



**socialplatform**



## **Response to EU public consultation**

**EU funds in the area of Cohesion**

**March 2018**

# Questionnaire

## EU Funds in the area of cohesion

Please let us know whether you have experience with one or more of the following funds and programmes (at most 6 choice(s))

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The Cohesion Fund (CF)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The European Social Fund (ESF)
<input type="checkbox"/>	The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)

Please let us know to which of the following one or more topics your replies will refer

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Economic and sustainable development
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Employment, skills and education
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Social inclusion

The Commission has preliminarily identified a number of policy challenges which programmes/funds under the policy area of cohesion could address. How important are these policy challenges in your view?

	*Very important	*Rather important	*Neither important nor unimportant	*Rather not important	*Not important at all	*No opinion
a. Promote economic growth in the EU as a whole	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Reduce regional disparities and underdevelopment of certain EU regions	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Address the adverse side-effects of globalisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Reduce unemployment, promote quality	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

jobs and support labour mobility						
e. Promote social inclusion and combat poverty	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Promote common values (e.g. rule of law, fundamental rights, equality and non-discrimination)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Facilitate transition to low carbon and circular economy, ensure environmental protection and resilience to disasters and climate change	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Foster research and innovation across the EU	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Facilitate transition to digital economy and society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Promote sustainable transport and mobility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Promote territorial cooperation (interregional, cross-border, transnational)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. Support education and training for skills and life-long learning	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. Improve quality of institutions and administrative capacity	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

n. Promote sound economic governance and the implementation of reforms	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
o. Other (please give degree of importance here and fill in question 30 below)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**If you selected 'Other' in the above question, please specify it here:**

*Support adaptation to demographic change with community-based long-term care services, relevant services for informal carers, work-life balance measures. Support holistic services for TCN integration.*

**To what extent do the current programmes/funds successfully address these challenges?**

	To a large extent	To a fairly large extent	*To some extent only	*Not at all	*No opinion
*a. Promote economic growth in the EU as a whole	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*b. Reduce regional disparities and underdevelopment of certain EU regions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*c. Address the adverse side-effects of globalisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*d. Reduce unemployment, promote quality jobs and support labour mobility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*e. Promote social inclusion and combat poverty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*f. Promote common values (e.g. rule of law,	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

fundamental rights, equality and non-discrimination)					
*g. Facilitate transition to low carbon and circular economy, ensure environmental protection and resilience to disasters and climate change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*h. Foster research and innovation across the EU	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*i. Facilitate transition to digital economy and society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
*j. Promote sustainable transport and mobility	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*k. Promote territorial cooperation (interregional, cross-border, transnational)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*l. Support education and training for skills and life-long learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*m. Improve quality of institutions and administrative capacity	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*n. Promote sound economic governance and the implementation of reforms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*o. Other (please give degree of importance here)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

and fill in question  
32 below)

**If you selected 'Other' in the above question, please specify it here:**

*Measures to adapt to demographic change are partially addressed and could be enhanced. Migrants integration is partially addressed, more funding is needed due to lack of budget from many MS.*

**To what extent do the current programmes/funds add value, compared to what Member States could achieve at national, regional and/or local levels without EU funds?**

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	To a large extent
<input type="radio"/>	To a fairly large extent
<input type="radio"/>	To some extent only
<input type="radio"/>	Not at all
<input type="radio"/>	Don't know

**Please explain how the current programmes/funds can add value compared to what Member States could achieve at national, regional and/or local levels**

*The current programmes and funds addressing the area of cohesion have definitely an added value, compared to what could be achieved by member states at the national, regional or local level without this funding. More in details, the EU funding:*

- *Strongly contributes to sustainable economic growth across the EU and to social cohesion.*
- *Represents an effective instrument showing the positive impact of the EU in people's everyday life, especially in a context of a shrinking public funding to social infrastructures (ERDF, EaSI, ESF).*
- *Provides funding coverage to policy areas which are often neglected/insufficiently funded by MS. It is for example the case of the implementation of the integration Roma strategies (ESF, FEAD, YEI), or of investments in public health prevention (on average, MS invest less than 3% of national healthcare budget in it).*
- *Provides room for innovation and experimentation on new ideas for challenging social problems (ESF) notably through the use of ICT.*
- *Acts as a tool to include individuals who fell outside the social protection net in many MS (ESF, FEAD), as undeclared migrants, but also of EU internal migrants, often not allowed to register as jobseekers.*
- *Puts together different actors in order to work towards common objectives: this could be much more difficult at the level of MS, and not achievable in some regions.*
- *Facilitates the exchange of good practices, and mutual learning among different local administrations and other relevant stakeholders.*

**Is there a need to modify or add to the objectives of the programmes/funds in this policy area? If yes, which changes would be necessary or desirable? (Please clearly indicate to which policies, programmes and funds your answers refer.)**

*The Social Platform firmly supports EU funding for cohesion, with a particular regard to the ESF, FEAD, YEI and EaSI, as one of the tools to deliver the EPSR, therefore the future regulation for ESF+ should link the thematic objectives of funding Operational Programmes to the principles of the EPSR and strongly consider the attainment of the SDGs. With this regard, cohesion funding needs to go both to employment and non-employment actions to foster social inclusion: ESF + needs to address adequately the principles of social inclusion in*

*the 3rd chapter of the pillar (1/3 of the budget), focusing on those individuals falling outside employability, prioritising integrated services that offer an holistic approach to people's needs.*

*EU cohesion funding should represent a support in the development of common and fair quality standards in social services across the EU, and support upward convergence in EU social security and health systems, closing the existing gaps between member states.*

*It is important that EU funding goes to projects working for adequate working conditions and work-life balance, prioritising fair quality standards in work, improving citizens' health and well-being, stressing the importance of early childhood development, preventing in-work poverty, facilitating transitions through better investments in skills.*

**To what extent do you consider the following as obstacles which prevent the current programmes/funds from successfully achieving their objectives?**

	To a large extent	To a fairly large extent	To some extent only	Not at all	No opinion
a. Complex procedures leading to high administrative burden and delays	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Heavy audit and control requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Available funding does not address the real challenges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Insufficient administrative capacity to manage programmes	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Insufficient information about funding and selection process	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Lack of flexibility to react to unforeseen circumstances	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Difficulty of combining EU action with other public interventions	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Insufficient synergies between the EU	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

programmes/funds					
i. Difficulty to ensure the sustainability of projects when the financing period ends	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Insufficient use of financial instruments	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Co-financing rates	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. Late disbursement of funds / delays in payments to beneficiaries	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. Insufficient linkages of the Funds with the EU economic governance and the implementation of structural reforms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. Legal uncertainty	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
o. Insufficient ownership	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
p. Insufficient involvement of civil society in design and implementation	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
q. Other (please specify below)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**If you selected 'Other' in the above question, please specify it here:**

*Rules restricting state aid*

**To what extent would these steps help to further simplify and reduce administrative burdens for beneficiaries under current programmes/funds?**

	To a large extent	To a fairly large extent	To some extent only	Not at all	No opinion
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a. Alignment of rules between EU funds	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Fewer, clearer, shorter rules	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. More freedom for national authorities to set rules	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. More flexibility of activity once funding is eligible	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. More flexibility of resource allocation to respond to unexpected needs	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Simplify the ex-ante conditionalities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. More effective stakeholders' involvement in the programming, implementation and evaluation	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Other (please specify below)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**If you selected 'Other' in the above question, please specify it here:**

*Strengthen the partnership principle to include NGOs as partners in all stages. Uphold and increase capacity building to CSOs. Cut co-financing for small stakeholders, to allow them to apply for funds.*

**How could synergies among programmes/funds in this area be further strengthened to avoid possible overlaps/duplication? For example, would you consider grouping/merging some programmes/funds? (Please clearly indicate to which policies, programmes and funds your answers refer.)**

*The alignments of rules for applications can produce simplification of procedures and a more efficient use of resources. Merging funding tools should take place with the respect of nature, objectives and regulations of each fund, underpinned by adequate resources for social*

*inclusion. With regard to the ESF+, this tool should strike a better balance between social inclusion measures targeting the most deprived, better access to qualitative social and health services and good interventions to foster qualitative and sustainable employment and activation measures (see supporting document).*

*The coordination of different funds should foster the implementation of projects promoting an integrated approach to different needs, complementing the intervention of cohesion funds in a particular sector with accompanying measures responding to different funding entries. This is the case of the multi-fund operational programmes: operational programmes which put together more than one EaSI fund (as for example ESF and ERDF) represent a tool which should be further developed.*

*Moreover, it is important to point out the need for improving the coordination of the calls for proposals, taking into account ideas of all stakeholders involved: preliminary calls for ideas can lead to better coordinated calls for proposals, with better projects presented and a higher amount of funding allocated being spent successfully.*

## **Document upload and final comments**

**Please feel free to upload a concise document, such as a position paper. The maximum file size is 1MB.**

**Please note that the uploaded document will be published alongside your response to the questionnaire which is the essential input to this public consultation. The document is optional and serves as additional background reading to better understand your position.**

[Social Platform: ESF supporting paper](#)

**If you wish to add further information – within the scope of this questionnaire – please feel free to do so here.**

*We feel that the adverse side of globalisation should not to be addressed only by EU funding. Globalisation induced changes to the European labour market needs to be addressed by legislative measures, at the European as well as at the member states levels, according to the principle of subsidiarity.*

*The Social Platform recognise the importance of ESIF in providing a benchmarking action in promoting equal opportunities and non-discrimination, mainstreaming early childhood development (ECD) as well as finding the right approach in fighting social exclusion and poverty. The existence of national policy frameworks for poverty reduction, Roma inclusion and health systems, putting into place suitable policies: for this reason ex-ante conditionalities needs to be maintained and strengthened, with the aim of promoting quality standards in Europe.*

*A further important point in terms of improvement of the current funding reflects the need for an upgraded support in technical assistance at the ground level: a better attention to capacity building at the level of applicants, and especially public authorities is crucial to the good implementation of integrated projects at the local level, to reduce the gap between funds allocation and spending, and to support applications for projects integrating different funds, with practical examples.*



*Social Platform is the largest civil society alliance fighting for social justice and participatory democracy in Europe. Consisting of 48 pan-European networks of NGOs, Social Platform campaigns to ensure that EU policies are developed in partnership with the people they affect, respecting fundamental rights, promoting solidarity and improving lives.*

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