

The European Social Fund + (ESF+) proposal Suggested Amendments

A. Social Services and the ESF+ proposal

Social Services Europe is the largest network of not-for-profit social and healthcare providers at EU level, representing over 100,000 organisations through its 8 members: Caritas Europa, CEDAG, EASPD, EPR, Eurodiaconia, FEANTSA, the Red Cross EU Office and SOLIDAR.

As highlighted in our paper “[Enabling Social Services through the Multi-Annual Financial Framework post-2020: A European Imperative](#)” (March 2018), the EU budget plays a **key role in funding both innovation and continuity in quality social service provision**. As a result of such investment, the EU Budget contributes to improving the quality of life of all people in Europe; thus leading to **a more stable, inclusive, productive and resilient European Union**.

Our [Initial Remarks on the Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2021-2027](#) (July 2018) welcome the general orientation of the European Commission’s proposals, including on the ESF+ proposal. The remarks also highlight five positive proposals and four areas with room for improvement.

These remarks form the basis of our proposed amendments to the European Commission [ESF+ proposal](#) and the [European Parliament Draft Report on the ESF + proposal](#). In red are the modifications we suggest to the initial proposal.

B. Proposed amendments

Articles	Proposed Amendments
Recital 19	<p>With a view that at Union level at least 4% of the resources of the ESF+ strand under shared management supports the most deprived, Member States should allocate at least 2% 4% of their national resources of the ESF+ strand under shared management to address the forms of extreme poverty with the greatest social exclusion impact, such as homelessness, child poverty and food deprivation.</p>
<p>Justification: Point (x) and (xi) of Article 4(1) are the only ESF+ objectives dedicated to social inclusion and material support to the most deprived. Given the needs of the most deprived and the increasing challenges they face, a minimum allocation of 4% to points (x) and (xi) is crucial to better support them and strengthen the impact of ESF+.</p> <p>A minimum allocation of 4% would also allow to sustain the level of resources available under the current Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) (EUR 4 billion between 2014 and 2020).</p>	
Recital 19 (a) <i>(Amendment 5 - EP draft report)</i>	<p>In order to eradicate poverty and ensure greater social inclusion, the ESF+ should promote the active participation of specialised social NGOs and organisations representing and working with people living in poverty both in the preparation and in the implementation of the programmes dedicated to this.</p>
<p>Justification: We welcome the proposal of the EP draft report to stress the importance of involving civil society organisations in the preparation and implementation of the ESF+ Operational Programmes. Indeed, EU funds are most effective in providing solutions to social challenges when those who work closest to the difficulties are more strongly involved in the process. However,</p>	

organisations working with people in poverty such as social service providers should be also be involved, as they are key in supporting on a daily basis the millions of people in poverty across the EU.

Recital 21	<p>The ESF+ should support policy and system reforms in the fields of employment, social inclusion, healthcare and long-term care, and education and training. In order to strengthen alignment with the European Semester, Member States should allocate an appropriate amount of their resources of the ESF+ strand under shared management to implement relevant country-specific recommendations relating to structural challenges which it is appropriate to address through multiannual investments falling within the scope of the ESF+. The Commission and the Member States should ensure coherence, coordination and complementarity between the shared-management and Health strands of ESF+ and the Reform Support Programme, including the Reform Delivery Tool and the Technical Support Instrument, as well as the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, the Commission and the Member State should ensure, in all stages of the process, effective coordination in order to safeguard the consistency, coherence, complementarity and synergy among sources of funding, including technical assistance thereof.</p>
-------------------	---

Justification: The proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights on 17 November 2017 by all EU Member States and institutions represents a decisive step towards a more Social Europe. Its 20 principles provide an important basis to improve the wellbeing of people and vulnerable groups in particular. In addition, the commitment of the EU to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is an opportunity to make progress towards poverty eradication.

The future EU budget represents an essential leverage to ensure the successful implementation of the Pillar and SDGs, bring positive change to people’s lives and restore trust in the EU as a citizens’ project.

In addition, whilst the European Semester covers many important social issues, it does not and cannot cover the full range of social challenges in each Member State or region. This limitation could be solved if the European Pillar of Social Rights and the SDGs are also used as guiding mechanisms in the development of Operational Programmes as they cover a much broader range of challenges.

Article 4.1 – Specific Objectives	<p>(vii) fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability and social inclusion;</p>
--	---

Justification: Poverty and social exclusion continues to affect too many people in Europe, despite the recent upturn of the economy and a decrease in unemployment. Solely focusing on active inclusion and employability could have the consequence to leave behind those who are far from the labour market, such as older people and children. The specific objectives of ESF + should therefore promote both the implementation of employment-oriented and social inclusion measures.

<p>Article 7.1 – Consistency and thematic concentration</p>	<p>Member States shall concentrate the ESF+ resources under shared management on interventions that address the challenges identified in their national reform programmes, in the European Semester as well as in the relevant country-specific recommendations adopted in accordance with Article 121(2) TFEU and Article 148(4) TFEU, and take into account ensure the implementation of the principles and rights set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights.</p>
<p>Justification: The proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights on 17 November 2017 by all EU Member States and institutions represents a decisive step towards a more Social Europe. Its 20 principles provide an important basis to improve the wellbeing of people and vulnerable groups in particular. The future ESF + programme represents an essential leverage to ensure its successful implementation.</p>	
<p>Article 7.1.2.a - Consistency and thematic concentration (Amendment 14 - EP draft report)</p>	<p>The Member States shall award priority to the measures that can achieve the objectives most efficiently and effectively, and preferably ones with a proven track record, taking into account criteria such as proven track record, quality and opportunities for social innovation.</p>
<p>Justification: Whilst we acknowledge the importance of channelling the EU budget on quality initiatives which have shown their efficiency, solely focusing on projects with a proven track record can hinder access to the ESF + programme to new organisations. In addition, social needs of people evolve rapidly, which obliges social service providers to innovate at all times. We therefore propose, to expand the list of criteria to quality and opportunities for social innovation, in addition to proven track record.</p>	
<p>Article 7.3 - Consistency and thematic concentration</p>	<p>Member States shall allocate at least 25% of their ESF+ resources under shared management to the specific objectives for the social inclusion policy area set out in points (vii) to (xi) of Article 4(1), including the promotion of the socio-economic integration of third country nationals.</p>
<p>We strongly support the proposal for earmarking at least 25% of ESF+ resources for social inclusion. Tackling poverty and social exclusion require both employment-oriented and social inclusion measures and cannot only be addressed through labour market policies. The minimum 25% allocation will therefore ensure enough focus is put on social inclusion measures and initiatives in the ESF+ Operational Programmes at national level.</p>	
<p>Article 7.4 - Consistency and thematic concentration</p>	<p>Member States shall allocate at least 2% 4% of their ESF+ resources under shared management to the specific objective of addressing social inclusion of the most deprived and/or material deprivation as set out in point (x) and (xi) of Article 4(1).</p> <p>In duly justified cases, the resources allocated to the specific objective set out in point (x) of Article 4(1) and targeting the most deprived may be taken into account for verifying compliance with the minimum allocation of at least 2% set out in the first subparagraph of this paragraph</p>

Justification: Point (x) and (xi) of Article 4(1) are the only ESF+ objectives dedicated to social inclusion and material support to the most deprived. Given the needs of the most deprived and the increasing challenges they face, a minimum allocation of 4% to points (x) and (xi) is crucial to better support them and strengthen the impact of ESF+.

A minimum allocation of 4% would also allow to sustain the level of resources available under the current Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) (EUR 4 billion between 2014 and 2020).

Member States should be free to decide whether they want to provide food aid, material aid or social inclusion measures for the most deprived, depending on their national contexts. It seems to us to be an unnecessary barrier to ask for justification on the use of point (x) of article 4(1).-

<p>Article 11 – Support to country-specific recommendation</p>	<p>The actions addressing the challenges identified in relevant country-specific recommendations and in the European Semester as referred to in Article 7(2) shall be programmed under one or more dedicated priorities. EU Member States shall ensure consistency, coherence and synergies of these priorities with the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.</p>
---	---

Justification: The proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights on 17 November 2017 by all EU Member States and institutions represents a decisive step towards a more Social Europe. Its 20 principles provide an important basis to improve the wellbeing of people and vulnerable groups in particular. In addition, the commitment of the EU to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is an opportunity to make progress towards poverty eradication.

The future EU budget represents an essential leverage to ensure the successful implementation of the Pillar and SDGs, bring positive change to people’s lives and restore trust in the EU as a citizens’ project.

In addition, whilst the European Semester covers many important social issues, it does not and cannot cover the full range of social challenges in each Member State or region. This limitation could be solved if the European Pillar of Social Rights and the SDGs are also used as guiding mechanisms in the development of Operational Programmes as they cover a much broader range of challenges.

<p>Article 12.1 – Scope (Amendment 17 - EP draft report)</p>	<p>This Chapter applies to ESF+ support under points (i) to (xi) (x) of Article 4(1) when implemented under shared management (the ‘general support of the ESF+ strand under shared management’).</p>
---	--

The chapter III of the European Commission ESF+ proposal outlines simple management rules for addressing material deprivation. This proposal adequately responds to the concerns of organisations providing material assistance on a daily basis to most deprived people across the EU and implementing the current Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD).

Material assistance is most of the time provided at local level by volunteers. It is essential to keep the management rules and subsequent administrative requirements as light as possible. **We therefore stress the importance of keeping the separate chapter III with simple management rules** in order to ensure the implementation of ESF+ does not create unnecessary burden on organisations, volunteers and end-users of material assistance.

Article 17.4 – Principles	The delivery of food and/or material assistance may shall be complemented with reorientation towards competent services and other accompanying measures aiming at the social inclusion of the most deprived persons.
Justification: Accompanying measures, such as providing social services, have proved to be key in addressing social exclusion of the most deprived. The provision of material and food assistance in context with social cohesion can only be meaningful if combined with additional social assistance measures. We suggest the allocation of resources to accompanying measures to be made compulsory (article 17.4) in order to make sure food and material assistance is most effective in contributing to social cohesion.	

Contact Details

info@socialserviceseurope.eu