

WOMEN AND THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

This document describes the European Social Fund:

- How the Social Fund works.
- Women and the Social Fund.
- A practical guide for applicants.



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INTRODUCTION

The European Social Fund gives assistance to training programmes for both men and women without discrimination. However, to help solve certain labour market problems which concern women, the Social Fund has since January 1978 been helping to finance vocational training programmes especially for women. The Social Fund can only give financial assistance to group training programmes; there is no provision to give assistance to individuals.

The main criteria for eligibility are that participants in any training programme must be:

- 1) aged over 25 years;
- 2) have lost their jobs, or have never worked or, wish to return to work after a break;
- 3) have no or inadequate qualifications i.e. are unskilled or semi-skilled.

These programmes must be concerned with training, retraining or pretraining that will lead to a skilled job, and include measures that:

- 1) help participants in the programme to prepare for working life;
- 2) help trainees find a new job.

Because the volume of applications exceeds the amount of money available the EEC Commission has to impose some selection criteria. The highest priority is given to programmes that train women for occupations that have been traditionally reserved for men or for programmes that train them for new jobs open to both sexes. When first priority applications have been met, second priority is given to programmes that concern traditionally female employment but

- 1) are for women involved in mass dismissals;
- 2) or facilitate women to reach a higher level of employment than their previous employment.

Financing

All training programmes must have financial backing from a public authority of the National Government. The European Social Fund matches the public authority contribution except in certain less developed regions where the Social Fund contribution is 10% higher. Training programmes can be for a maximum 3 year period initially or can operate on an annual basis which is renewable each year. There is no upper limit on the number of trainees involved, when they are of a continuous nature.

Applications

An application to the European Social Fund must be made through the relevant government department in the member state (see Appendix IV) using the official application form.

Training programmes are often set up by national training authorities or local governments etc. Voluntary organisations and private firms may also set up training programmes on condition that an authorised public authority provides financial backing and guarantees the successful completion of the operation.

THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND: General description and main areas of intervention

The European Social Fund (ESF) was set up in 1958 by Article 123 of the Treaty of Rome "in order to improve employment opportunities for workers in the Common Market" with the task of "rendering the employment of workers easier and of increasing their geographical mobility within the Community".

It is concerned with the vocational training and retraining of workers and with creating new jobs in the Community.

The legal provisions defining the activities and qualifying conditions of the ESF have been amended several times in line with economic and social developments in the Community. The major legislation is embodied in the Council Decision of 1 February 1971 amended by the Council Decision of 20 December 1977. (see Appendix II for text).

The ESF provides aid in two main groups.

The first form of intervention is embodied in Article 4 of the Council Decisions mentioned above. Article 4 enables measures of employment policy to be taken to improve the balance of supply and demand for labour, or, for when the level of employment is affected by or is in danger of being affected by Community policies. At present the categories of workers that can qualify for aid under Article 4 are:

- 1) people leaving agriculture to pursue non-agricultural activities;
- 2) people employed in the textile and clothing sector or who are leaving this sector;
- 3) migrant workers and members of their families;
- 4) young unemployed people or job seekers aged under 25;
- 5) unemployed women or women seeking employment aged over 25.

The second form of intervention is embodied in Article 5 of the Council Decision mentioned above. It enables aid to be granted to programmes for:

- 1) people in less developed areas or declining areas;
- 2) people employed by firms who must adapt to technical progress in their sector and undergo substantial changes in manpower and training for new skills;
- 3) people employed by groups of firms who are faced with changes in production or marketing which require them to cease, reduce or fundamentally change their activities;
- 4) handicapped people to help them integrate or reintegrate into economic life, specifically into open employment.

Beneficiaries

Workers do not individually have the right to claim assistance from the ESF. The regulations governing the conditions and administration of the ESF refer to 'operations'. The ESF can only approve and subsequently

provide aid for projects involving a number of persons. The ESF aid is paid in instalments to the public authority or private body responsible for the project/operation.

Public Authorities are bodies governed by public law entrusted with tasks in the public interest e.g. national and local government departments. Each member state has a list of public authorities that it has empowered to provide financial assistance and guarantee completion of operations that qualify for ESF financial assistance.

Private Bodies are bodies governed by private law but they can only receive aid from the ESF on condition that an authorised public authority (as above) has guaranteed the successful completion of that operation and guaranteed the appropriate public authority financing.

Administration

The European Social Fund administrative unit is within the department 'Employment, Social Affairs and Education' which is Directorate General V in the Commission of the European Communities. Applications can be made to the unit only by the relevant Department in the member states (see Appendix IV).

The Commission consults a European Social Fund committee on applications. The Committee has 60 members appointed by the Council comprising of two Government representatives, two employee representatives and two employers representatives from each member state.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

Financial aid from the European Social Fund is granted without discrimination to both men and women in all the eligible categories of workers. In fact it is estimated that 30% of the total number of ESF beneficiaries are women. In 1978, however, a special section was opened in the Social fund to finance specific actions for the training of women in response to the deteriorating position of women in the labour market.

The Commission's general policy is to promote equality of opportunity and conditions of employment for women. This involves improving the balance of jobs between men and women through widening job opportunities for women. There are three Directives specifically concerning women which have obliged member states to introduce legislation to promote equal pay, equal opportunities in training and employment and by 1984, equal treatment in social security (see Appendix I for references). In the administration of the special women's section under Article 4 the Commission gives high priority to programmes which support the objective of equality of treatment for women in training and employment.

In 1980 the amount earmarked by the ESF for Article 4 Women was 20 Mio ECU which benefited over 10,500 women.

It should be noted that the Commission also gives high priority to programmes for young women under 25 years of age under the Youth section of the Fund where they concern jobs in which women are under-represented or new jobs open to both sexes. In 1980, the ESF supported such programmes with financial grants totalling 26.24 Mio ECU which benefitted nearly 20.000 young women.

Main Conditions for eligibility

To be eligible for the ESF grants for women under Article 4 participants in a training programme must be over 25 years of age. (Women under 25 years old would come under the category of young persons as noted above).

The participants must be unemployed, having lost their jobs or never had a job, or want to return to work after interruption. For example they might have been at home bringing up a family.

The participants must be unskilled or semi skilled. Women with third level education i.e. graduates are unlikely to qualify for aid as they can only be considered when all applications for unskilled participants have been accepted.

The training programmes must also include certain supporting measures. These measures must aim to help prepare the participants for working life or help motivate them to make a new choice of occupation. For example these supporting measures could include: information about the labour market and available jobs, guidance on entitlements to equal pay and opportunity, social legislation, employment contracts, conditions of employment and so on; information about entering new occupations that have been traditionally reserved for men; updating of basic knowledge and skills; psychological back-up and individual vocational guidance. This description is by way of an example and the requirements in this regard are that they are flexible not restrictive. There is a detailed example of an approved application on page 6.

There must also be measures to help the participant find a new job. For example contacts with potential employers, on-the-job training, links with placement services.

The aim of the supporting measures described above is, besides the vocational training, to give women the necessary preparation for the best practical job opportunities.

Training programmes that qualify for ESF funding can be for a maximum 3 year period initially or they can operate on an annual basis which is renewable each year when they are of a continuous nature. There is no upper limit to the number of trainees involved.

Priorities

Because there are at least four times the volume of applications to the amount of money available the Commission has to impose some priorities in the selection procedure. These are consistent with the Community's policy to improve the balance of jobs between men and women.

The priorities are laid down in the Guidelines for the Management of the European Social Fund 1982-1984. (See Appendix III for text). First priority is given to those operations that train women for occupations where they are underrepresented or for new jobs open to both sexes.

Second priority is given to operations that are concerned with jobs in which women are not underrepresented but are for women involved in mass dismissals, or the training programmes are designed to help women reach a higher level of employment than their previous job.

Examples

Training programmes that have received financial support from the ESF have taught women a wide variety of skills. The majority of applications presented so far have come from Germany. Women are able to pursue vocational training courses in engineering skills such as maintenance engineers, toolmakers, mechanics, fitters, in manual skills such as painters, joiners, in electronics: electronics fitters and engineers, in the catering sector: chefs. In France and Italy women have been trained in after-sales servicing of televisions, domestic electrical appliances and motor car maintenance, plumbing, home decorating skills and carpentry as well as a number of programmes concerned with new technology skills such as computer programming and the use of micro-processors. Some cooperatives have made successful applications; for example one scheme in Italy trained women in the making and selling of handicrafts.

Description of a training programme in France (in 1980)

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Dunkirk in 1980 ran a number of training programmes for unemployed women offering a wide range of skills where they have been traditionally underrepresented. Women showed a preference for the jobs of light and heavy vehicle drivers and of drivers of forklift vehicles/storekeepers.

The training hours and supportive measures were made up in the following way:

Preparation for working life (80 Hours)

- Information on the firm
- Labour legislation
- Preparation for employment
- Development of personal abilities

Motivation for new occupations (80 Hours)

Information on the labour market.
Initiation to 'male' skills.
Vocational guidance of trainees.

Vocational Training (560 Hours)

Light and heavy vehicle drivers:

Preparation for the test for driving licences LVD
and HGV.
Knowledge of the safety rules.
Optimum utilization of a vehicle (planning of loadings
etc. and driving for fuel efficiency).
Preventative maintenance of vehicles and ability
to service elementary break-downs.

Forklift vehicle drivers:

Administrative and physical stock-keeping (replenishment,
checking and signing for goods, storage)
Safe driving of forklift vehicles and other vehicles
for handling goods.

Entry to new occupation

On-the-job training in small and medium-sized companies.

European Social Fund Payments

The first principle of the ESF financial arrangements regarding any training programme or operation is that the financial contribution can only match the amount donated by the public authority in the member state. The ESF contribution is however 10% higher for operations carried out in the 5 least developed regions (1). The ESF cannot contribute to any capital expenditure and it can contribute a maximum of 50% of operating costs. If a public body sets up and carries out the operation the contribution would be 50% from the public body and 50% from the ESF. In the case of a private body, such as a voluntary organisation the promoter must obtain a financial contribution from the public authorities and the ESF matches that contribution. For example 30% by the private body, 35% from the public authority and 35% from the ESF.

Lists of the public authorities authorised to provide financial assistance can be obtained from the national Government department responsible for the co-ordination and forwarding of applications (See Appendix IV).

Method of Payment

Once the ESF has approved a training programme or operation the financial assistance is paid out according to the progress of the operation:

- 1) an advance of 30% of the assistance is payable as soon as the member state certifies that the operation has begun
- 2) a second advance of 30% can be paid out when the member state certifies that half of the operation has been completed
- 3) the balance is paid out when the ESF administration has received full details of all the costs incurred following the completion of the operation.

(1) Greenland, the French Overseas Departments, Ireland, Northern Ireland, the Mezzogiorno.

If the training programme or operation last longer than one year:

- 1) advances are paid on the basis of each annual instalment
- 2) additional payments may be made on the completion of each instalment.
- 3) the balance is payable when the ESF administration receives notification that the operation has been completed.

There are prescribed forms for all these stages of payment.

PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

An application for assistance must

- 1) be made on the standard application form obtainable from the appointed national government department (See Appendix IV);
- 2) be forwarded by that national Government department;
- 3) have some appropriate guarantee from a public authority of the national Government.

Timing

The deadline for applications falls twice a year. The applications for programmes due to start during the first half of the year should reach the Commission by 21 of October of the previous year, along with an estimate of the applications to be submitted for the second half of the year. These applications, i.e. concerning programmes due to start during the second half of the year, should reach the Commission by 1st April of the current year.

It should also be noted that the relevant national government departments will have their own earlier deadlines as they will require time to process and check applications before forwarding them to Brussels.

Applications by Voluntary Organisations

Having checked that the potential project appears to conform with the Council Decision and the Guidelines 1982-1984 (see Appendix II and III) contacts should be made with the relevant national government department as well as the authorised public authority providing the other part of the funding. The ESF application forms require quite detailed information including financial calculations and projections and it is important to ensure that all the conditions can be met at the earliest possible stage.

PILOT SCHEMES

A small part of the ESF budget (in 1981 3 Mio ECU) is allocated to provide financial assistance for preparatory studies and pilot schemes. These pilot projects should be innovatory in character, designed for example, to develop and test new approaches to job creation or improvement of the quality of training. Previous projects have related to such varied areas as youth employment, training of instructors, training in new techniques, and the integration of migrant workers. The purpose of these pilot schemes is to improve the operation of the Social Fund or establish the need for new uses of the Fund.

Women and Pilot Schemes

Since 1976, 23 pilot schemes have dealt exclusively with the special problems of women's employment. These schemes have proved useful in indicating difficulties in vocational training programmes for women and establishing the effective solutions.

Funding and applications

A pilot scheme need not necessarily be funded by a public authority but it must be authorised by the relevant national government department. This body forwards the applications to the EC Commission. Pilot schemes are limited to 30 people and are on a one-off basis, though their results may lead to the setting-up of training programmes under Article 4.

Examples

1) In Italy, an operation was set up to retrain instructors employed in the vocational training of women; to respond to changes in the labour market involving an increasing demand for job qualifications by adult women. Preliminary research was launched to ascertain the facts and to analyse to what extent existing training facilities responded to the new requirements. This research was followed by experimental work; the objective was to teach the instructors to develop and run training programmes specifically designed for adult women entering occupations where they are under-represented, such as computer analysts/programmers.

2) A second project carried out in France, analysed the local employment situation to find new skilled job openings, particularly those jobs that have traditionally been done by men. Having ascertained where these jobs openings were, the aim of the project was to then train women for them and test, using one group, to see how far it is possible to place women in those skilled job openings. This pilot scheme was intended to prepare as effectively as possible subsequent schemes eligible for support from the European Social Fund Article 4 Women. 19 women out of 23 found jobs within a month following the end of the pilot-scheme.

3) A Belgian pilot-project sought to train and promote women to a level of responsibility in the textile industry in which they had not previously been employed. Of eighteen women undertaking the course ten finished the training. The reasons for failure were both personal (motivational and occupational attitudes) and environmental (family and social pressures due to attitudes towards women in work). Heavy physical effort was not an obstacle as this was solved by ergonomical equipment. The attitude of trainers and male trainees towards the admission of women as weavers was favourable. Despite the generally favourable attitude of employers

and the high standard of training achieved, some obstacles remain, firstly some employers fear that women will have a higher rate of absenteeism; secondly the persistence of certain legal provisions preventing night-work by women; thirdly, women face a number of difficulties when working due to their dual role at home and at work and the lack of social facilities (eg. crèches and nursery schools). Seven of the ten women who finished the course found employment in that skill immediately. The promoters intend to extend the principles established to other jobs in which women have been traditionally under-represented.

Appendix I

Legislation and documents concerned with the European Social Fund

Council Decision 71/66/EEC of 1 February 1971
on the reform of the Social Fund
OJ No L 28 4.2.1971

Council Decision 77/804/EEC as modified by Council Decision 80/1117/EEC
on action by the European Social Fund for Women
OJ No L 337 27.12.1977
OJ No L 332 10.12.1980
Guidelines for the Management of the European Social Fund 1982-84
OJ No C 110 13.5.1981

Eighth Report of the Activities of the European Social Fund.
Financial Year 1979.
COM (80) 365 final/2 29.7.1980

EEC Directives concerned with promoting equal pay
and conditions for Women

Council Directive on the approximation of the laws of the Member States
relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and
women. (75/117/EEC)
OJ No L 45/19 19.2.1975

Council Directive on the implementation of the principle of equal treat-
ment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training
and promotion, and working conditions (76/207/EEC)
OJ No L 39/40 14.2.1976

Council Directive on the progressive implementation of the principle of
equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security (79/7/EEC)
OJ No L 6/24 10.1.1979

Appendix II

COUNCIL DECISION OF 20 DECEMBER 1977 ON ACTION BY THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND FOR WOMEN (77/804/EEC) AS MODIFIED BY COUNCIL DECISION OF 4 DECEMBER 1980 (80/1117/EEC)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community,

Having regard to Council Decision 71/66/EEC of 1 February 1971 on the reform of the European Social Fund (1), as amended by Council Decision 77/801/EEC (2), and in particular Article 4 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament (3),

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee (4),

Whereas the Heads of State or of Government, meeting in Rome on 25 and 26 March 1977, agreed on the need to undertake action to resolve certain specific labour market problems, especially as regards the training and employment of women;

Whereas the situation as regards women who are unemployed or seeking employment shows the need for specific joint action aimed at improving the balance between supply and demand on the Community labour market;

Whereas, in order to overcome specific obstacles to the entry or re-entry of women into working life, vocational training for women must be accompanied by complementary measures; whereas it is also essential to encourage the vocational adaptation of instructors;

Whereas the procedures of the Fund have been defined in Council Regulation (EEC) No 2396/71 of 8 November 1971 implementing the Council Decision of 1 February 1971 on the reform of the European Social Fund (5), as amended by Regulation (EEC) No 2893/77 (6),

Article 1

1. Assistance may be granted from the Fund, pursuant to Article 4 of Decision 71/66/EEC, for operations to encourage the employment of women of or over 25 years of age with no vocational qualifications or with insufficient vocational qualifications where the entry or re-entry of these persons into working life proves particularly difficult, provided that these operations are for:

- women who wish to exercise an occupation for the first time or after a long break, or
- women who have lost their employment.

Such operations must include vocational training measures in the framework of measures aimed, on the one hand, at preparing for working life or at motivating new choices of occupation and, on the other, at facilitating entry into occupations where there are job prospects.

(1) OJ No I. 28, 4. 2. 1971, p. 15.

(2) See page 8 of this Official Journal.

(3) OJ NO C 266, 7. 11. 1977, p. 13.

(4) Opinion delivered on 26 and 27 October (not yet published in the Official Journal).

(5) OJ No L 249, 10. 11. 1974, p. 54.

(6) See page 1 of this Official Journal.

2. Assistance may also be granted from the Fund pursuant to Article 4 of Decision 71/66/EEC for vocational adaptation operations for instructors where these persons pursue their activities in connection with the operations referred to in paragraph 1.

Article 2

The aids eligible for assistance from the Fund pursuant to this Decision shall be those laid down in Article 3 (1) of Regulation (EEC) No 2396/71.

Article 3

This Decision shall be published in the Official Journal of the European Communities and shall enter into force on 1 January 1978.

It shall apply to operations covered by applications for assistance which have received the approval of the Commission before 1 January 1983.

Done at Brussels, 4 December 1980.

For the Council

The President

J. BARTHEL

Appendix III

GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND 1982 - 1984

2.5. Women

2.5.1. First priority

Operations to promote a more even mix between the sexes in new types of employment and in jobs where women are under-represented.

2.5.2. Second priority

Other operations, including those concerning traditionally female employment which either

2.5.2.1. are for women involved in mass dismissals; or

2.5.2.2. facilitate women in obtaining employment at a higher level than their previous job

2.5.3. NOTE

Operations for women with third level education can be considered only after all eligible applications for the unskilled or semi-skilled have been accepted.

Appendix IV

THOSE RESPONSIBLE AT NATIONAL LEVEL FOR COORDINATION WITH THE
EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

BELGIUM

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Appendix V

Value of Applications and approved operations in 1980 for Article 4-Women

In 1980 20 million ECU was made available for the training of women over 25 years by the European Social Fund.

There is no national allocation of the funds; operations are approved according to the volume of applications per member state and the programmes eligibility under the European Social Fund criteria.

	Value of applications million ECU	Value of projects approved million ECU	No. of women benefitting
Belgium	0.48	0.48	165
Denmark	0.45	-	-
France	4.75	3.67	3,055
Germany	61.21	14.08	4,469
Ireland	0.23	0.23	281
Italy	2.95	2.36	1,798
Luxembourg	-	-	-
Netherlands	0.95	0.17	741
U.K.	0.46	0.10	68
	<u>71.48</u>	<u>21.09</u>	<u>10,577</u>

What 1 ECU is worth in other currencies (rate in October 1980)			
BFr./LFr.	40.4722	Dkr.	7.82280
DM	2.53405	FFr.	5.8776 4
Fl.	2.75049	Lit.	1207.64
£	0.587199	£Ir.	0.675378

Appendix VI

Volume of applications approved in 1980 for young women under
Article 4 - Young People

Country	Volume of projects approved in Mio ECU (1)	No. of women benefitting
Belgium	0.99	250
Germany	20.80	11,000
France	0.15	120
Italy	3.44	8,250
UK	0.86	250
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	26.24	19,870

(1) rates in October 1980

SUPPLEMENTS TO "WOMEN OF EUROPE"

- No. 1 - ceased publication, replaced by no. 6
- No. 2 - ceased publication, replaced by no. 7
- No. 3 - "Women and Men of Europe in 1978"
- No. 4 - "Women in the European Parliament"
- No. 5 - "European Women in Paid Employment"
- No. 6 - "Women and the European Social Fund"
- No. 7 - "50 questions on : the European Community
and Work for Women"
(being prepared)