



# Evaluation of ESF

US-EU Exchange on workforce development  
programmes

Brussels, 04 September 2015

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# Presentation

1. Introduction to the ESF
2. Evaluation Requirements and Evaluation Plans
3. European Commission support

# 1. Introduction to the European Social Fund (ESF) 2014-2020





## What is the ESF?

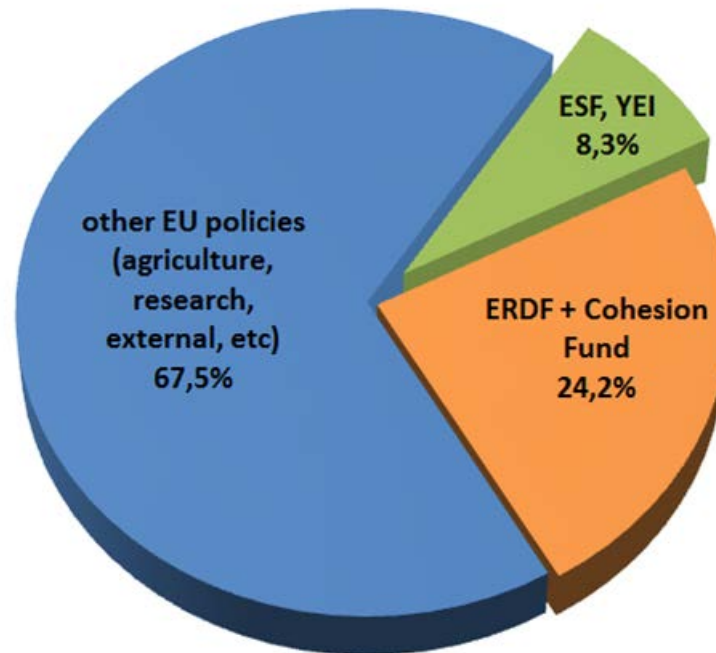
*The EU's key instrument for investing in people and systems:*

- *To improve employment opportunities*
  - *To promote education and life-long learning*
  - *To enhance social inclusion and combat poverty*
  - *To improve efficiency of public administration*
- ➔ **An expression of European solidarity**



## The ESF and the EU budget 2014-2020

Total ESF allocation:  
80 billion € 7 years.

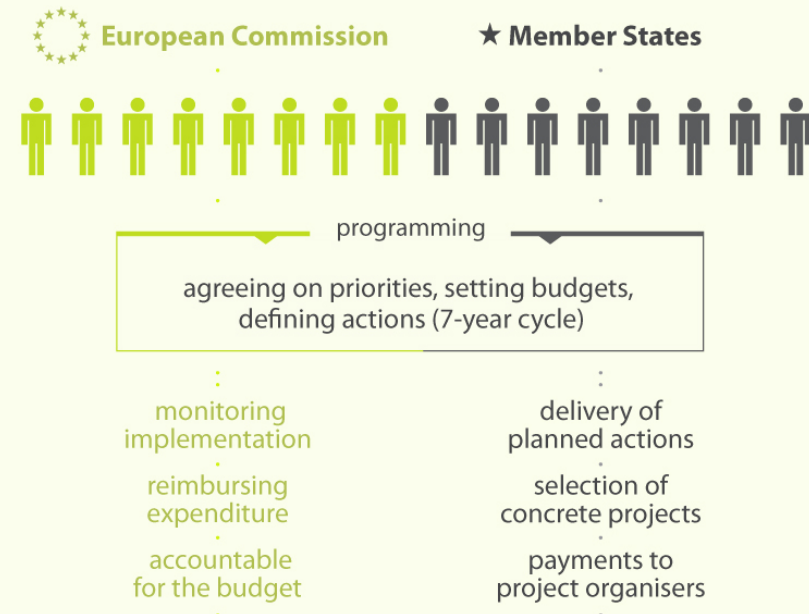




## ESF- how does it work?

187 ESF Operational Programmes managed by Member States or regions

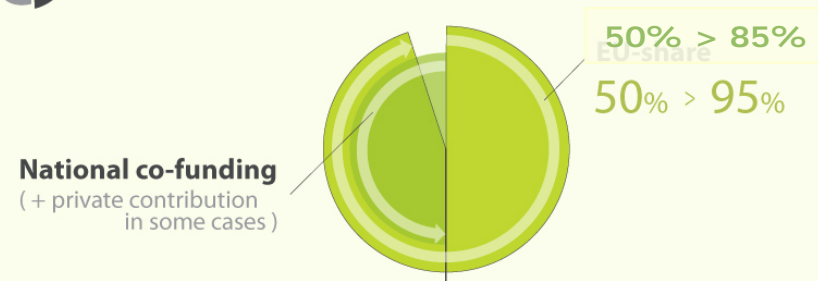
### Shared management



### Partnership



### Co-financing



# ***2. Evaluation Requirements and Evaluation Plans***

# ESF 2007-2013 ex post evaluations

- **Ambitious exercise**
  - series of thematic evaluations and synthesis
- **Aim of ex post evaluations**
  - analyse the extent to which resources were used, effectiveness, efficiency and impacts of funding
- **Expected use**
  - for accountability purposes to the Court of Auditors, European Parliament, etc.
  - for learning purposes for 2014-2020 and beyond.



# Lessons from 2007-2013: Evaluation

- **Great diversity in practice and quality** among 721 evaluations of the ESF between 2007 and 2013
- **Limited** but **growing numbers of evaluations** dealing with effects and impact (only 5% Counterfactual Impact Evaluations (CIE) on ESF)
- **Stronger evaluative evidence** on what works, for whom and in what contexts and the impacts of cohesion policy **is needed**: stronger requirements for 2014-2020, including more impact evaluations.



## Results orientation

- Sound intervention logic at programming stage fixing clear objectives towards which progress can be measured
- Indicators – common and specific:
  - What do you want to change?
  - What indicator can capture this change?
  - What is the baseline (for ESF: previous experience)?
  - How will the outputs of the programme contribute to change?
- Performance framework (milestones and targets), performance review and reserve (6% of financial allocation)
- Enhanced evaluation and reporting
- Option of payments based on results (vs. reimbursement of incurred real costs)

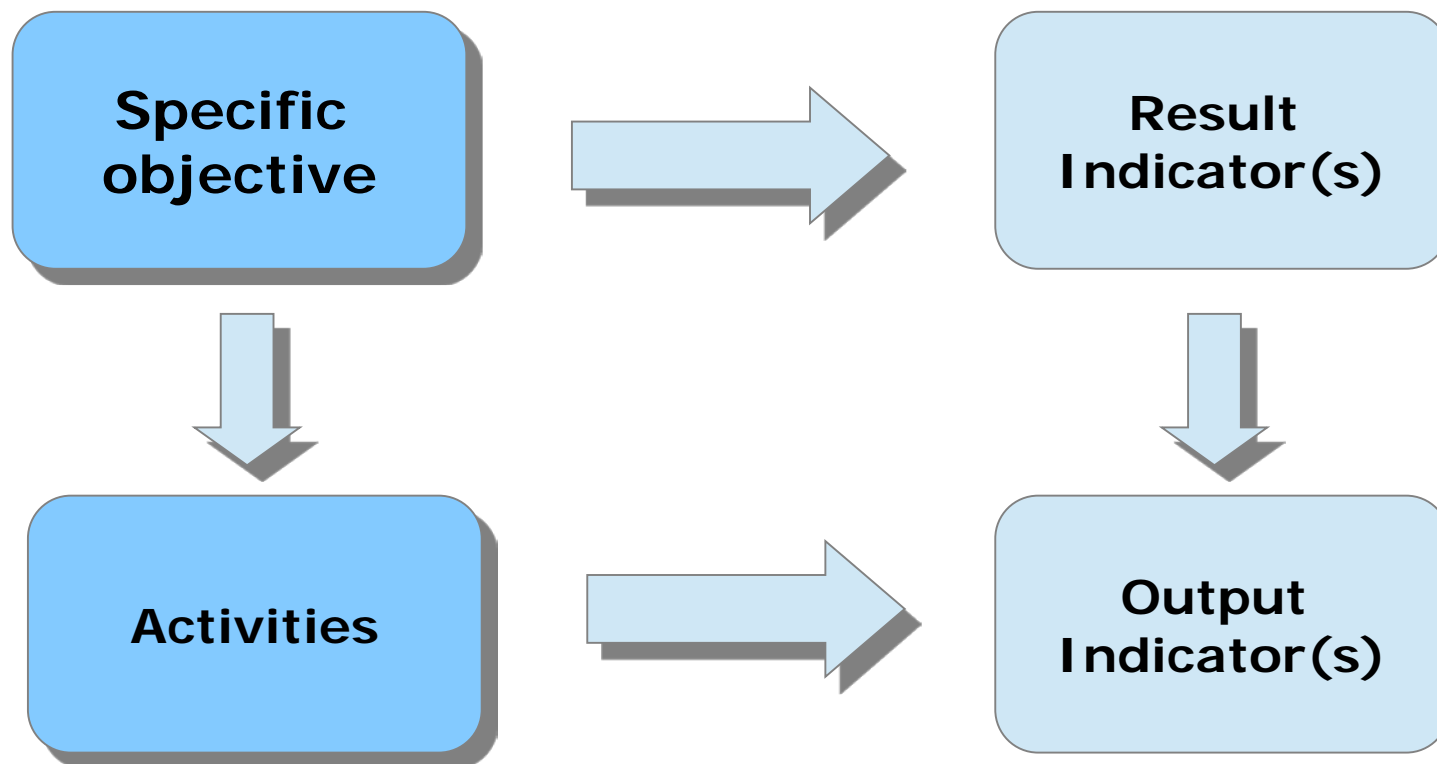
# Enhanced monitoring and evaluation provisions for ESF 2014-2020

More robust and comparable results should be achieved through:

- **Baselines:**
  - Effectiveness and efficiency of previous programmes is the benchmark
- **Common and programme-specific indicators:**
  - Datasets about participants and entities will facilitate more counterfactual evaluations and aggregation of results
- **More impact evaluations**
  - Impact evaluations will have to be carried out for all objectives of the programmes

# *Guiding principles for ESF Indicators*

Not indicators-, but intervention logic-driven



# *Guiding principles for ESF Indicators*

Indicators measure

**supported**

persons/entities/projects

Indicators are determined by and **reflect**

**specific objective**

# Evaluation Plans: main elements

Evaluation plans are required for all ESF Operational Programmes

- **Context:** objectives, coverage, coordination
- **Process:** evaluation framework
- **Content:** planned evaluations
- **Review & follow up** of evaluation plan

# Evaluation Plans: use

- Quality of evaluations: time, methods, data
- Use for management and policy making
- Sharing of evidence in different policy fields
- Matching reporting needs by MS:
  - ✓ Annual Implementation Reports (AIR);
  - ✓ Progress reports (2017, 2019);
  - ✓ Summary report on evaluation findings (2022)

# Impact evaluations (I)

## What is required by Regulation?

- Evaluate contribution of Operational Programme (OP) to objectives of each Priority Axis
- Evaluate impact in relation to EU2020 targets
- Report on Funds contribution to change in result indicators + to EU 2020 achievement (Annual Implementation Report 2017 + 2019)
- Impact evaluations of Youth Employment Initiative end 2015 and 2018

## What does this mean?

- Each Specific Objective (and expected results) should be covered to allow conclusion for each Priority Axis
- EU 2020: in most cases, qualitative analysis considering other factors



# Impact evaluations (II)

## Methods

- Theory-based
- Process evaluations
- Counterfactual impact evaluation

## Combination of methods needed

to capture the causal link between interventions and results and the underlying causal mechanisms

# Impact evaluations (III)

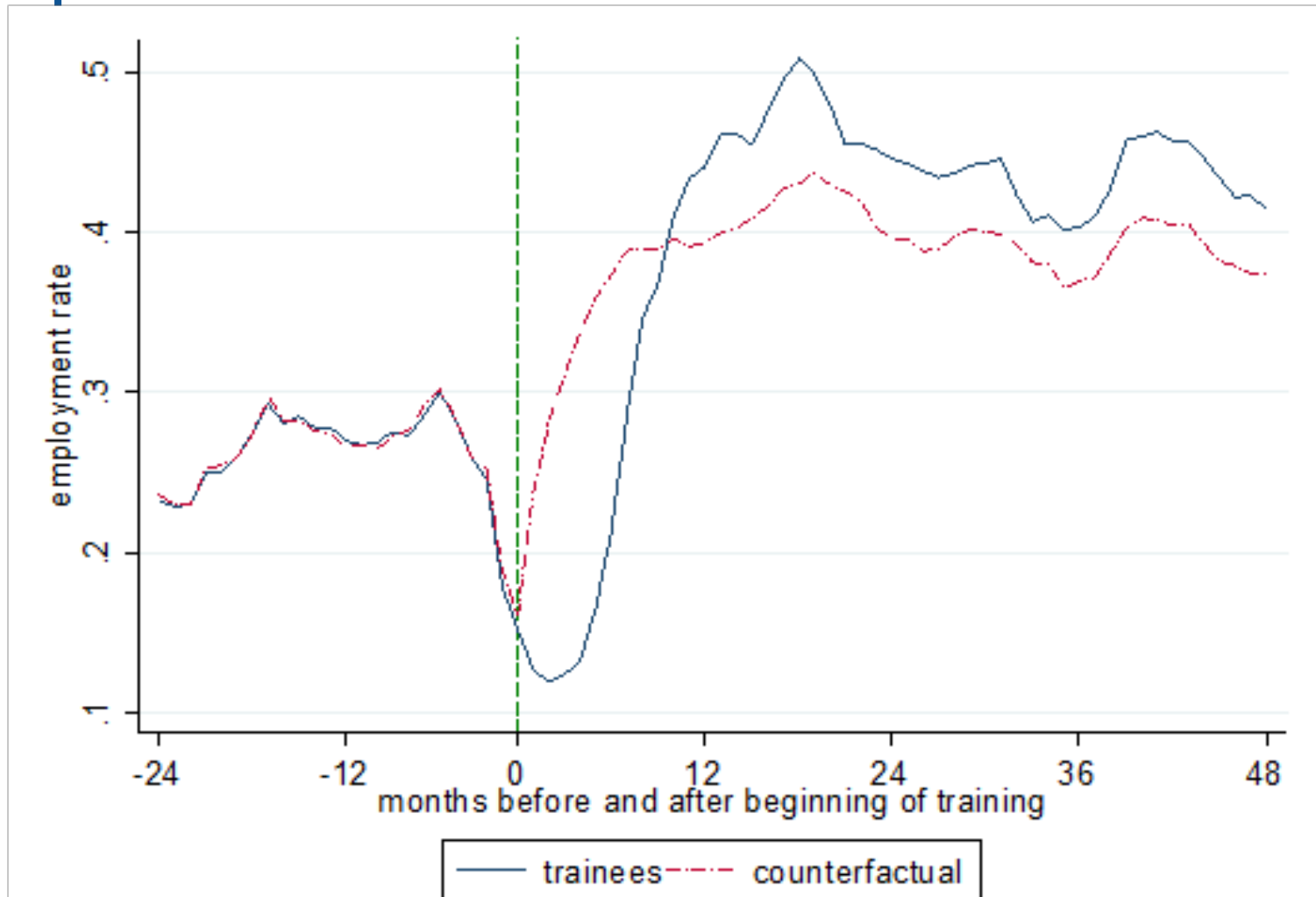
## Timing

- Timing is crucial; some interventions may show their effects only after a certain period of time;
- All impact evaluations will not be carried out at the same time

## Data needed

- Supported entities and individual participants
- Data from other sources of information than monitoring systems: unemployment records, tax records...
- Counterfactual: data for non-treated groups
- Need to be planned in advance

## Example of a counterfactual evaluation



Source: Presentation of Mr. Paolo Severati, ISFO (Italy) at Open Days 2014 (Brussels), based on pilot CIE project financed by DG EMPL: "Post-secondary vocational training courses: are they effective for Italian unemployed youth with a high school diploma?"

# ***3. European Commission Support***

# On-going EC support:

## ESF data support centre

- Advice to Commission and Member States (MS)
- Methodological advice on Monitoring and Information Systems

## CRIE: Center for Research on Impact Evaluation

- Focus on counterfactual impact evaluation
- Capacity building of MS: training and practical advice
- Regional Workshops on CIE Initiative
- Accompanying pilot projects in different MS
- <https://crie.jrc.ec.europa.eu>

## Final considerations:

- **Plan evaluations seriously** in terms of depth, data, questions and timing
- Think of the **stakeholders** to be involved – involve academics and other partners
- **Build capacity** within administrations and among evaluators
- **Accumulate evidence** on what works, for whom & in what contexts, in order to have:
- A **Learning Policy** delivering for citizens

The European Social Fund



**More information available under**

*<http://ec.europa.eu/esf>*



# Annex

## Common indicators

### ESF 2014-2020



# Common output indicators on people

## Employment status

- unemployed, including long-term unemployed\*
- long-term unemployed\*
- inactive\*
- inactive, not in education or training\*
- employed, including self-employed\*

# Common output indicators on people

## Age

- below 25 years\*
- above 54 years\*
- participants above 54 years who are unemployed, including long-term unemployed, or inactive not in education or training \*

## Education

- with primary (ISCED 1) or lower secondary education (ISCED 2)\*
- with upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary education (ISCED 4)\*
- with tertiary education (ISCED 5 to 8)\*

# Common output indicators on people

## Disadvantaged participants

- participants who live in jobless households\*
- participants who live in jobless households with dependent children\*
- participants who live in a single adult household with dependent children\*
- migrants, people with a foreign background, minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)\*\*
- disabled\*\*
- other disadvantaged\*\*
- homeless or affected by housing exclusion\*
- from rural areas\*

# Common output indicators on entities

- number of projects fully or partially implemented by social partners or non-governmental organisations
- number of projects dedicated to sustainable participation and progress of women in employment;
- number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level
- number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, enterprises of the social economy)

## Common immediate result indicators

- inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving\*
- participants in education/training upon leaving\*
- participants gaining a qualification upon leaving\*
- participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving\*
- disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/training, gaining a qualification, or in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving\*\*

# Common longer-term result indicators

- participants in employment, including self-employment, 6 months after leaving\*
- participants with an improved labour market situation 6 months after leaving\*
- participants above 54 years in employment, including self-employment, 6 months after leaving\*
- disadvantaged participants in employment, including self-employment, 6 months after leaving\* \*

These data are to be provided in the annual implementation reports 2019 and 2023. They are to be collected based on a representative sample of participants within each investment priority.