Financial Instruments under the European Social Fund (ESF) 2014-2020

Conference
2 February 2016
Brussels, Belgium

Programme
Index

Context ................................................................................ 3
Information ........................................................................ 4
Objectives .......................................................................... 5
Agenda ................................................................................ 6
The Europe 2020 Strategy for Growth and Jobs called for a stronger role of Financial Instruments in 2014-2020. The European Council subsequently gave a mandate to the European Commission that the programming of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) should be used to significantly increase the overall EU support from these funds to leverage-based Financial Instruments, in particular for SMEs. An increase in the use of ESIF Financial Instruments, to a level almost double that of the 2007-2013 programming period, is also set out in the Investment Plan for Europe. To achieve this, the new legal and policy framework has widened the scope of Financial Instruments to include all thematic objectives and all five ESI funds. The framework also gives Member States more implementation options.

Within this framework, the European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) aims to increase the use of Financial Instruments under the European Social Fund (ESF) in terms of budget, territorial coverage and types of investment.

In the 2007-2013 programming period, a total of 53 Financial Instruments, primarily limited to supporting SMEs, were implemented across 7 Member States to finance ESF interventions. This modest take up indicates that ESF stakeholders lack experience using these instruments and are less accustomed to dealing with market mechanisms, yet this also implies great potential in using revolving funds to effectively tackle social issues.

Financial Instruments can be co-funded by the ESF to support the investment priorities outlined in the ESF Operational Programmes (OP) of the Member States. Provided that they address an identified market gap, i.e. areas where banks are unwilling to lend, and/or where the private sector is unwilling to invest or finds access to financing difficult, Financial Instruments can contribute to the achievement of the following thematic objectives of the ESF:

- promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility;
- promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination;
- investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning; and
- enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders, as well as efficient public administration.

Managing Authorities also have the possibility to contribute ESF resources to the EU Programme for Employment and Social Entrepreneurship (EaSI). In this way, Managing Authorities can make use of an already existing vehicle that invests ESF resources in the territory covered by a programme. Synergies between the ESF and EaSI are to be explored and developed further.

To allow the use of ESF resources for Financial Instruments, Member States have to plan these into their OPs and implement them in their programme areas. Financial Instruments may have various types (such as loans, guarantees and equity) and cover either all economic sectors supported by the programmes or some sectors/sub-sectors, or types of investments, which face restricted access to and/or unfavourable conditions for funding from private resources.

To support Member States in increasing their use of Financial Instruments, DG EMPL set up, together with other Commission Services responsible for ESIF, the fi-compass integrated advisory platform on Financial Instruments, which provides comprehensive advice and learning opportunities to the benefit of Member States, their Managing Authorities but also for the wider public. The fi-compass platform has been set up in partnership with the European Investment Bank (EIB).
Audience

The target audience for this conference are the ESF Managing Authorities, bodies implementing or considering implementing financial instruments under ESF programmes, financial intermediaries, ESF stakeholders and other actors supporting financial instruments’ implementation.

Venue

Thon Hotel EU
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 75
B-1040 Brussels

Language

The language of the conference will be in English. Interpretation will be provided in French and Italian.

Costs

Registration is free. Participants are expected to finance their own travel and accommodation costs.

In case of unforeseen circumstances such as force majeure or low participant numbers, the event might be moved to a different date or cancelled. In this case, registered participants will be informed immediately via email. The reimbursement of travel and accommodation expenses or work hours lost will not be possible.
What will the conference offer?

Two fi-compass ESF events are being organised in Brussels in February 2016 on how financial instruments can help delivering the ESF. This conference is organised back-to-back with a specific workshop on microfinance 3 February.

Participants of this fi-compass ESF event can expect to further their understanding of how financial instruments can help in their efforts to deliver ESIF 2014-2020 objectives, in particular under the ESF.

The purpose of this conference is to:

• Outline the major EU social policy objectives in relation to use and implementation of financial instruments under the ESF;
• Stimulate among Managing Authorities and social policy stakeholders exchange and discussion on examples, advantages, features and suitability of financial instruments in delivering ESF 2014-2020 objectives;
• To present the regulatory framework and key novelties of the financial instruments and the fi-compass support available;
• To provide the opportunity to discuss in depth the technical challenges that the Managing Authorities and the Member States are facing at the moment as regards the design and set up of financial instruments; and
• To inspire new concepts for financial instruments by reviewing latest developments in the area of social investment.

How to book your place at the seminar?

Please register via www.fi-compass.eu. The deadline for registration is 27 January 2016. As there is limited capacity for the event, we advise registering as soon as possible.
Brussels, 2 February 2016 (Tuesday)

Thon Hotel EU
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 75
B-1040 Brussels

Moderator: Cathy Smith, fi-compass expert

08:30
Registration and coffee

09:30
Welcome and opening remarks
Andriana Sukova-Tosheva, Director, DG EMPL, European Commission

10:00
Opportunities offered by the ESF framework
2014-2020 – State of play
Andrea Da Pozzo, DG EMPL, European Commission
Followed by Q&A

10:30
Coffee break

11:00
Financial instruments at work – Experiences from the ground
Salvatore Pirrone, Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Italy
Rūta Dapkiūtė-Stankevičienė, Ministry of Finance, Lithuania
Carla Pedro, Portugal Social Innovation
Alessandro Valenza, fi-compass expert
Followed by Q&A

13:00
Lunch and networking break

14:30
Social impact investments in Europe in the ESF framework
Jader Cané, DG EMPL, European Commission
Cyril Gouiffes, European Investment Fund
Karen Wilson, OECD
Mario Calderini, Politecnico di Milano, Italy
Alessandro Valenza, fi-compass expert
Followed by Q&A

15:30
Coffee break

16:00
Other opportunities for EU financial instruments
Stefan De Keersmaecker, DG EMPL, European Commission
Ann Branch, DG EMPL, European Commission
Per-Erik Eriksson, European Investment Fund
Cyril Gouiffes, European Investment Fund
David Gonzalez Martin, European Investment Fund
Followed by Q&A

17:00
Closing remarks
Andriana Sukova-Tosheva, Director, DG EMPL, European Commission

17:15
Networking opportunity

18:00
End of the conference