

European Social Fund (ESF) 2007-2013

2004/0165(COD) - 14/07/2004 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to establish the tasks of the European Social Fund (ESF) in the reformed framework of cohesion policy for the period 2007-2013.

PROPOSED ACT : Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTENT : this proposal has been drafted as part of the cohesion legislative package. The package consists of a general Regulation (AVC/2004/0163), the European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF) (COD/2004/0167) as well as an entirely new proposal creating the framework for a cross-border authority to manage cooperation programmes (EGCC) (COD/2004/0168).

The draft ESF Regulation for 2007-2013 provides a focussed framework for ESF interventions throughout the Union. Under both the 'Convergence' and the 'Regional Competitiveness and Employment' objectives, the ESF will provide support with a view to anticipating and managing economic and social change. Its intervention will focus on four key areas for action endorsed by the European Council: increasing adaptability of workers and enterprises; enhancing access to employment, preventing unemployment, prolonging working lives and increasing participation in the labour market; reinforcing social inclusion by promoting the integration in work of disadvantaged people and combating discrimination; and promoting partnership for reform in the fields of employment and inclusion.

In the least prosperous regions and Member States, the Funds will concentrate on promoting structural adjustment, growth and job creation. To this end, under the Convergence objective, in addition to the above-mentioned priorities, the ESF will also support action to expand and improve investment in human capital, in particular by improving education and training systems, and action aimed at developing institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations, at national, regional and local level. Furthermore, the proposal gives a greater emphasis to the Union's commitment towards the elimination of inequalities between women and men: specific actions addressed to women are combined with a robust gender mainstreaming approach, to increase participation and progress of women in employment. Moreover, the promotion of innovative activities and trans-national co-operation will be fully integrated in the scope of the ESF, and mainstreamed within the national and regional operational programmes.

Under both the 'Convergence' and the 'Regional Competitiveness and Employment' objectives, the ESF will give priority to funding trans-national cooperation, including exchanges of experiences and best practices across the Union and joint actions, ensuring where appropriate, coherence and complementarity with other trans-national Community programmes.

Finally, the proposal attaches a particular importance to the promotion of good governance. To this end, under the new Convergence objective, social partners will be encouraged to actively participate in capacity building actions and to undertake joint activities in the policy areas where they play a decisive role. Under the Commission proposal, it would account for 20-25% of cohesion total funding.

For further information concerning the financial implications of this measure, please refer to the financial statement.