



# THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

## A TOOL FOR CREATING MORE AND BETTER JOBS IN EUROPE

**The European Social Fund (ESF) is the EU's main tool for supporting employment in Europe. The EU and the member states put money in the fund. This money is distributed to local, regional and national projects which create jobs, help companies and help individuals develop their skills. The national Social Fund programmes set the targets of the contributions in each member state and decide how the money from the Social Fund is to be used.**

### **What is the European Social Fund?**

The Social Fund is one of the EU's so-called Structural Funds. The purpose of these funds is to strengthen the member states' economy and social cohesion. The purpose of the Social Fund is also to contribute to reducing differences in prosperity and living standards between countries.

### **How does the Social Fund work?**

Each year the EU contributes EUR 10 billion to the Social Fund. This is equivalent to 10 per cent of the total budget of the EU. On top of this the member states add their own contributions. The money is used to finance different national, regional and local projects which contribute to employment and development of skills. How it

is to be distributed between member states depends on their relative prosperity.

Each member state has one or more organisations responsible for the Social Fund. In Sweden, the Swedish ESF Council is responsible for making sure that the money is distributed according to EU strategy and national policies.

Each country is responsible for creating a programme document: a plan for how to use the money, including goals and priorities. Some countries have several programmes. This is usually a task for the ministries. The programme document must be adapted to the country and its current challenges in the labour market. The current programme period lasts from 2014 until 2020. In Sweden, the Social Fund is divided into three programme areas with different priorities. (Please see the fact sheets about the programme areas.)

### **Who can receive funds from the Social Fund?**

Projects given support from the Social Fund work with skills development, employment measures and integration efforts. Public and large private and voluntary sector organisations alike can apply for funds from the Social Fund. Private individuals cannot apply for funds from the Social Fund.

## How to apply for funds

So-called calls are made when there are funds to apply for. The funds are distributed in turns. Each call states specific goals and terms for the projects to be given support. The calls are available on the ESF Council's website, divided into nine geographical areas: eight regions and one national level. The calls state if a project can be active in more than one region.

Organisations interested in the funds can apply on the ESF Council's website.

At most, the Social Fund covers 50 per cent of the projects' costs; the projects themselves usually need to cover a part of the cost in each individual project.

## More information

To find out more about the Social Fund in Sweden, visit the Swedish ESF Council's website: [www.esf.se](http://www.esf.se). There are more fact sheets available if you are considering to apply for funds. They give an overview of different parts of the Social Fund programme:

- Fund co-operation
- Programme area 1:  
Competence development
- Programme area 2:  
Increased transitions to work
- Programme area 3:  
Employment initiatives for young people
- Co-financing
- Simplified accounting
- Projects within the European Social Fund  
From calls to assessments
- Follow-up and assessment
- Horizontal principles, equal opportunities,  
within the Social Fund: Non-discrimination
- Horizontal principles, equal opportunities,  
within the Social Fund: Equality
- Horizontal principles, equal opportunities,  
within the Social Fund: Accessibility
- Horizontal principles, equal opportunities,  
within the Social Fund: Sustainable development
- Transnationality



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