

Common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund; general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

2011/0276(COD) - 01/04/2019 - Follow-up document

The Commission presents its 2018 summary report of the programme annual implementation reports covering implementation European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds for the period

2014-2017. This Staff working document provides a complementary synthesis of the evaluation work undertaken by the Member States and the Commission in order to assess the impact of the programmes supported by ESI Funds. The Commission notes that the legislation for the period 2014-2020 sets out a stronger emphasis on the need to evaluate the contribution to growth, sustainable development and job creation of the policies cofinanced through the ESI Fund programmes, which comprise the following:

- European regional development fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Funds;
- European social fund (ESF) and Youth Employment Initiative (YEI);
- European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD);
- European maritime and fisheries fund (EMFF)

Main findings

An overview of the implementation progress shows that the reported expenditure of projects selected at the end of 2017 in the programmes supported by the ESI Funds amounts to 15% of the total planned. Although it has more than doubled in 12 months, it still represents a low execution rate, especially if compared to the previous programming period.

- The low pace of implementation has determined a ***limited availability of evaluations for the period 2014-2020*** so far, behind the level initially planned. The evaluations mostly deal with process /implementation and monitoring/progress issues, and those oriented to evaluate the impact of the programmes and the policy are only a minor share of the total. However, the number of 2014-2020 evaluations completed by the Member States is now increasing. There are positive signals also on implementation, such as the 25% increase in the selection rate of the projects in 2017 alone (the largest annual rise so far), indicating that Member States are turning the planned investments into concrete projects.

With regard to quality, an in-depth analysis of the reliability of impact evaluations, related to both programming periods, showed that only a limited number of them can be considered as fully reliable, which highlights the need for improvement in the quality of the works produced by Member States, to which the Commission is committed to provide necessary support.

Conclusions

The report notes the following:

- First evidence is available from the Member States on the period 2014-2020, mostly for ESF/YEI and show positive impact on employment of the various measures evaluated so far, while impact evaluations on the other Funds are still very limited, due to the scope and nature of the actions funded.
- For the 2007-2013 period, impact evaluations show that most investments would have not been carried out without EU support and their success requires strong coordination of different measures and cooperation among stakeholders. Support to SMEs has increased employment, productivity and exports and can be more effective when complemented with non-financial support.

Based on the forecasts of the evaluation plans and the fact that implementation is accelerating to reach its full pace, the Commission expects that a more conspicuous number of impact evaluations related to 2014-2020 programmes will be available in the next 12 months, so that more evidence from the Member States will be reported in the 2019 edition of this document.