

National operational programmes 2014-2020 European social fund (ESF) Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)

Summary of assessment works

Thanks to nearly 4,5 million participants and more than 20.000 actions, the interventions supported by the co-financing of ESF and YEI national operational programmes between 2014 and 2020 have overall reached their objectives. The follow-up and the effect assessment have made it possible to identify the results upon the return to employment and integration.

People further away from the labour market and young people in difficulty benefited from new support procedures and an increasing range of services from various operators. Career paths were secured thanks to an increasing access to training. However, support to innovative actions remained marginal.

This summary reminds of the fundamentals of both national operational programmes (ESF and YEI), presents their key numbers and described the reinforced the place given to the assessment of the 2014-2020 period and resituates the main results of the work done. It allows to learn lessons for the assessment strategy of the 2021-2027 ESF+.

"Summary of assessment works on NOP ESF and YEI 2014-2020" report, Amnyos-Edater, February 2020

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Cohesion policy and the implementation of the **Europe 2020 Strategy** for growth and jobs rely on several important financial instruments, the European Social Fund (ESF) being the main one.

To tackle long-term effects of the 2008 crisis, high levels of unemployment, early school leaving and the risk of disruption of pathways for young people, the Council of the European Union adopted a recommendation in April 2013 establishing the **European Youth Guarantee**. Each Member State was asked to create an action plan for young people who are neither in employment nor in training (the “NEET”) in order to offer them a quality job, further training, an apprenticeship, or an internship in the 4 months following their exit from the educational system or the loss of their job.

For the 2014-2020 programme period, France was allocated €6.5 billion of ESF credits, of which almost €1 billion is for YEI. The ESF and YEI are deployed through 32 ESF and YEI Operational Programmes (OP), including two national OPs¹:

- **The national ESF OP** in metropolitan France for more than **€2.7 billion** with 3 strategic axis of intervention and an axis 4 relating to technical assistance (98 M€).
- **The national YEI OP** in the territories, including the overseas territories, where the unemployment rate for the young aged 15 to 29 exceeds 25%, with a budget of more than **€672 million** (excluding technical assistance).

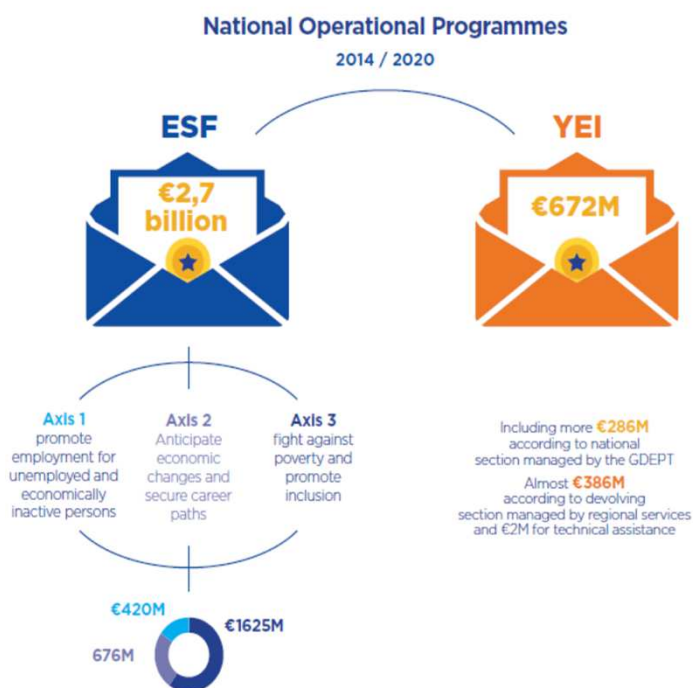
An extra €800 million (axis 5 - implementation of **React-EU** funds and axis 6 - React-EU technical assistance) has been allocated to the ESF national operational programme for the period 2021-2023 to address the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis.



The **European Social Fund** helps to facilitate access to employment, secure career paths, support those most in need on the labour market and strengthen social inclusion. It mainly focuses on groups most at risk of unemployment and exclusion and the least qualified.



The **Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)**, a financial instrument for intervention associated with the European Youth Guarantee aims to provide a positive solution for young people under the age of 25 and facilitate their professional integration into the job market. The target has been extended to the under-30s in 2018.



These two national OPs are managed by the State and its regional services as well as intermediate bodies.

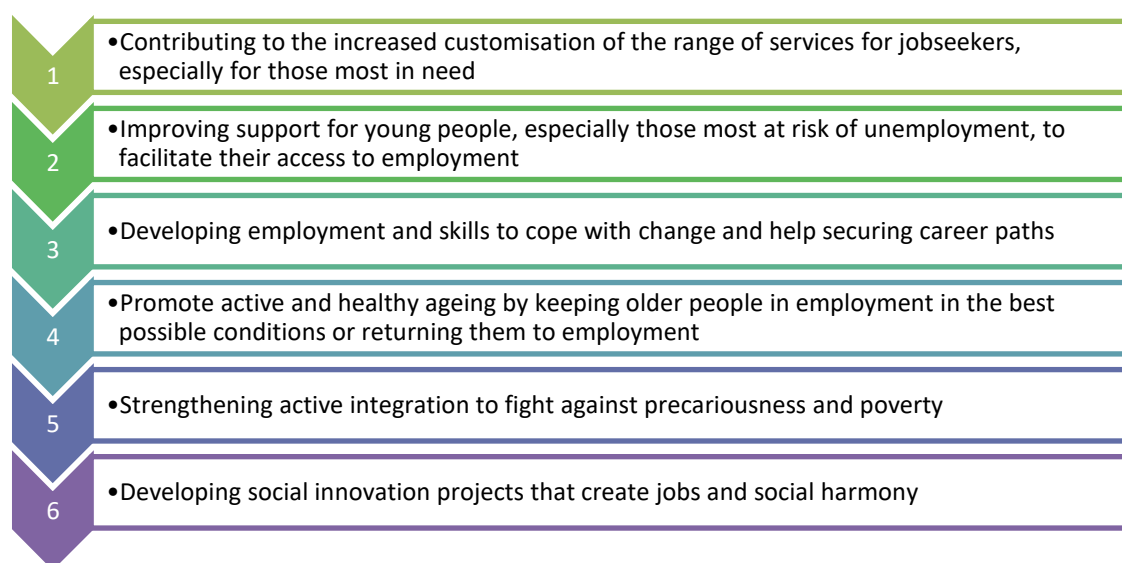
¹ Metropolitan France counts also **22 regional OPs** managed by regional Councils and **8 overseas OPs** (3 ERDF-ESF-YEI OPs managed by the territorial authorities of Guadeloupe, French Guiana and Martinique and 5 ESF OPs managed by the State in Reunion Island, Mayotte, Guadeloupe/St-Martin, French Guiana and Martinique).

² French Regions (before they merged in 2016) and Departments eligible to YEI since 2018 are : Aquitaine, Auvergne, Centre, Champagne-Ardenne, Haute-Normandie, Languedoc-Roussillon, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Picardie, Alsace, Bourgogne, Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, Reunion Island, Bouches-du-Rhône, Var, Haute-Garonne, Seine-Saint-Denis, Moselle, Meurthe et Moselle, Haute Corse, Corse du Sud and Mayotte.

The ESF and YEI National Operational Programmes aim to address **six main challenges**.

The actions financed by these two programmes must contribute to the achievement of the different objectives (quantitative and qualitative) of the European Strategy, in line with the national employment policy, the fight against poverty and for social inclusion.

The six challenges of the programming period 2014-2020



Nearly €4.5 million was spent on assessment works carried out under the supervision of the Evaluation Monitoring Committee. Numerous studies were undertaken (audits, impact assessments of the YEI Operational Programme and of the three axis of ESF National Operational Programme, thematic studies, 6-month surveys), mixing various methods, depending on their objectives (including counterfactual approaches). Together, they constitute a complete tool for assessing the effectiveness and impact of the mobilisation of the ESF and YEI between 2014 and 2020.

The new aspect of the 2014-2020 programme is the requirement to measure the performance and progress of ESF intervention. This has resulted in the monitoring of output and result indicators and the establishment of a performance framework, and in the strengthening of the role of monitoring and assessment with :

- **The adoption of an assessment plan** to characterise and define the purposes of evaluation, the specific evaluative questions, and the timetable,
- **Assessments for each programme axis** to measure the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of EU funds and improve the quality of the design and implementation of the programmes,
- **An expanded role for the ESF Evaluation Monitoring Committee.**

This Committee's mission is to inform the Managing Authority and its partners on the performance monitoring and evaluation of the two National Operational Programmes, by examining all the components (effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and added value).

The diversity of its members and their competences ensure that the National Operational Programmes are put into perspective with the public policies to which they are linked and the integration of assessment work into a qualitative, scientific, and knowledge-producing approach.

- **An assessment system based on a process of individual data collection** that characterises the situation of people at the start and end of operations co-financed by European funds, and then six months later through a survey.

The data entry and capitalisation tool ("Ma Démarche FSE" i.e. "My ESF procedure") and a monitoring tool (the decision-making information system) have been introduced to facilitate the daily provision of aggregated and updated data, to manage, monitor and evaluate the programmes.

³Regulation (EU) N°1303/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union laying down common provisions on the ERDF, the ESF, the Cohesion Fund, EAFRD and the EMFF

⁴Overall, the ESF NOP counts 52 follow-up indicators including 32 ESF output and result indicators et 12 related to YEI, common to all Member States, that must be integrated in the Annual Implementation Report.

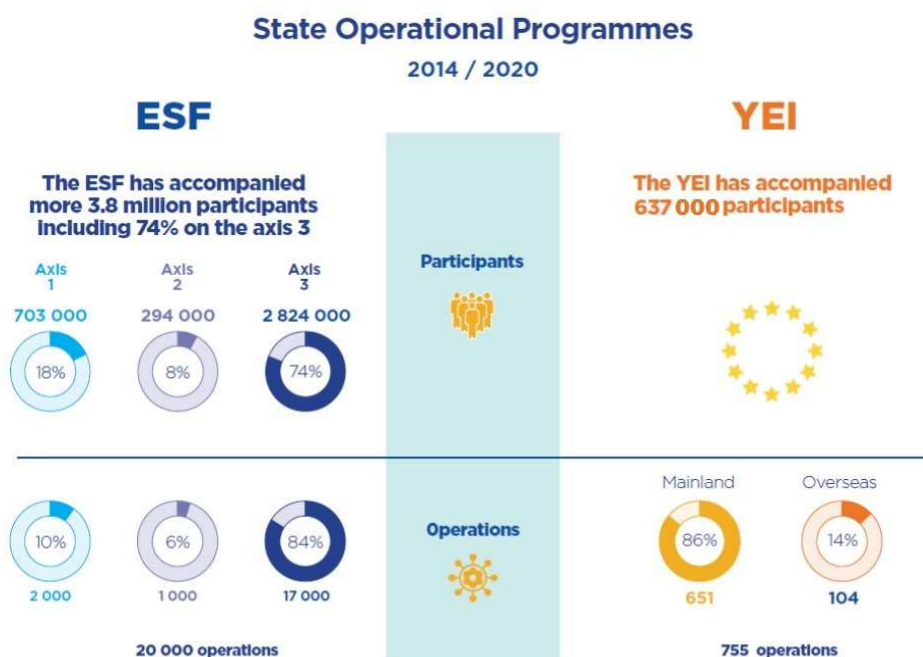
⁵ The performance framework is composed of 6 output indicators (2 by axis of the ESF NOP) and financial indicators with an intermediate value to reach by 31 December 2018, and a final value to reach by 31 December 2023. 2018 outputs must correspond to over 50% of the financial envelope. Financial sanctions are planned in case of non-reach of the output objectives. The global amount of the performance reserve is 6% of the global envelope.

In 2021 adding of the challenge 7 - Addressing the consequences of the sanitary crisis.

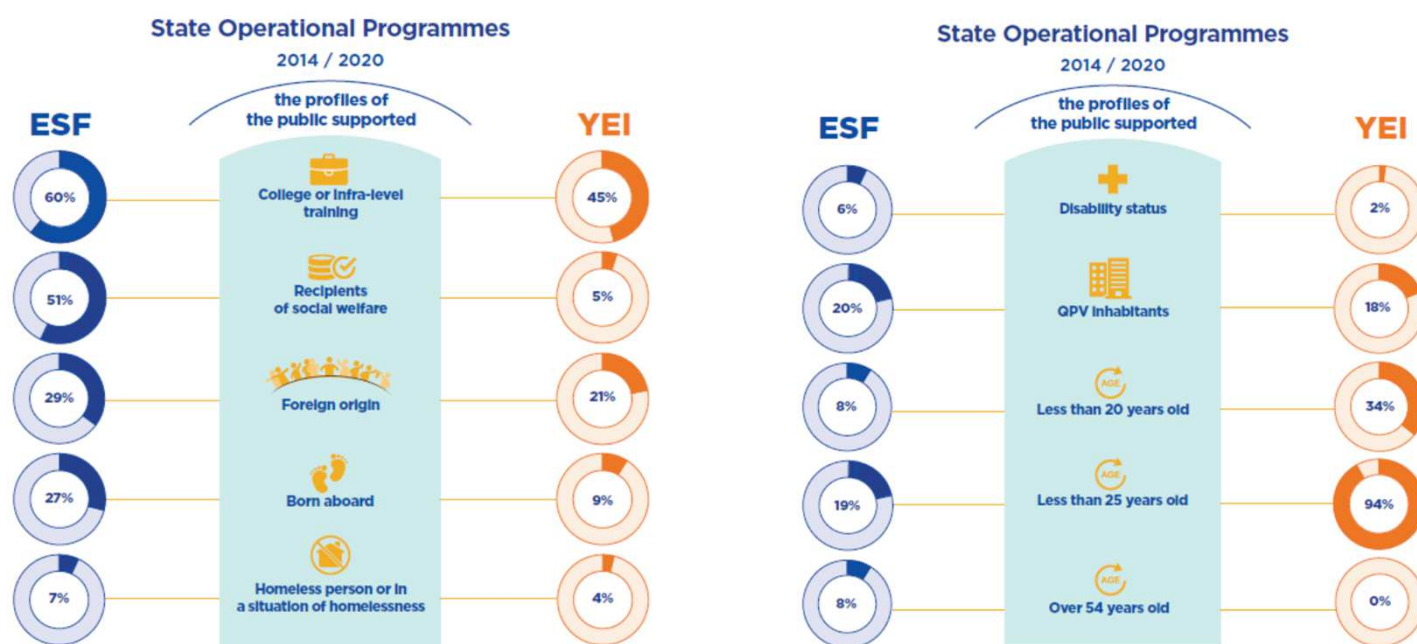
The results are generally in line with the objectives of the ESF and YEI Operational Programmes

More than 20 000 operations funded

Nearly 4.5 million participants supported, benefiting of ESF and YEI co-financing

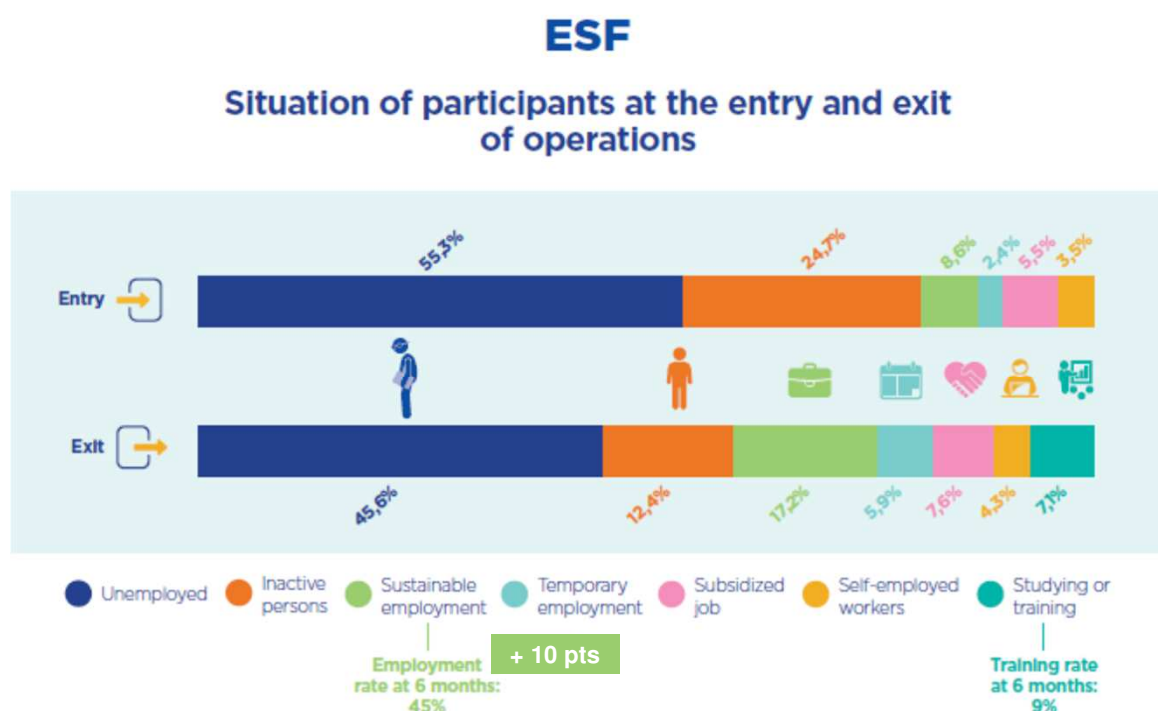


The target audience furthest from the job market is generally reached



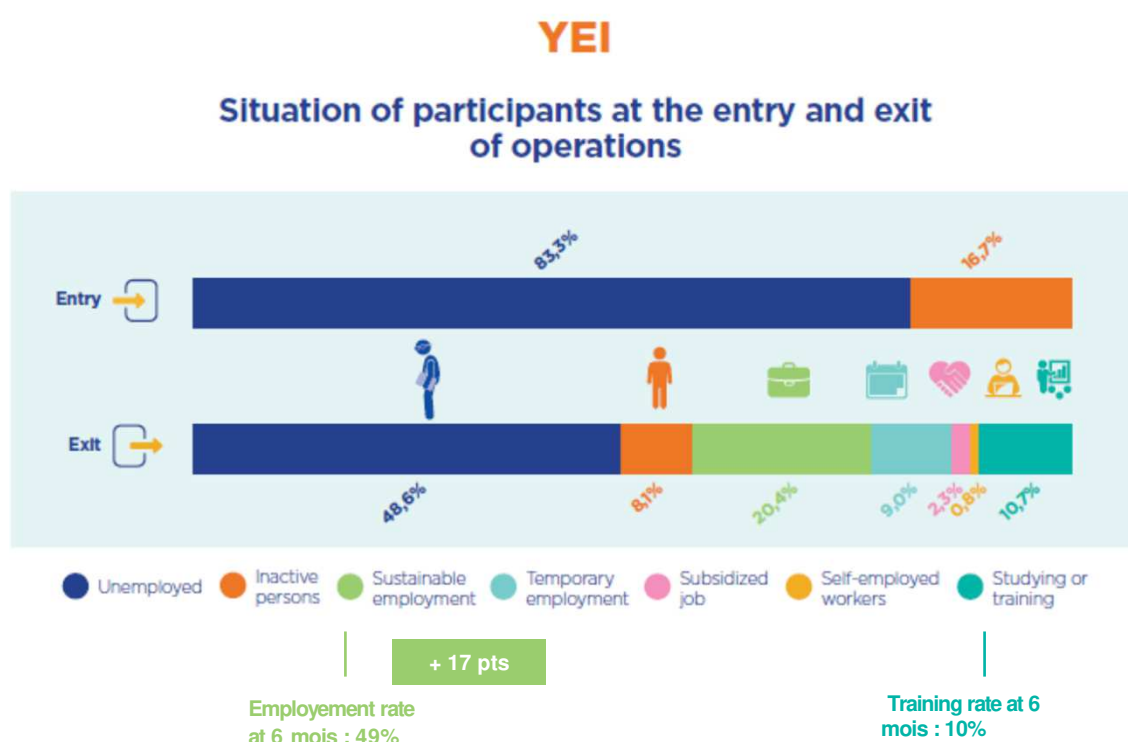
A positive impact of ESF and YEI mobilisation on the career paths of the people supported

Following their exit from the actions of the ESF National Operational Programme, 35% of participants are in employment and 45% six months after the end of the action. The decrease of almost 12 points in the number of inactive people shows the positive evolution of their employability situation. Nearly 30% of employed participants at the start of the programme saw their situation on the job market improve six months later.



Following the end of the YEI National Operational Programme, 32% of the young NEETs are employed and 10,7% are in training or studying.

The employment rate keeps improving, one out of two participants is employed 6 months after the end of the programme.



A combined ESF and YEI action that largely addresses the challenges identified in 2014

The intensification of services for jobseekers and those who need it most

ESF co-financing has helped to better support vulnerable groups on the job market after the 2008 crisis, especially young people.

As a result, we observe:

- An increase in the number of jobseekers and inactive people being supported, combined with an intensification of the support offered to them (through a mix of collective and individual approaches). The ESF contributes to providing a more massive and effective solution to the needs generated by the persistence of high unemployment, especially among young people. It also provides support for certain jobseekers to start or take over a business.
- A modernisation of public action through support for structures and agents, by developing and strengthening the adaptation of their service offers for jobseekers (including the development of services for employers, the improvement of career paths, and the integration of the digital component).

However, the evaluations show that:

- The ESF could reach more certain groups (women and seniors in particular) through a wider range of targeted calls for projects and through a more territorial approach responding to more specific needs.
- The ESF could have a greater added value compared to ordinary law by focusing its intervention on the financing of more innovative projects, integrating different pedagogical practices, but also by promoting partnerships between the heads of the associative network, the different networks of actors and the main operators.

Massive support for the coaching of young people most at risk of unemployment

ESF and YEI funding have helped to support many young people into employment or training via two major national schemes, the Youth Guarantee, and Intensive Youth Support, but also in a variety of territorial schemes adapted to reach young people who are far from the "institutions". The proportion of young people supported through ESF and YEI **represents 27% of the participants in the National Operational Programme, which means more than 1,200,000 participants under the age of 25.**

Through the ESF and YEI, young jobseekers, or inactive people, especially those with low levels of education, have been more intensively supported, with personalised interventions offered by dedicated advisors. The evaluation work on YEI concluded that there was a more clearly positive effect for long-term unemployed young people depending on the nature of the operations.

The recommendations from the study are the following:

- Develop approaches to better understand the "NEET" population and formalise the measures that broaden the current policies, which are mainly focused on low-skilled unemployed young people
- Improve the consistency of the interventions of the different actors through the development of partnerships to support the most disadvantaged and remote young people over the long term
- Establish a strategy for the deployment of funds on a regional level that takes local situations better into account
- Simplify the procedures for European funding

Support for securing career paths through access to training

The financing of common law training schemes through the ESF helps to address the major needs in terms of securing career paths. The most vulnerable members of the public, whether those in employment or those who have lost their jobs, benefit from access to a training programme. **The strengthening of skills has a positive effect on maintaining or returning to employment.**

The results of the evaluations highlight the need to:

- Support a greater diversity of projects, including those aimed at anticipating change
- Encourage innovative approaches
- Take better account of the territorial dimension, the specific needs of sectors of activity and the specific profiles of potential targets

A persistent difficulty in effectively promoting active and healthy ageing

ESF funding helped to support people aged 54 and over, with positive effects on their return to employment, although to a smaller extent than for all beneficiaries. However, no specific approach was dedicated to this group, either for access to training or for support towards and in employment. There have been few specific operations in this area.

The challenge of promoting active and healthy ageing remains fully relevant. The ESF has not been able to

achieve the expected leverage effect in terms of keeping older people in employment and developing new age management strategies in companies in a more systematic way.

The ESF could play an incentive role to jointly mobilise operators in the related fields of employment and health at work. Combining a local territorial approach with a sectoral dimension would also be promising.

A significant improvement in the situation of the most remote from employment

During this programming period, the ESF provided massive support (more than 2.8 million participants) **for concrete actions to remove the social and professional obstacles** of the most vulnerable people on the job market.

The offer of reinforced, integrated, and individualised support has resulted from **increased mobilisation of partnerships and improved synergy between actors** (Employment Office and departments through comprehensive support, IAE structures, etc.) and has made it possible to support people who are further away from employment in terms of length of time unemployed, coverage by a social minimum or inactivity. The results concerning the return to employment are positive, although they do not always benefit the most vulnerable groups. Nearly six out of ten inactive people who benefited from support measures left inactivity for employment, training, or registration as jobseekers.

Several recommendations from the evaluations suggest better consideration of integration issues, including:

- Consolidate support for access to employment by integrating the relationship with companies
- Upgrade the offer to remove social obstacles (housing, health, education/training, material goods, etc.)
- Support more innovative practices and encouraging change of scale, by pursuing cooperation between actors
- Mobilise the capacities of the territories for the networking of support operators and the coordination of the relationship with employers
- Develop approaches allowing the evaluation of social and societal benefits beyond the only objective of return to employment.

The 2014-2020 programming period still in a marginally way served the development of innovation and experimentation

The innovative dimension is a guiding principle for the selection of operations, as the challenge is to renew support practices and the integration offer and to develop responses to societal, social, and environmental challenges. The ESF has taken up this challenge by effectively supporting various projects adopting an innovative approach. The YEI National Operational Programme also aims to encourage the emergence of experimental and innovative schemes, in line with the spirit of the ESF.

The mobilisation of the ESF has supported in a limited volume approaches qualified as innovative: less than 2% of programmed ESF amounts for actions containing logics qualified as innovative.

The management framework, the principles adopted for the performance framework and the absence of targeted funding were not conducive to their deployment.

The evaluation work therefore stresses the need to provide dedicated support for experimentation and innovation projects, going beyond the scope of quantitative objectives, and integrating risk-taking in the implementation of this type of project.

Change of practices, imagining new ways of supporting the public, management of partnerships and different modes of governance, desired by the actors, could open up perspectives for further improving the performance of the schemes co-financed by the ESF.

Crosswise, and in addition to considering ESF and YEI abilities to take up the challenges referred to in the 2014-2020 programming period, ESF allowed to convert the players' approaches and to support meaningful reforms.

Three main effects were identified by the assessment works:

Volumetric impact, through the increase of the whole public investing amount directed to people most vulnerable on the labour market and to the young people in greatest difficulties. During this period of decline in public funding and increased risk of social exclusion, European funding was structuring in order to mobilise relevant actors, adjust and reallocate their service offer towards those who need it more.

Range impact, through a shift of national policies towards the priorities and goals set by the European Union, i.e. reducing poverty, long-term unemployment and social exclusion situations, or urging actions towards NEET.

Role impact, in favour of innovative or pilot actions, whose capacities were insufficiently used. National co-funding gaps and management requirements partly explain the hindrance to such operations.

USEFUL LEARNINGS FOR 2021-2027

The 2014-2020 programming was rich and the numerous following-up, study and assessment works allowed to finely analyse the ESF and YEI outcomes and impacts, as well upon the people as the structures and the key players.

The assessments were scheduled, as well as the evaluative questions, targets, and study methodologies discussed at various steps of the programme, within the ESF evaluation and steering committee.

Ad hoc committees were set up for every impact evaluation, allowing to engage evaluation experts and to involve the relevant actors.

The delivered results of the programming have thus brought useful components, continuously, to analyse and understand the ESF mobilisation in the light of defined strategic guidelines. On the run, they provided a support tool to understand and decide.

These whole aspects associated to the ESF evaluation deserve to be strengthened during the next 2017-2027 ESF+ programmes.

These recommendations, referred to in the synthesis report of the evaluations, specifically present the following guidelines:

- The joining involvement of experts and stakeholders in conducting the evaluation. The aim is to answer the need for mutual acculturation, and to achieve relevant high quality works, suitable to drive action, to generate knowledge and to accept the ownership of the results. The experts' place could be reinforced and, in this context, access to data from the operation design should be better predicted in order to make the achievement of the evaluations easier.
- To maintain a wide range of evaluations studies. This range is linked to the structuration and to the wideness of the ESF+ programming, combined with the included fields, the methods, and both the quantity and quality studies. Mobilising counterfactual studies that allowed to measure the 2014-2020 direct impact of the interventions should be kept. In order to consider the improved situation of those who took part in the operations, as well as their course, considering wider criteria than the only employment or training access, quality and long-term approaches will have to be more included. Impact analysis of the pilot operations, innovative and exemplary, will have to be included into the whole device.
- The advantage of pooling the works executed as part of the national programme with those led by the local managing authorities. Such a process would strengthen several initiatives associated to the 2014-2020 programming period. It could allow to better understand the global effects of the ESF action in a territorial approach, while giving attention to all its priorities.
- Clearly looking at the evaluation studies upon the results of the ESF actions is important. The valuation of the works, broadcasting results, increasingly putting them into perspective with the other evaluation works conducted by other study organisations would provide a significant progress. Partnerships and complementarities could be useful to produce knowledge in the public policy fields covered by ESF interventions.

2014-2020 ASSESSMENT WORKS

Les audits	Date
Analyse de l'accompagnement au changement	2015-2016
Analyse du cadre de performance	
Analyse du système d'indicateurs	
Analyse du système de suivi de la performance	

Les autres travaux	Date
Analyse de la programmation sous l'angle des principes horizontaux	2017
L'efficacité des opérations des PON FSE et du PO IEJ : analyses, 1ers résultats et éléments de méthode	2017
Etudes sur l'innovation sociale dans le FSE	2017 puis 2019
Analyse de la prise en compte des personnes en situation de handicap	2018
Etude sur le concept de valeur ajoutée appliqué aux financements européens et particulièrement au FSE	2018
Analyse du suivi de la performance du PON FSE	2018
Analyse de la contribution du PON FSE aux objectifs de la stratégie UE 2020	2019
Bilan à mi-parcours de la programmation du FSE et de l'IEJ en France	2018
Etude sur l'articulation du FSE avec les politiques publiques de l'emploi	2020
Étude relative au bilan de la mise en œuvre du FSE 14-20 en France et aux perspectives de la programmation 21-27	2020
Enquêtes de la situation des participants 6 mois après la sortie des opérations FSE et IEJ	2017 - 2023

Les évaluations d'impact	Date
Évaluation de l'impact de l'IEJ	2015 - 2016
Évaluation de l'impact de l'IEJ	2018 - 2019
Évaluation de l'impact de l'axe 1 (PON FSE) hors PI 8.7	2020
Évaluation des actions de modernisation des institutions de marché du travail (PI 8.7 de l'Axe 1 du PON FSE)	2020
Évaluation de l'impact de l'axe 2 (PON FSE) élargie à toutes les opérations du PON FSE pour le public sénior	2020
Évaluation de l'impact de l'axe 3 (PON FSE)	2019

Consult all the assessment results : <https://fse.gouv.fr/evaluations-decryptage>

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