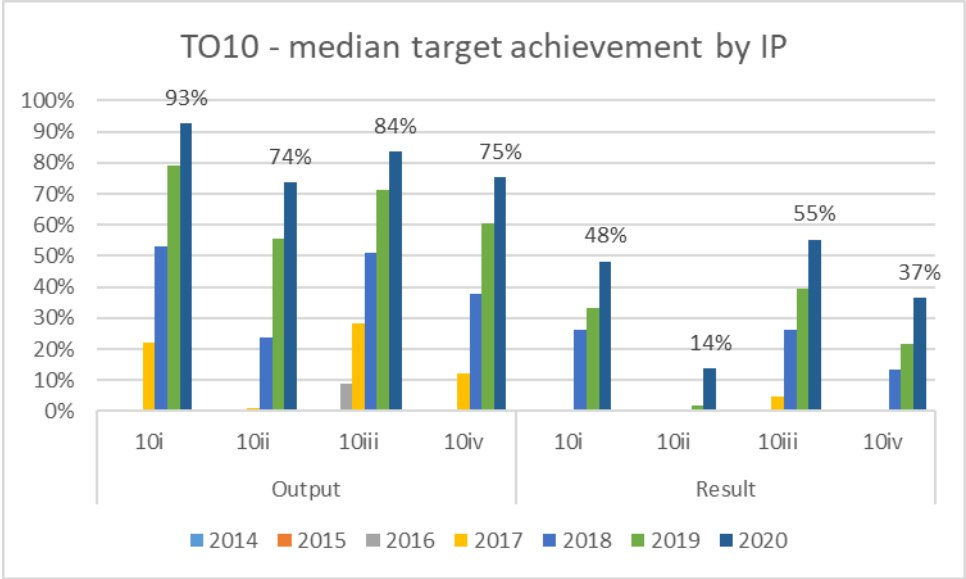
Figure 6.12 Absorption of budget under investment priorities with education objectives (TO10)



Source: AIRs 2015-2020

Progress towards the indicator targets shows most improvements since 2018. The median target achievement for output indicators reached 93% for early school leaving, which means that half of the indicators under this investment priority report a target achievement above 93%. Other TO10 investment priorities also show substantial target achievement rates, with investments in access to higher education (10ii) as the lowest with 74%. As can be expected, the target achievement for result indicators is lower than that of output indicators and still has considerable room for improvement in the coming years.

Figure 6.13 Evolution of median target achievement under TO10 - by investment priority



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

In total, 16.9 million participations are reported under TO10, of which 6.1 million have reached an individual short-term result. For operations that seek to reduce early school leaving (IP10i) and increase access to lifelong learning (IP10iii) the common indicators for individual outputs and results provide an accurate picture of the results of these investments. At the end of 2020, 4.3 million participants gained a qualification with thanks to ESF support under TO10, while another 1.2 million participants were in education / training upon leaving the intervention. As could be expected for operations that focus on education, these results are much higher than, for instance, the number of participants that engaged in job searching or entered employment (which are nonetheless not negligible). In addition to these figures, a relevant result that is recorded in various programmes across TO10 investments is related to improved skills (without necessarily leading to a qualification, see table 6.9 below). Moreover, the number of children supported into some sort of pre-primary education is another relevant indicator for progress under this thematic objective, currently reaching 349 389 children, supported by 21 operational programmes in five Member States. Within the scope of combating early school leaving, the increased capacity of community learning centres is a relevant programme-specific indicator that illustrates the broader scope of these interventions as well.

Table 6.9 Overview of key result indicators under T010 (common / programme specific)

Categorising key results education investments measured by Common indicators	Total achieved	Number of OP covered	Number of MS covered
Individual results	6 149 099	147	27
Of which inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving (CR01)	263 605	147	27
Of which participants in education/training upon leaving (CR02)	1 162 458	147	27
Of which participants gaining a qualification upon leaving (CR03)	4 336 201	147	27
Of which participants in (self-)employment, upon leaving (CR04)	386 835	147	27
Categorising key figures education investments measured by Programme-specific indicators	Total achieved	Number of OP covered	Number of MS covered
Individuals – number of persons with skills improved after intervention	2 805 526	33	12
	BG, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, IT, LV, PL, SI, SK, UK		
Individuals – number of children supported into pre-primary education	349 389	21	5
	GR, HR, PL, PT, RO		
Entities – Education providers reached (outputs)	120 689	43	18
	BG, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, GR, HR, IT, LT, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK		
Entities – Positive result for education providers	101 958	43	18
	BG, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, GR, HR, IT, LT, LV, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK		
Achievements: Capacity increased for community learning centres	174 026	5	5
	CZ, HR, PL, PT, RO		
Projects – Number of successful projects	2 307	17	12
	BE, BG, CZ, DE, ES, FI, FR, LV, PL, RO, SE, SK		

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

As already pointed out above, the more structural objectives of investments in access to higher education (IP10ii) and increasing the labour market relevance of education (IP10iv) are best measured by more specific indicators, defined by programmes themselves. From this perspective, for instance, T010 investments reached 120 689 education providers, of which a total of 101 958 institutions achieved additional positive results. The type and breadth of such 'positive results' vary substantially across programmes and consist for instance in the number of education providers that use new teaching approaches (Bulgaria, Slovakia), cooperation agreements (Germany), or the number of providers that start using new ICT equipment / laboratories (Croatia, Poland, Portugal). The ongoing reprogramming efforts in response to the COVID-19 crisis further expanded the use of indicators that measure ICT equipment and distance learning; progress on these indicators can be expected in the next few years³⁷.

In other programmes reaching an education provider is already considered a result; in many cases no follow-up indicators measure the scope of change achieved. A good example of this is represented by education providers that participate in knowledge exchanges with labour market experts. Even though participation may not result in an immediate measurable result, on the longer run education providers can improve the labour market relevance of their courses because of their participation in such events. Likewise, the indicators counting positive results in education providers are often not accompanied by output indicators that track the actual number of education providers reached.

³⁷ Because the reprogramming is still ongoing we cannot yet provide a definitive list of Member States that have selected this type of indicator. So far these have been programmed as part of the COVID-19 response in France and Portugal, but it may be extended further in the coming months.

6.4 Thematic Objective 11: Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration

6.4.1 Objectives

The quality of public administration significantly impacts the economic environment. Consequently, reforming public administrations has also been defined as a key priority for the successful implementation of the EU2020 Strategy towards smart and sustainable growth. The Annual Growth Surveys, the Economic Adjustment Programmes and other frameworks of Financial Assistance in EU Member States highlight the need to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public services, as well as the transparency and quality of public administrations and the judiciary.

"Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and an efficient public administration" is included as a separate thematic objective (thematic objective 11 or "TO11") in the Common Provisions Regulation for the 2014-2020 programming period (Regulation (EU) 1303/2013, Art.9). Both the ESF and ERDF contribute to TO11, but their role is quite different. The ERDF has a relatively narrow scope on infrastructure, while the ESF focuses more on the (staff of the) institutions and procedures.

To contribute to these objectives, two specific investment priorities have been defined under the ESF:

- (11i). Investment in institutional capacity and in the efficiency of public administrations and public services at the national, regional and local levels with a view to reforms, better regulation and good governance
- (11ii). Capacity building for all stakeholders delivering education, lifelong learning, training and employment and social policies, including through sectoral and territorial pacts to mobilise for reform at the national, regional and local levels.

6.4.2 ESF interventions under thematic objective 11

Under TO11, Member States programme a variety of operations that contribute to institutional capacity. Operations can target different levels of government, and in the majority of cases consist of training measures. Under IP11i, measures aim at adapting structures, streamlining processes and implementing evidence-based public policies, preparing strategic planning with programme budgeting, simplifying legislation and reducing administrative burden, strengthening the capacity of public authorities and institutions for transparent and effective implementation of public procurement as well as improving the efficiency of the judiciary.

While IP11i mainly consists of capacity building of public institutions, IP11ii has a considerably broader scope and brings together operations that seek to build capacity of different types of stakeholders in various thematic fields such as employment, social inclusion or education policies. This also includes support for sectoral and territorial pacts to carry out reforms.

6.4.3 Implementation of institutional capacity investments

A total amount of EUR 4.4 billion is allocated to this Thematic Objective (EU + national share), which makes it considerably smaller in scope than the other thematic objectives. At EU level, the project selection rate in this area currently stands at 95.4%, and is relatively distributed among the Member States that programmed TO11 investments. Poland shows the lowest project selection rates so far (69.1% of the total budget). More than half of Member States report project selection rates above 100%.

Table 6.10 Overview of Implementation under TO11 – by Member State

MS	Allocated budget	Eligible costs	% project selection	Participations	Median output achievement	Individual results	Median result achievement	Average success rate
	(x€ million)							
AT								
BE								
BG	237.0	191.4	80.7%	64 791	85.4%	23 880	109.4%	37%
CY	13.1	15.5	118.2%	0	100.0%	0	99.7%	
CZ	163.3	183.3	112.2%	12 264	43.2%	9 925	23.8%	81%
DE								
DK								
EE	33.4	34.2	102.4%	2 445	94.1%	492	93.3%	20%
ES								
FI								
FR	23.3	17.2	73.7%	10	0.0%	0	0.0%	0%
GR	319.3	341.3	106.9%	92 271	48.7%	81 876	0.0%	89%
HR	210.7	165.1	78.3%	19 832	18.2%	662	0.0%	3%
HU	892.5	871.0	97.6%	218 059	61.1%	81 882	84.6%	38%
IE								
IT	869.3	646.2	74.3%	107 470	66.3%	5 479	36.7%	5%
LT	126.4	127.1	100.5%	57 480	90.7%	25 243	0.4%	44%
LU								
LV	20.9	21.2	101.5%	16 525	112.0%	350	124.3%	2%
MT	13.5	15.6	115.4%	3 273	61.8%	584	31.3%	18%
NL								
PL	227.0	156.9	69.1%	76 155	17.1%	4 527	0.0%	6%
PT	259.8	284.5	109.5%	3 666	14.3%	0	42.5%	0%
RO	625.1	742.5	118.8%	27 100	76.0%	14 976	2.6%	55%
SE								
SI	78.6	82.0	104.4%	17 349	112.5%	20	73.3%	0%
SK	287.8	306.7	106.6%	3 330	111.7%	0	100.0%	0%
UK	23.6	18.4	78.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
Total EU	4 424.7	4 220.0	95.4%	722 020	56.3%	249 896	12.1%	35%
Region	Allocated budget	Eligible costs	% project selection	Participations	Median output achievement	Individual results	Median result achievement	Average success rate
	(x€ million)							
Less dev.	3 581.6	3 452.7	96.4%	452 957	58.0%	144 230	18.1%	32%
More dev.	700.6	632.0	90.2%	240 902	55.1%	91 828	6.5%	38%
Transition	142.5	135.3	94.9%	28 161	51.0%	13 838	7.8%	49%

Empty fields indicate that no interventions are programmed for the thematic objective in that Member State.

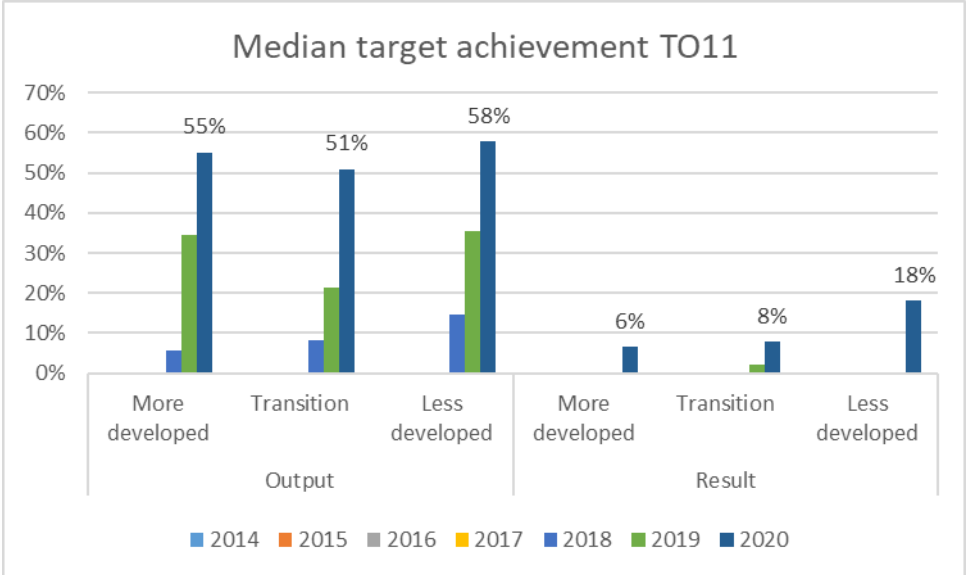
Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

So far, no participations nor individual results have been reported for Cyprus and the United Kingdom, and only 10 participations have been reported for France. Of course, it is not unlikely that Member States within this thematic objectives focus on entities and structure, and may not even count participations or individual results. Portugal and Slovakia for instance, reported no individual results. The United Kingdom only has a small budget and only fully defined the scope of its TO11 investments in September 2018; reporting on the common indicators can therefore be expected in the coming years. In France, TO11 investments are programmed only for its overseas territories (Guyane, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Mayotte). While considerable progress is already reported in Guyane and Martinique, implementation in Guadeloupe and Mayotte does not show substantial progress by the end of 2020. Cyprus does not mention any specific reason. In Slovakia, the lack of results reported so far should be temporary, as it does already count individual results among its programme-specific indicators (individual employees, public administration staff as well as judges were targeted and reached positive results under the programme). If one compares for instance its target achievement rate for all results indicators, this corresponds to a median of 100%. For Portugal no individual results are reported for programme-specific indicators either; instead, the first results reported concern the number of institutions where capacity development activities were conducted. Again, the target achievement rate for result indicators suggests that implementation is still ongoing.

Figure 6.14 shows how the median output and result indicators at EU level have started to edge towards their targets; since 2017 more than half of all indicators have reported progress

towards their targets. Differences between regions are relatively small. However, it is worth remembering that almost all investments are conducted in less developed regions. For result indicators, progress towards targets remains quite limited under TO11. A possible explanation for this is given by the more structural nature of interventions in this area. As a result, the expected results may suggest that progress towards such objectives cannot be observed until the very end of the programming period.

Figure 6.14 Evolution of median target achievement under TO11 – by region



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

A substantial difference can be observed in progress achieved by investments in the institutional capacity of public administrations (IP11i), compared to capacity building of stakeholders (IP11ii). The latter has reported less progress so far, with 62.3% of the total allocated amounts reported as selected eligible costs so far. Its median target achievement for output indicators is however relatively comparable.

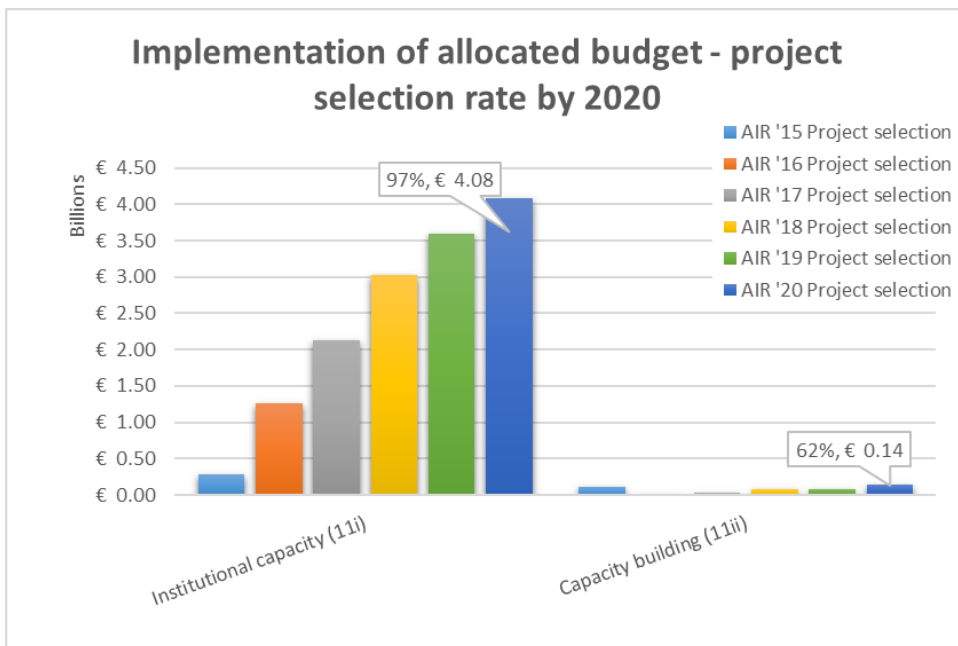
Table 6.11 Summative factsheet on progress of TO11

IP	Allocated budget (x€million)	Eligible costs (x€million)	% project selection	Participations	Median output achievement	Individual results	Median result achievement
11i	4 206.0	4 083.7	97.1%	692 774	56.3%	247 962	14.7%
11ii	218.7	136.3	62.3%	29 246	51.2%	1 934	0.0%
TO11	4 424.7	4 220.0	95.4%	722 020	56.3%	249 896	12.1%

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

The substantial difference in absolute participations and results also reflects the differences in budget; the budget allocated to measures supporting the capacity building of stakeholders (IP11ii) is considerably smaller. Progress in this area is therefore an important finding. In fact, as figure 6.15 shows below, the actual costs reported have been increasing steadily every year since 2016.

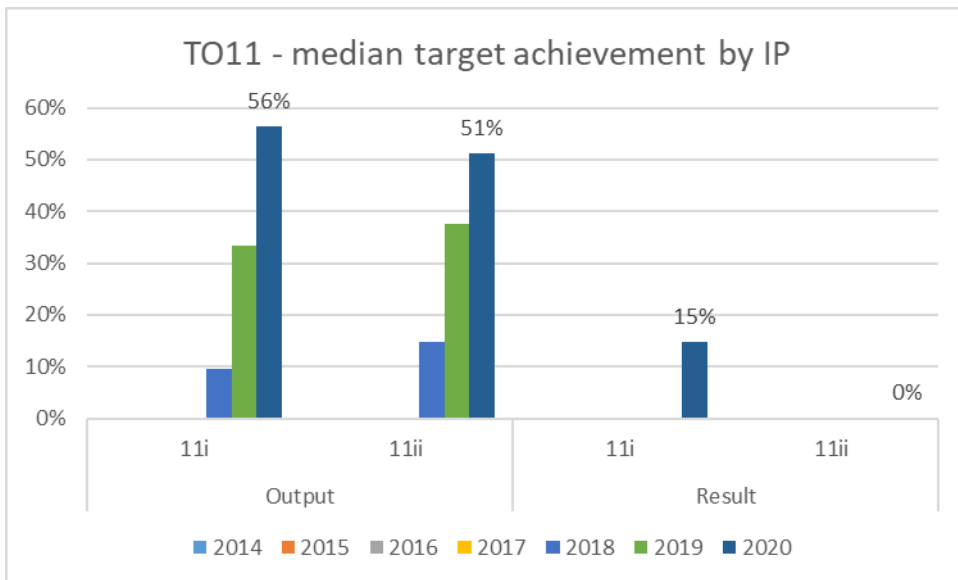
Figure 6.15 Absorption of budget under investment priorities with institutional capacity objectives (TO11)



Source: AIRs 2015-2020

Since 2018, progress towards targets has been reported when measured by the median of target achievement of output indicators. For result indicators, in 2020 for the first time more than half of the result indicators reports progress towards their target for IP11i, however not yet for IP11ii.

Figure 6.16 Evolution of median target achievement under TO11 by investment priority



Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

As the example of Slovakia already showed above, when determining progress of implementation in absolute numbers, it is important not to limit the analysis to common indicators. Individuals are not the main units targeted by these operations, and more attention is needed on other types of absolute outputs and results. In terms of results for instance, programmes often report on (the reduction of) administrative time required for certain operations, or specific positive results for organisations, public administrations, the judiciary, civil society organisations. These are operationalised by measuring the number of

institutions that implemented certain IT systems, revised and / or simplified procedures, increased regulatory scrutiny, etc.

Table 6.12 Overview of key result indicators under T011 (common / programme specific)

Categorising key results institutional capacity measured by Common indicators	Total achieved	Number of OP covered	Number of MS covered
Individual results	249 896	54	17
Of which inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving (CR01)	260	54	17
Of which participants in education/training upon leaving (CR02)	17 752	54	17
Of which participants gaining a qualification upon leaving (CR03)	229 277	54	17
Of which participants in (self-)employment, upon leaving (CR04)	2 607	54	17
Categorising key figures institutional capacity measured by Programme-specific indicators	Total achieved	Number of OP covered	Number of MS covered
Entities – Positive result for Authorities / Institutions / Organisations	22 213	27	16
	BG, CY, CZ, EE, GR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK		
Of which Positive result for national public authorities	2 739	14	11
	BG, CY, EE, GR, IT, LT, MT, PL, RO, SI, SK		
Of which Positive result for judiciary	1 288	8	8
	HR, IT, LT, LV, PL, RO, SI, SK		
Of which Positive result for local / regional public authorities	14 361	9	7
	BG, EE, HU, IT, LT, PL, RO		
Of which Positive result for Civil society organisations	280	4	4
	HR, PL, RO, SI		
Of which other institutions / organisations	3 545	14	8
	CZ, GR, HR, IT, LT, PL, PT, SK		

Source: SFC2014, AIRs 2020 (data extracted on September 7, 2021)

Programme-specific indicators that measure positive results for organisations (public and private) aggregate to a total of 22 213 organisations that recorded positive results. Though such programme-specific indicators that measure results for institutions are indeed a better measure of success of the interventions than individual results, these are difficult to aggregate or even to compare. The introduction of the nation-wide rollout of a major IT improvement in all municipal authorities cannot easily be compared to the improved function of a specific public department or passing of a certain law. Comprehensive evaluations by member States at the end of the programming period will be necessary to assess the implementation of such widely different operations.

7 Conclusions

7.1 Scope of ESF / YEI

By early September 2021, the ESF 2014-2020 has an overall budget of EUR 133.7 billion, of which EUR 95.7 billion is financed by the European Union. When adding the YEI, the total budget available is EUR 138.2 billion. The largest share of the budget is earmarked to support European employment objectives under Thematic Objective 8 (with a combined EU and national budget of EUR 42.9 billion focused on ESF interventions under TO8, and another EUR 5.99 billion topping up the dedicated YEI fund with ESF matching funds and national co-financing), followed by education and training under Thematic Objective 10 (EUR 39.5 billion of EU and national funds), and social inclusion under Thematic Objective 9 (EUR 35.5 billion of EU and national funds). Finally, a combined total of EU and national budgets of EUR 4.5 billion is allocated to institutional capacity building under Thematic Objective 11, while the remaining EUR 5.1 billion (EU and national) is allocated to technical assistance.

Since the start of the ESF programming period for 2014-2020, the fund has already undergone a number of substantial changes.

- Most recently, the European Commission launched a number of initiatives in response to the COVID-19 crisis. These seek to increase flexibility of programming, adjust programmes to direct resources where these are most needed and introduce new priorities under the heading of fighting the pandemic. After the CRII and CRII+, REACT-EU was launched in May 2020 and approved by the Council and European Parliament in December 2020. Under REACT-EU a total of EUR 50.6 billion of additional resources was made available to existing cohesion policy programmes for the years 2021 and 2022. In response, Member States have initiated a substantial review of ESF/YEI operational programmes, including the shifting of budgets, applying new flexibility for co-financing rates and introducing new output and result indicators and targets. This reprogramming is still ongoing; by 7 September 2021, a total of 63 out of the 187 programmes were reprogrammed to include additional REACT-EU resources. The exact scope of additional resources that is allocated to the ESF can only be determined once all amendments are approved. This also means that there is no complete picture on the number and type of additional voluntary indicators introduced in ESF operational programmes to measure implementation and results of COVID-specific interventions.
- Earlier in the programming period, budgets for fighting youth unemployment were already substantially raised as well. In June 2017, the European Parliament and Council approved the European Commission's proposal to increase the YEI dedicated budget by EUR 1.2 billion to a total of EUR 4.47 billion, further topped up by a matching share of ESF funding and national ESF contributions. As such, by the end of 2020, a total of EUR 8.9 billion of the EU budget is available for YEI interventions, a total of EUR 10.4 billion if national co-financing is included.

ESF programmes shifted their budget allocations from education (TO10) and employment objectives (TO8) in 2015-2019 towards social inclusion (TO9). Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and additional resources available under REACT-EU have contributed to budget increases overall, but in particular towards investments in labour market (TO8) and social inclusion (TO9) objectives. While increased investments towards employment in the earlier years were most often financed by reducing budgets dedicated to investments in education (in 2019, TO10 had been reduced by roughly EUR 1.3 billion compared to the start of the programming period), the envelope of investments in education is now also larger than at the start of the programming period. Thanks to the REACT-EU investment package, in 2020 investments in education (TO10) also increased, for instance allowing additional support for the purchase of relevant IT equipment, software for distance learning, and additional skills training to use the newly-purchased tools.

7.2 Progress in implementation

By the end of 2020, implementation of the ESF / YEI can be considered relatively mature. In a majority of Member States, projects with costs amounting to the entire programming period's budget have already been selected. Moreover, implementation rates have increased steadily and surpassed 54% at the level of the EU, with Member States currently reporting 45.4 million participations³⁸. Whilst the initial years of implementation showed considerable differences between different types of regions, the number of participations from more and less developed regions is now relatively balanced and in line with the shares of budget allocated. ESF implementation has progressed in a similar pace compared to earlier years; there is little reason to indicate that COVID-19 may have had a negative impact (so far) on the numbers of participations and shares of costs reported by Managing Authorities. Overall, participants benefitting from ESF / YEI have different backgrounds, but most participants were unemployed (38 %) or inactive (38%) and 44 % were below 25 years old. Finally, with regards to the education level, a considerable level of participants were low-skilled (qualifications at ISCED 1/2 level (48 %))³⁹. The participation of (wo)men is relatively balanced at EU level, but varies among Member States, depending on the local needs and types of interventions.

The totals of participations presented above include a total of 3.4 million participations that are supported by YEI interventions focusing on enhancing youth employment. In terms of YEI implementation, an increasing number of Member States reported difficulties in identifying, mobilizing and recruiting young NEETS for the remaining interventions. The increase of new participations under YEI interventions in 2020 is therefore comparatively small (0.2 million in 2020, compared to 0.4 million in 2019 and 0.6 million in 2018), mainly due to falling youth unemployment levels up until the COVID-19 crisis. It should however also be taken into consideration that YEI programmes have been slowly edging towards their output targets (output target achievement rates for most YEI programmes are above 80%). Now more focus is placed on the 'regular' ESF projects on youth employment in order to support this target group.

In addition to participants, reported common outputs are also the number of projects and entities. A total of 91 446 projects that targeted social partners or non-governmental organisations were supported, while 46 259 supported projects were dedicated to the sustainable participation and progress of women in employment. Another 61 401 projects targeted public administration / public services at national, regional or local level. Finally, the ESF supported a total of 1.2 million SMEs between 2014 and 2020.

The substantial numbers of participation reached with ESF / YEI helped 5.4 million participants find a job, while another 7.4 million participants gained a qualification, 1.0 million are engaged in job-searching and 2.2 million are in education / training. Additionally, a total of 5.0 million disadvantaged participants achieved one of these positive results.

7.3 ESF support to EU policies

This report jointly analysed the objectives established in the Operational Programmes and the types of operations funded from the perspective of the national situation and strategies (as reported in the AIRs) and the EU level strategies and headline targets.

Thematic objective 8 - employment

Operations that promote sustainable and quality employment (Thematic Objective 8) supported almost 13.6 million participants, which led to almost 5.2 million positive results.

³⁸ Background characteristics (labour market status, age, education) are available for 45.4 million of the 49.7 million participations. While Member States have the obligation to try to obtain as many of the necessary background variables on participations as possible, the Regulation does not allow to exclude from participation individuals that object to share sensitive information. For this reason, the reporting does not contain background information for all 49.7 million participations.

³⁹ Note that these categories are not mutually exclusive.

These positive results refer to people that either found a job, gained a qualification or otherwise were able to improve their labour market position thanks to ESF interventions.

Interventions that support access to employment (IP8i) are most common and reach a high level of implementation in terms of project selection rate (101.7 %), number of participations (6.7 million) and the number of results for individuals (2.8 million) already achieved. As it receives more than 40 % of the entire budget dedicated to employment objectives, it is reassuring to find that implementation of this important investment priority continues to proceed towards its targets. Operations with a focus on youth integration in the labour market (IP8ii) are also progressing steadily, with YEI operations ahead of the implementation of ESF-funded employment measures for young persons. With YEI operations getting close to their final targets, it can be expected that support for youth employment is going to be increasingly financed by the ESF as well.

Thematic objective 9 – social inclusion

Operations in the field of social inclusion are designed to contribute to the EU2020 headline target of reducing poverty in the EU. For the most part, these operations are designed around active inclusion (IP9i). Member States allocated a variety of interventions to this broad investment priority, evidenced by its position as the priority with the highest allocated budget under this thematic objective. Individual background characteristics (either economic status, education, or family background) show how social inclusion investments target various specific groups, such as low-skilled, (long-term) unemployed, elderly, disabled, and people with a migrant / foreign background. Programme-specific indicators show that a certain level of attention is put on prisoners and ex-offenders, drug users, people with mental disorders, individuals benefitting from specific social support programmes, ethnic minorities, and residents in marginalised neighbourhoods. Such investments supported 10.8 million participations, which led to 3.0 million positive results, such as finding a job, gaining a qualification or other improvements in terms of one's position on the labour market. This is a substantial figure in view of the headline target to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Investments under the investment priority on active inclusion (IP9i) also show the highest project selection rates under this thematic objective, with on average 106.5% of the total allocation to this investment priority already reported as costs. The project selection rates for smaller investment priorities under TO9 are considerably lower, varying from 63.8% for community-led local development strategies (IP9vi), to 84.7% for access to healthcare and social services (IP9iv) to 80.5% for marginalised communities (IP9ii). Overall, the project selection rate for TO9 interventions reached 98.1%, signalling that almost all allocations have been contracted.

Progress towards the targets defined for output indicators has advanced consistently, with at the end of 2020 at least half of all indicators achieving 75% of their defined output targets. On the other hand, it usually takes longer for progress towards results indicators to materialize. As a consequence, the median result target achievement of result targets under TO9 has remained at 21% so far. For the investment priority on active inclusion (IP9i), which has the largest financial envelope, a median target achieved of 41.5% is already reported.

Thematic objective 10 – education and training

In the field of education and training, the implementation of the key investment priorities has steadily progressed each year. By the end of 2020, a total of 16.9 million participants are recorded for all operations in the field of education, of which 6.2 million have reached an individual short-term result. This includes more than 4.3 million participants who gained a qualification thanks to ESF investments with an education objective, and 1.2 million participants who were in education / training upon leaving the intervention. As could be expected for operations that focus on education, these results are higher than the results related to the number of participants that engaged in job searching or entered employment. In addition to these figures, a relevant result recorded in various programmes across education investments is related to improved skills (not necessarily leading to a qualification), which is recorded by another 2.8 million participants.

The project selection rates reported for education investments are consistently high across investment priorities; on average 106.4% for all TO10 investments. More eligible costs were reported than the allocated investments in early school leaving operations (project selection rate of 116.5% - IP10i) and improving labour market relevance of education (105.9% - IP10iv). The median target achievement for result indicators in interventions that focus on increasing access to higher education (IP10ii) are comparatively lower than in other investment priorities (13.8% against overall median of 41.8%).

Thematic objective 11 – institutional capacity

Institutional capacity investments receive the lowest budget allocation with an overall EUR 4.4 billion (EU and national total combined). The implementation of these investments moves relatively in line with the other thematic objectives and reported a total of 95.4 % of the allocated amounts as eligible costs. In terms of individual results, such interventions mainly contributed to public officials gaining a certain type of qualification (229 277), but most meaningful results in this area are procedural in kind, such as shorter time required for certain operations, or specific positive results for organisations, public administrations, the judiciary, and civil society organisations. Good examples for this are, for instance, the number of institutions that implemented certain IT systems, revised and / or simplified procedures, and increased regulatory scrutiny. Despite continuous progress in implementation, there remains considerable room for improvement, particularly in terms of the target achievement recorded for result indicators. While at least half of result indicators with a target now report at least some progress in investments in the institutional capacity of public administrations (IP11i), less than half of all indicators measuring investments in the capacity building of stakeholders (IP11ii) have reported progress towards their targets so far.

Overall assessment

Across all thematic objectives and investment priorities, the levels of implementation are increasingly well distributed across Member States and different types of regions. Also Member States that reported consistently lower project selection rates in the previous years (such as Croatia and Romania), now report eligible costs close to the total allocated budgets. While this is no guarantee for successful implementation, it does suggest that the preparations for calls and new projects are progressing. Moreover, investments in employment and education objectives have led to considerable improvements in achieving result targets, as measured by the median target achievement rates.

Additional attention continues to be necessary in monitoring the relation between costs reported and participation and results, especially in less developed regions.

Under the influence of the substantial impacts of COVID-19 on societies, the steady progress reported this year for ESF/YEI is remarkable. Member States initiated a major reprogramming effort in 2020 to make use of the increased flexibility in how ESF funds could be spent, and of the substantial opportunities for increasing ESF budgets under CRII/CRII+ and REACT-EU. This allowed adjusting ESF programmes to the changed economic conditions, as well as directing ESF funds to increase access to healthcare services, and improve distance learning, to name a few areas that received additional attention. This reprogramming effort was still ongoing at the time of writing this report. For this reason, no final overview can be given on the full scope of post-COVID-19 ESF budgets, nor on what exact choices have been made across the EU. Nevertheless, the continued stable implementation rate, and reduced differences between Member States suggest that the responses provided by the ESF/YEI in the form of reprogramming towards those areas that are most needed and the continued implementation in the Fund's existing areas of attention have helped ensure a common – yet diversified – response to the larger societal challenges that European citizens currently face.

Annex I: Sources of data

Versions of AIRs 2020

CCI	AIR version	Status	Status date	OP version used for reference	Report approval date
2014AT05SFOP001	2020.0	Accepted by EC	13-08-2021	4.0	27-05-2021
2014BE05M9OP001	2020.0	Accepted by EC	05-07-2021	6.1	27-05-2021
2014BE05M9OP002	2020.0	Returned for modification by EC	27-08-2021	6.0	26-05-2021
2014BE05SFOP001	2020.2	Accepted by EC	26-08-2021	4.1	
2014BE05SFOP002	2020.0	Returned for modification by EC	16-07-2021	7.2	27-05-2021
2014BG05M2OP001	2020.0	Accepted by EC	12-07-2021	4.0	18-05-2021
2014BG05M9OP001	2020.0	Accepted by EC	09-07-2021	5.0	20-05-2021
2014BG05SFOP001	2020.0	Accepted by EC	26-07-2021	4.0	20-05-2021
2014CY05M9OP001	2020.0	Accepted by EC	05-07-2021	5.0	27-05-2021
2014CZ05M2OP001	2020.0	Accepted by EC	11-07-2021	3.0	06-05-2021
2014CZ05M9OP001	2020.0	Accepted by EC	30-08-2021	4.0	12-05-2021
2014CZ16M2OP001	2020.0	Accepted by EC	02-07-2021	7.2	05-05-2021
2014DE05SFOP001	2020.0	Accepted by EC	23-06-2021	2.0	27-05-2021
2014DE05SFOP002	2020.1	Accepted by EC	06-08-2021	3.1	
2014DE05SFOP003	2020.0	Accepted by EC	07-07-2021	1.3	19-05-2021
2014DE05SFOP004	2020.0	Accepted by EC	16-06-2021	4.0	28-05-2021
2014DE05SFOP005	2020.0	Accepted by EC	16-07-2021	3.0	27-05-2021
2014DE05SFOP006	2020.0	Accepted by EC	16-07-2021	3.0	19-05-2021
2014DE05SFOP007	2020.1	Accepted by EC	16-08-2021	2.0	26-05-2021
2014DE05SFOP008	2020.0	Accepted by EC	09-07-2021	1.2	20-05-2021
2014DE05SFOP009	2020.0	Accepted by EC	09-07-2021	3.0	26-05-2021
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2014PL16M2OP005	2020.0	Accepted by EC	16-07-2021	6.0	28-05-2021
2014PL16M2OP006	2020.0	Accepted by EC	25-06-2021	5.0	28-05-2021
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2014PT16M3OP001	2020.0	Returned for modification by EC	09-07-2021	9.0	25-05-2021
2014RO05M9OP001	2020.0	Accepted by EC	26-07-2021	10.0	28-05-2021
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2014UK05SFOP002	2020.0	Accepted by EC	05-07-2021	4.0	20-05-2021
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2014UK05SFOP005	2020.0	Accepted by EC	17-06-2021	4.1	20-05-2021

Annex II – reference guide

Thematic Objectives and Investment Priorities

Thematic Objective 8: promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility

- (8i / intervention field 102). Access to employment for job-seekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility;
- (8ii / intervention field 103). Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee;
- (8iii / intervention field 104). Self-employment, entrepreneurship and business creation including innovative micro, small and medium sized enterprises;
- (8iv / intervention field 105). Equality between men and women in all areas, including in access to employment, career progression, reconciliation of work and private life and promotion of equal pay for equal work;
- (8v / intervention field 106). Adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change;
- (8vi / intervention field 107). Active and healthy ageing;
- (8vii / intervention field 108). Modernisation of labour market institutions, such as public and private employment services, and improving the matching of labour market needs, including through actions that enhance transnational labour mobility as well as through mobility schemes and better cooperation between institutions and relevant stakeholders.

Thematic Objective 9: Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination

- (9i / invention field 109). Active inclusion including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability;
- (9ii / invention field 110). Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities, such as the Roma;
- (9iii / invention field 111). Combating all forms of discrimination and promoting equal opportunities;
- (9iv / invention field 112). Enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, including health care and social services of general interest;
- (9v / invention field 113). Promoting social entrepreneurship and vocational integration in social enterprises and the social and solidarity economy in order to facilitate access to employment;
- (9vi / invention field 114). Community-led local development strategies.

Thematic Objective 10: Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning

- (10i / intervention field 115). Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for reintegrating into education and training
- (10ii / intervention field 116). Improving the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged groups
- (10iii / intervention field 117). Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways, including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences

- (10iv / intervention field 118). Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes

Thematic Objective 11: Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration

- (11i / intervention field 119). Investment in institutional capacity and in the efficiency of public administrations and public services at the national, regional and local levels with a view to reforms, better regulation and good governance
- (11ii / intervention field 120). Capacity building for all stakeholders delivering education, lifelong learning, training and employment and social policies, including through sectoral and territorial pacts to mobilise for reform at the national, regional and local levels.

Common output indicators ESF

- CO01 Unemployed, including long-term unemployed
- CO02 of which Long-term unemployed
- CO03 Inactive
- CO04 of which not in education or training
- CO05 Employed, including self-employed
- CO06 Below 25 years of age
- CO07 Above 54 years of age
- CO08 Above 54 years of age who are unemployed, including Long-term unemployed, or inactive not in education or training
- CO09 With primary (ISCED 1) or lower secondary education (ISCED 2)
- CO10 With upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary Education (ISCED 4)
- CO11 With tertiary education (ISCED 5-8)
- CO12 Participants who live in jobless households
- CO13 Participants who live in jobless households with dependent children
- CO14 Participants who live in a single adult household with dependent children
- CO15 Migrants, participants with a foreign background, minorities
- CO16 Participants with disabilities
- CO17 Other disadvantaged
- CO18 Homeless or affected by housing exclusion
- CO19 From rural areas
- CO20 Number of projects fully or partially implemented by social partners or non-governmental organisations
- CO21 Number of projects dedicated at sustainable participation and progress of women in employment;
- CO22 Number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level
- CO23 Number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, enterprises of the social economy)

Common result indicators ESF

- CR01 - Inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving
- CR02 - Participants in education/training upon leaving
- CR03 - Participants gaining a qualification upon leaving
- CR04 - Participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving

- CR05 - Disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/ training, gaining a qualification, or in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving
- CR06- Participants in employment, including self-employment, 6 months after leaving
- CR07 - Participants with an improved labour market situation 6 months after leaving
- CR08 - Participants above 54 years of age in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving
- CR09 - Disadvantaged participants in employment, including self-employment, 6 months after leaving

Common result indicators YEI

- YEI-CR01 – Unemployed participants who complete the YEI supported intervention
- YEI-CR02 – Unemployed participants who receive an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving
- YEI-CR03 – Unemployed participants who are in education/training, gain a qualification, or are in employment, including self- employment, upon leaving
- YEI-CR04 – Long-term unemployed participants who complete the YEI supported intervention
- YEI-CR05 – Long-term unemployed participants who receive an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving
- YEI-CR06 – Long -term unemployed participants who are in education/training, gain a qualification, or are in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving
- YEI-CR07 – Inactive participants not in education or training who complete the YEI supported intervention
- YEI-CR08 – Inactive participants not in education or training who receive an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving
- YEI-CR09 – Inactive participants not in education or training who are in education/training, gain a qualification, or are in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving
- YEI-CR10 – Participants in continued education, training programmes leading to a qualification, an apprenticeship or a traineeship six months after leaving
- YEI-CR11 – Participants in employment six months after leaving
- YEI-CR12 – Participants in self-employment six months after leaving

Classification output indicators

The classification provided below is the result of post-coding and classification of all output indicators by the FGB consortium. It offer a classification of all types of common and programme-specific output indicators into specific categories. Each of these categories were grouped into broader categories, based on how frequent these are used.

Classification of output indicator	Broader category
1.0.1 - Individual: unspecified	Other
1.1.1 - Individual - demographic: Women	Other
1.1.2 - Individual - demographic: children	Young
1.1.3 - Individual - demographic: young	Young
1.1.3.1 - Individual - demographic: young (below 25)	Young
1.1.4 - Individual - demographic: old	Old
1.1.4.1 - Individual - demographic: old (above 54)	Old
1.2.1 - Individual - economic situation: Unemployed, including long-term unemployed	Unemployed
1.2.1.1 - Individual - economic situation: Long-term Unemployed	Unemployed
1.2.2 - Individual - economic situation: Employed (including self-employed)	Employed
1.2.2.1 - Individual - economic situation: threatened by losing job	Vulnerable

1.2.3 - Individual - economic situation: Inactive	Inactive
1.2.3.1 - Individual - economic situation: inactive, not in education or training	Inactive
1.2.4 - Individual - economic situation: threatened by poverty	Vulnerable
1.3.1 - Individual - Vulnerable: disadvantaged / vulnerable groups (unspecified)	Vulnerable
1.3.1.1 - Individual - Vulnerable: Low-skilled / Low qualification	Vulnerable
1.3.1.2 - Individual - Vulnerable: Migrants, foreign background, marginalised communities	Vulnerable
1.3.1.3 - Individual - Vulnerable: Participants with disabilities	Vulnerable
1.3.1.4 - Individual - Vulnerable: Vulnerable family situation	Vulnerable
1.3.1.5 - Individual - Vulnerable: participant from rural area	Vulnerable
1.3.1.6 - Individual - Vulnerable: criminal background / history	Vulnerable
1.4.1 - Individual - education: in education (unspecified)	Young
1.4.1.1 - Individual - education: in HE	Young
1.4.1.2 - Individual - education: in VET	Young
1.5.1 - Individual - other: with qualifications	Other
1.5.1.1 - Individual - other: with HE qualifications	Other
1.6.1 - Individual - by occupation: public administration staff	Professionals
1.6.2 - Individual - by occupation: Staff in education providers (teachers / managers)	Professionals
1.6.3 - Individual - by occupation: professionals (healthcare and other)	Professionals
1.6.4 - Individual - by occupation: Labour market institution staff	Professionals
2.1 Entity: institution / organisation	Public purpose entity
2.1.1 Entities - Public authorities	Public entity
2.1.1.1 Entities - Local / regional public authorities	Public entity
2.1.1.2 Entities - Judiciary	Public entity
2.1.2 - Entity: education provider (unspecified)	Public purpose entity
2.1.2.1 - Entity: school - childcare	Public purpose entity
2.1.2.2 - Entity: school - primary / secondary	Public purpose entity
2.1.2.3 - Entity: school - VET	Public purpose entity
2.1.2.4 - Entity: school - HE	Public purpose entity
2.1.3 - Entity: Healthcare organizational unit (centre, team, etc.)	Public purpose entity
2.1.4 Entities - Civil society organisations	Public purpose entity
2.1.5 Entities - communities	Public purpose entity
2.2 - Entity: enterprise / economic operator	Company
2.2.1 - Entity: enterprise / economic operator - SME	Company
2.2.2 - Entity: enterprise / economic operator - Social enterprises	Company
2.2.1 - Entity: enterprise / economic operator - SME	Company
3.1.1 - Projects: number of actions	Projects
3.2.1.1 - Projects: (partially) implemented by civil society	Projects
3.2.1.2 - projects: dedicated at social innovation	Projects
3.2.1.2.1 Projects: dedicated at fighting discrimination	Projects
3.2.1.2.2 - Projects: dedicated at sustainable participation and progress of women in employment	Projects
3.2.1.3 - Projects: targeting public sector	Public administration project
3.2.1.3.1 - Projects: targeting education sector	Projects
3.2.1.3.2 - Projects: targeting PES / capacity to support	Public administration project
3.2.1.4 - Projects: targeting private sector	Projects
3.3.1 - Projects: other	Projects
4.1.1 - Products: number of awareness / communication campaigns	Products
4.2.1 - Products: number of curricula / education programmes / qualifications / educational methods, tools, material developed	Products
4.3.1 - Products: number of good practices exchanged	Products
4.4.1 - Products: number of studies / evaluations	Products
4.5.1 - Products: number of innovative products / tools	Products
4.6.1 - Products: number of instruments developed	Products

4.6.2 - Products: number of registers / databases developed	Products
4.6.3 - Products: number of standards / guidelines developed	Products
4.7.1 - Products: number of local development strategies	Products
4.8.1 - Products: other	Products
5.1.1 - Structures: number of networks / partnerships	Structures
5.2.1 - Structures: number of structures	Structures
6.1.1 - Type: number of health programmes supported	Projects
6.2.1 - Type: number of jobs supported	Projects
6.3.1 - Type: number of scholarships	Projects
6.4.1 - Type: number of start-ups	Projects
7.1.1 - other counts	Projects

Classification result indicators

The classification provided below is the result of post-coding and classification of all result indicators by the FGB consortium. It offer a classification of all types of common and programme-specific result indicators into specific categories. Each of these categories were grouped into broader categories, based on how frequent these are used.

Classification of result indicator	Broader category
R.1.1 Individual result: in education after intervention	In education
R.1.1.1 Individual result: in education some time after intervention	In education
R.1.1.2 Individual result: Early school leaving (inversed target achievement)	In education
R.1.2 Individual result: in employment after intervention	Entered employment after leaving
R.1.2.1 Individual result: in employment some time after intervention	Entered employment after some time
R.1.3 Individual result: improved labour market position after intervention	Improved position on labour market
R.1.3.1 Individual result: improved labour market position some time after intervention	Improved position on labour market
R.1.3.2 Individual result: People at risk of poverty (inversed target achievement)	Other individual result
R.1.4 Individual result: other positive result after intervention	Other individual result
R.1.4.1 Individual result: other positive result some time after intervention	Other individual result
R.1.4.2 Individual result: Other negative result (inversed target achievement)	Other individual result
R.1.5 Individual result: job searching after intervention	Other individual result
R.1.5.2 Individual result: Persons inactive (inversed target achievement)	Other individual result
R.1.6 Individual result: qualification obtained after intervention	Qualification obtained
R.1.6.1 Individual result: qualification obtained some time after intervention	Qualification obtained
R.1.7 Individual result: skills improved after intervention	Improved skills
R.1.7.1 Individual result: skills improved some time after intervention	Improved skills
R.1.8 Individual result: individual activated (any of various positive results)	Other individual result
R.1.8.1 Individual result: individual activated some time after intervention (any of various positive results)	Other individual result
R.1.9 Individual result: number of people that preserved their job after intervention	Jobs created
R.1.9.1 individual result: number of people that preserved their job some time after intervention	Other individual result
R.1.10 Individual result: intervention completed	Other individual result
R.2.1 Entities - Positive result for Institutions / Organisations	Positive result - institutions
R.2.1.1 Entities – Positive result for public authorities	Positive result - Authorities
R.2.1.1.1 Entities – Positive result for local / regional public authorities	Positive result - Authorities
R.2.1.1.2 Entities – Positive result for judiciary	Positive result - Authorities
R.2.1.3 Entities: Positive result for education providers	Positive result - Education entities

R.2.2 Entities - Positive result for Civil society organisations	Positive result - institutions
R.2.2.1 Entities: positive result for communities	Positive result - institutions
R.2.3 Entities - Positive result for Enterprises	Positive result - Companies
R.2.3.1 Entities – Positive result for SME	Positive result - Companies
R.2.3.2 Entities – Positive result for social enterprises	Positive result - Companies
R.3.1 Achievements: Jobs created	Jobs created
R.3.2 Achievements - Improvement in service LM institution	Positive result - Authorities
R.3.3 Achievements: Educational programmes improved	Positive result - Education entities
R.3.4 Achievements: Student achievements improved	Positive result - Education entities
R.3.5 Achievements: Measures on gender equality	Other positive result
R.3.7 Achievements: Access to health / social welfare services	Positive result – Welfare services
R.3.7.1 Achievements: Access to childcare places	Positive result – Welfare services
R.3.8 Achievements: Number of partnerships	Other positive result
R.3.9 Achievements: other achievements	Other positive result
R.3.9.1 Achievements: other achievements (inversed target achievement)	Other positive result
R.4.1 General: Awareness	Other positive result
R.4.2 General: Satisfaction scores	Other positive result
R.4.3 General: Administrative time required (inverse)	Other positive result
R.4.4 General: number of projects completed	Projects completed
R.4.5 General: Budget spending	Other positive result
R.4.6 General: other administrative achievements	Other positive result