

ESF InfoReview

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Meeting the challenges of the new millennium...

Over the past twelve months, the European Union has taken important, and widely-publicised, steps towards a common approach on employment. The adoption of strengthened Treaty provisions at Amsterdam in June heralded a new dawn for EU employment policy and set the scene for the endorsement of a set of common guidelines on employment at the November Jobs Summit.

Meanwhile, away from the glare of the media spotlight, the European Social Fund continues its mission to improve the prospects of those facing the greatest obstacles to finding, keeping or regaining work. It may seem like 'behind-the-scenes' work, and may not have high public visibility, but as all of us involved in the ESF know, it is of crucial importance.

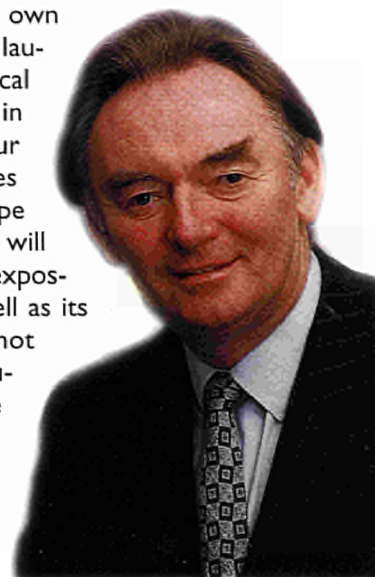
As we approach the end of this programming period and turn our attention to the years 2000-2006 and the extra challenges they will provide, I see one of our main tasks as being to increase awareness and understanding of the key contribution made by the ESF to helping people obtain – and retain – jobs.

In 1997 we introduced a number of products, including the InfoReview, aimed at improving the visibility of the ESF. In parallel, we took steps to establish closer, more regular contact with those responsible for ESF information in the Member States, in order to increase the complementarity of our activities and to avoid overlap. In the course of this year, we plan to enhance our information and communications strategy still further by introducing new products and adapting the existing ones where necessary.

This year will also see the launch of the first-ever Congress devoted specifically to the European Social Fund; 'The ESF – Investing in People' Congress will be held at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham, UK on 26-28 May 1997. Participants will gain an insight into how the Fund works, the contribution it has made to social and employment policy objectives and, most importantly, to the lives of individuals. Those already working with the ESF will have a chance to see and understand how it operates

in other countries and to learn from the experiences of others, while those less familiar with the Fund will learn about its guiding principles and the different ways in which these principles are implemented throughout the Union. At the same time, we shall reflect together on how to improve our results in the next period, since by then the Commission will have put forward its proposed changes to the legal framework in which the ESF (and all the other Structural Funds) actually work.

Our aim is not to blow our own trumpet, still less to sit on our laurels. We intend to cast a critical eye over our experiences in recent years and to fine-tune our strategy to meet the challenges of the new millennium. We hope that the conference debates will contribute to this process by exposing the ESF's weaknesses as well as its strengths. Those who cannot attend will still have an opportunity to air their views via the Congress website or, alternatively, by writing to us at InfoReview. I sincerely hope that as many of you as possible will do so.



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Employment & social affairs



European Commission

Euro-15 News

Reflecting on 'Reflex'



Teaching IT skills at the Drumchapel Reflex project

Many inner city areas in the United Kingdom, typified by the Drumchapel area of Glasgow, Scotland, have serious social problems: high unemployment, low educational achievement and, consequently, considerable demands on social benefits.

Drumchapel has the second highest unemployment rate of the Glasgow regeneration areas and the highest level of male unemployment.

The Reflex project has begun to address some of these problems by offering training in the basic skills needed to improve people's chances of finding employment: numeracy, literacy and IT skills are top of the list. The project is a partnership between Drumchapel Opportunities and Anniesland College, Glasgow, and has received funding from the European Social Fund each year since 1993. Since training began in 1992, 1 824 people have completed one or more courses.

I like IT!

Trainees can work individually or in classes, under the guidance of three tutors. They can apply for training in each area separately, and the demand for IT training has been particularly great. Some of those starting IT training have then been encouraged to take numeracy or literacy classes to complement and enhance their newly acquired IT skills.

The teaching emphasis is on informality and the college deliberately avoids an institutional atmosphere. While mainstream education commonly uses continuous assessment and time limits, Reflex trainees are only assessed when they feel ready.

In 1993, Reflex was given an Innovation in Enterprise award, and an official inspection by HMI (inspectors of teaching standards in the UK) in September 1996 praised its teaching and learning achievements. The project is still evolving, and is becoming a model for other groups in Scotland.

Best foot forward

When José Leite wanted to expand his footwear business in 1994, a combination of plentiful labour and an advantageous investment deal with the local authorities

led him to choose the town of Vila Pouca de Aguiar in Portugal as the site for his third factory. His only obstacle was the low level of skills in the town. Therefore, in partnership with the Vila Pouca de Aguiar



Shoe-makers at the Vila Pouca de Aguiar factory

Town Hall and the Chaves Employment Centre, a series of vocational training programmes were launched in the town, with the financial support of the European Social Fund.

Training guarantees jobs

The first programme started in August 1995 with 100 people, all of whom went on to work in the new factory when production started in March 1996. In all, four training programmes are planned, each with about 100 new enrolments. The course instructors are independent professionals from the Centre for Professional Training for the Footwear Industry (CFPIC), while recruits are selected by the Chaves Employment Centre. Aiming to fill 300 positions in the factory by 1998, including 20 technical/managerial posts, the programme includes rigorous assessment during training, and enables the

organisers to guarantee jobs to almost all those who complete the programme. José Leite hopes to turn the Vila Pouca plant into a 'model' factory, producing 400 pairs of shoes per day.

“The economic and social impact of the factory on the district is extraordinary”



Fighting economic decline

The new factory will help to reverse a pattern of economic decline in the district. The local population, which stands at 17 000, fell by 15% between 1960 and 1990 as a result of economic migration brought on by the closure of the area's established industries. Many of those now working in the footwear factory might otherwise have emigrated or remained unemployed. The new factory also provides employment to women in a region where male employment predominates.

"The economic and social impact of the factory on the district is extraordinary," says Carlos Ambrosio, chief executive of the Vila Pouca Town Hall. Antonio Pires Bernardos, manager of the Chaves Employment Centre, echoes this sentiment, saying "The company is a good example to our whole region."

Job swapping



Jens-Jørgen Pedersen, EU Jobrotation Director

send their workers on training courses, replacing them temporarily with unemployed people, who have themselves undergone preparatory training before taking up temporary posts. The results speak for themselves: established employees learn valuable new skills, while the unemployed gain much needed work experience. Three out of four jobless people find full-time employment as a result of the programme.

Confidence building

The temporary posts available under the job rotation schemes are part of a rolling programme. They are all run by a coordinator who identifies individuals or groups of people trained specifically for certain tasks who can rotate between temporary posts, either within one company or in a network of smaller companies. The experience gained by those seeking full-time work can be fairly considerable, and because they are filling posts where they are needed, it helps to raise their self-esteem and bolster their confidence.

A pan-European dimension

In 1996, the job rotation concept was given fresh support under the ESF's Adapt Community Initiative which allowed it to be exported to 11 other EU Member States, under the title "EU Jobrotation - A New Track in Europe." Some 5 000 employees and job-seekers participated in the first year, and further expansion is expected by the end of 1998.

Jens-Jørgen Pedersen, EU Jobrotation director, says "the twin problems of poor skills and unemployment can be used to solve one another. Our aim is to instigate a more active EU labour market policy."

From the project's front line, Leif Thomsen, production manager at Winther A/S Them, a large Silkeborg-based bicycle manufacturer, notes that the company benefits from both the improved performance of its existing staff, and from the security of having "a reserve bank of qualified labour to draw on." One of his staff, shop steward Vagn Smith, who himself participated in the training courses, comments "On the courses we learned how to work independently and flexibly in groups. Standards have gone up – I don't think we could have done without this kind of retraining."

"The results speak for themselves: established employees learn valuable new skills, while the unemployed get much needed work experience"



Hans Bechgaard, head of the Danish Employers Training Association College, Silkeborg



Focus on the UK

In this section we again turn our attention to one particular Member State. On this occasion, we focus on the United Kingdom (UK) and present project examples from each of the four regions.

Numbers have continued to grow since 1993. The number of part-time workers in the economy has also increased: in 1996, almost a quarter of all workers were in part-time employment. And there has been an increase in the average working week to just under 44 hours for full time workers in 1996; this is the longest working week in the EU.

Introduction

This article is intended both to shed light on how the ESF works in the UK and to outline the ambitious steps undertaken by the UK authorities to regionalise both the decision-making and implementation aspects of its employment strategies. As the UK takes over the EU presidency in the first half of 1998, employment and education remain priorities for all European Union Member States. For this reason, the UK's innovative approaches to getting people back to work and its moves towards decentralised management of the Structural Funds are being watched with interest by all Member States, particularly in the light of Agenda 2000.

The ESF in the UK

There are considerable regional disparities in economic growth and, consequently, in unemployment. Between 1994 and 1999 the UK will receive an allocation of ECU 5 402 million from the ESF. Funding is allocated according to defined Structural Fund Objectives.

The implementation structure of the current 1997-1999 SPD in the United Kingdom provides for assistance based on clear identification of regional needs. Each region must produce a Regional Development Plan (RDP) which sets out, within the framework of the SPD, their strategy, priorities and pathways for implementation. These regional arrangements also encourage complementarity between actions supported under the largest plan, Objective 3, on the one hand and under Objectives 2, 5b and the Community Initiatives on the other.

Economic background

Unemployment in the UK has fallen this decade from just over 10% of the total labour force in 1992 to around 8% in 1996. For 1997, it is anticipated to fall still further to 6.4%. Over the last three decades, employment rates in the UK have generally been higher than the EU average, but many people still depend on benefits, and this number rose substantially in the 1980s and 1990s.

In October 1997, over 1.6 million were unemployed and claiming benefit, 350 000 of whom had been unemployed for longer than two years. A particular concern is that one in five households of working age contains not one person in employment, a ratio that is significantly higher than in the majority of EU Member States. Overall, government spending on social security benefits has doubled in real terms since 1979.

The last decade in the UK has been marked by three significant trends: self-employment has grown considerably: the period 1979-1993 saw the number of people self-employed grow by 50% to reach 2.3 million.

Three regions in the UK qualify for Objective 1 support (to promote the development and structural adjustment of less developed regions): the Scottish Highlands and Islands, Merseyside and Northern Ireland. Structural Fund assistance totalling ECU 2360 million has been allocated to these regions for the period 1994-1999, about one-third of which (ECU 747 million) comes from the ESF. Forty-five programmes are underway, 43 of which are part-financed by the ESF.

Under Objective 2 thirteen UK regions seriously affected by industrial decline benefit from Structural Fund support totalling ECU 4580 million. The ESF, which provides about a quarter of this allocation, co-finances the human resources development needed to combine with the economic development measures funded by the other Structural Funds. The agreed priorities for ESF-assisted action are support for local businesses, especially SMEs, skills and training in modern technology, research and development and the development of tourism, culture and leisure.





The new regional Objective 3 plan which applies throughout the UK is the largest of its kind in the EU, receiving over half the country's total ESF allocation. Interestingly, the UK has two three-year SPDs instead of one covering the period 1994-1999, as the plan was reviewed and reformulated at the halfway stage.

The ESF supports the UK government in its key aim of providing all people in the UK with full economic and social opportunities and, increasingly, access to lifelong learning, training and retraining. Objective 4 funding will be especially important here, explains UK Minister for Education and Employment, Andrew Smith.

Interview with Andrew Smith, Minister for Education & Employment

"Our aim is to help people back to work in a fair and flexible labour market," declares Andrew Smith, whose department has overall responsibility for education, training and employment policy in the UK.

"The ESF is enormously important to the UK in this endeavour," he explains. "We share very similar views with the Commission about the situations and needs that we must target. For instance, we are both working to help SMEs grow and increase their employment capability. The £600 million ESF programme in the UK also provides the means to help single parents, disabled people and women who have taken a break from the labour market to find work – as well as helping the unemployed."

"The ESF fits in with our general approach of seeing work as the best form of welfare," affirms the Minister. "It also touches a lot of people in the UK," he adds. "It is one of the best means by which people here feel the EU dimension of policies, as it tends to reach them in a dramatic way."

Working in partnership

Smith praises the diversity of organisations currently helping make the ESF work in the UK, including small voluntary organisations and national training and enterprise councils. The UK administration is encouraging all organisations seeking ESF assistance to integrate their various activities and to work in partnership. The trend will be to ensure the comple-

mentarity of projects – for instance by linking training, career guidance and job placement schemes that may previously have been separate. Working in partnership, organisations can build on each other's particular strengths, while ensuring that efforts are coordinated to best effect. This will be made easier still when the government completes the establishment of new 'employment zones', within which dedicated local departments will assume more and more of the tasks previously managed centrally by diverse government offices.

Reflecting local needs

The new UK government will back the trend towards devolution of decision-making on the ESF to the regions (see below). Andrew Smith believes that people feel a greater sense of ownership over projects that they are involved in developing and adapting to their particular needs. This also increases the prospects for success of the projects. "Projects should be designed round local situations and specific local needs; it's a question of fitting programmes to people rather than people to programmes," he explains.

Looking to the future, Andrew Smith hopes that the ESF will be used in such a way as to help stimulate innovative actions to promote citizens' employability, providing a means for us to learn from each other and increase social cohesion.

Objective 4: complementing national priorities

Smith is especially positive about the possibilities afforded the UK by impending Objective 4 programmes, which he believes will dovetail with the new UK administration's own priorities. "Objective 4 will help us to lever in partnerships, and to take forward new policies such as lifelong learning schemes and university for industry," says Smith, referring to the government's plan to facilitate continual re-training and education for all citizens throughout their working lives. He believes strongly that all of us need to be given the means to retrain at various stages in our lives, for reasons of personal development and enhanced career prospects. Plans for Objective 4 are currently being finalised by the UK and the Commission.





“One of the unique advantages of the ESF is that it provides a vehicle for European countries to share experiences, pool ideas and attack common problems”

The UK intends to mark its presidency of the EU in the first half of 1998 by highlighting the issue of employment and education. A conference on life-long learning will be held on 17-19 May in Manchester followed by the most important ESF event to date, the ESF Congress, to be held in Birmingham from 26 to 28 May. Under the banner, The European Social Fund: Investing in People, this will be the first-ever Congress specifically devoted to the ESF.

“One of the unique advantages of the ESF is that it

provides a vehicle for European countries to share experiences, pool ideas and attack common problems,” says Smith. “The forthcoming Congress will provide a forum for that process of cross-fertilisation.”

Interview with Elaine Trewartha, Head of the ESF Unit, London



Elaine Trewartha, Head of the ESF Unit

“We’re very pleased that the first ESF Congress will be held in the UK just at the time that it holds the EU presidency” says UK ESF Head of Mission Elaine Trewartha. “I would like to extend a big welcome to all who attend!”

“The Congress will help raise the profile of the ESF in the UK, though with around 7000 projects running per year, a large and growing number of people are already aware of the possibilities for assistance” she says.

The Congress also puts the spotlight on a number of major changes taking place in the administration of the ESF in the UK, the most important of which are regionalisation and a move to full open competition for project funding. The UK already favours a very open approach, with applications for funds welcome from all organisations carrying out suitable activities.

“The European Commission was keen to move to regionalisation – and so were we,” says Elaine Trewartha. “Bringing the ESF administrative process closer to the regions should improve the service to ESF clients by allowing a greater focus on the type of projects most suited to the region and by shortening the administrative chain.”

Hence in the 1999 round of ESF applications, local Government Offices will take over authorisation and processing of payments, and will oversee the entire ESF cycle from beginning to end. In practice Objectives 1, 2, and 5b are already administered this way, with Objective 3 in transition. The ESF mission, based in the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) in London, will nonetheless continue to manage national projects under Objective 3 Priority 5 as well as human resource Community Initiatives.

The UK administration of the ESF already varies regionally according to requirements. The Scottish Office has responsibility for day-to-day administration of the ESF in Scotland, having pioneered the delivery of ESF support under the regional programmes through dedicated teams called ‘Programme Executives’. The Welsh Office is in the process of assuming day-to-day responsibility for the majority of ESF work in Wales, while the ESF mission in Northern Ireland is already given a large degree of autonomy over allocation of the ECU 354 million assigned to this region for 1994-1999. Sectarian unrest in Northern Ireland has compounded socio-economic problems, so the ESF’s work is linked closely to other civic programmes such as the Peace Initiative.

There is a particular emphasis in the UK on involving social partners such as workers’ and employers’ organisations and the voluntary sector on ESF projects, and greater involvement should be actively encouraged. “Social partners should be able to steer the ESF in the UK, not just be figureheads...” asserts Trewartha.

As few organisations can provide everything that is required to help the unemployed find and keep work (skills training, job search techniques, guidance and counselling etc.), an integrated ‘pathways to employment’ approach is promoted under Objective 3, with social partners encouraged to concentrate on their particular area of specialisation.

Previously, some organisations regarded each other as competitors for funds. They are now being encouraged to work in partnership, to provide coordinated programmes which provide a step-by-step path to employment. However, there is still understandable nervousness among current recipients of ESF funding over their prospects for funding when full open competition for funds arrives shortly.

“We hope, in particular,” says Elaine Trewartha, “that the ESF can support some of the new government’s priorities, in particular, schemes to help people move from welfare to work and to provide everyone with the opportunity for lifelong learning.”



Project examples

Scotland – keeping tradition alive

An initiative in the Scottish Highlands uses funds from the ESF and from the local authorities to train students of all ages in the exacting art of kilt-making – the only such scheme in the entire UK. The course in Keith, which was conceived by current director David Sykes, has received considerable media publicity.

“We were looking to help workers made redundant by the devastating closure of textile mills in this area in the early 1990s,” explains Liz McManus, European Officer at Moray Council. Unemployment is already high in this predominantly rural area, in which there are probably only six companies with over 100 employees.



‘Marking out’ the 8 metres of cloth needed to make an adult man’s kilt

Moray Council worked with local partners and the ESF to establish a training centre in the town of Keith, recruiting as trainer Robert McBain, formerly kiltmaker to the Gordon Highlanders army regiment. “There are six different hand-stitches used in making a

real kilt,” says Robert. “This requires training, great hand-eye coordination – and plenty of practice!”

Robert joined forces with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and devised the first-ever nationally-accredited qualification for kilt-making. A high percentage of the course graduates are now making a living as producers of high-quality kilts. Most work for themselves or for local SMEs, helping to satisfy the enormous national and international demand for genuine Scottish kilts. “We could not have done this without the ESF, which provides 45% funding of the £48000–£52000 annual costs of running the course” says Liz McManus.

The project also complements Objective 5b funding, she adds, as it takes otherwise unemployed textile workers, retrain them and greatly improves their employment prospects and brightens the outlook for struggling local SMEs.

Wales – opening the door to employment

Agoriad Cyf is an organisation based in North Wales that seeks to help people with learning disabilities and/or mental health problems to access employment.

“Agoriad is Welsh for ‘key’ or ‘opening,’” says director John Dickens. “We try to open up more possibilities for people, benefiting them and the rest of society.”

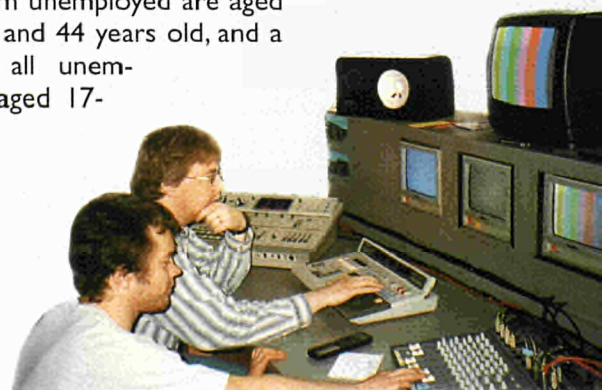
The methodology, which Argoriad developed itself due to a lack of any precedents, is deceptively simple. It involves talking extensively to the individuals concerned, discovering their particular hopes and interests; securing them the right job, with the assistance of (increasingly helpful) local employers; preparing them adequately for that job; and providing one-to-one training at the work-site for an initial period.

The results are impressive: 187 people with learning disabilities have been placed in employment in the five years since the project began; eight people with mental health problems found employment in the first year of the programme with 38 more in training. Most individuals’ confidence and self-esteem dramatically improves after they have secured employment.

“ESF funding allows us to deploy a greater number of counsellors,” says John. “We now have a staff of fifteen, allowing us to provide a wider service in an area of particularly high unemployment.”

Northern Ireland – innovative approaches to youth unemployment

The Nerve Centre is a self-help initiative set up in 1990 to provide a link between young people, the arts and new technology. It is located in the heart of the Derry City Council area. Here, about half of the population is under 25 years old, an estimated 58.5% of the long-term unemployed are aged between 17 and 44 years old, and a quarter of all unemployed are aged 17-24.



New technologies are no problem for Nerve Centre students



The Nerve Centre provides some 70 students a year with full-time courses in music, multimedia, sound recording, cinema management and business studies. There is a similar number of part-time students. Overall ESF funding for the Nerve Centre currently totals approximately £500 000.

Finance Director, Pearse Moore, emphasises the importance of the business studies element: "it leads people to think how they are going to use their skills afterwards" he says. Some students, in fact, stay on to work on a variety of the Nerve Centre's own initiatives: in addition to the Centre's 19 full-time staff, its offshoots, Raw Nerve Productions and Blast Furnace Studio, support six full-time posts. Other artists and technicians use the Centre's facilities for practice, design and production.

Moore believes that students benefit greatly from exposure to the considerable variety of projects taking place in and around the Nerve Centre. These include the Foyle Film Festival, music festivals, a community Internet access scheme and a record label for resident bands. Multimedia educational work includes an animated series on heroes of Celtic mythology for the BBC, a CD-ROM on Irish Symbolism and an interactive 'virtual museum' that will bring the past alive for the younger generation – both of which are supported by the Peace Initiative, via the Department of Education for Northern Ireland and Cooperation North respectively.

The Centre works on a number of positive community projects, sometimes in parallel with local partners such as the Community Relations Council and Derry City Council. "We like the younger generation to realise that there's more than just two stories in the history of Northern Ireland," says Nerve Centre Director Martin Melarkey.

"ESF funding is especially important in allowing us to provide innovative courses that the normal education system cannot cope with, and to help people who are marginalised by unemployment due to lack of skills," explains Pearse Moore. "The ESF's been very good at recognising the economic potential of the cultural and alternative sectors."

England – employment skills for Asian women

ESF funding is helping expand the work of AWAAZ, a non-governmental organisation based in Sheffield, England, that develops the employment skills of Asian women and subsequently helps them to secure work or higher education. ESF assistance, currently totalling £29 750 over three years, is disbursed under Objective 3 – Pathways to Employment. From four students in 1990, the course has grown to accommodate 15.

For half of the course, students are taught study and work skills such as how to use a computer. The rest of the course is dedicated to addressing the participants' identities as Asian women, as well as building assertiveness and self-confidence. Some of the women have escaped domestic violence, so an early task is to agree strict rules of confidentiality between all present.

"Most of the women are very motivated to get training, employment and financial independence," says Janet McDermott, a course tutor and project manager. "They or their families are usually keen that they should attend a women-only environment."

Frieda, Shameem and Naharun are attending the course this year. In their cases, their families were very supportive. All three praise the positive, helpful atmosphere they have encountered on the course, as well as the practical support received, without which many could not hope to attend: child-care is provided free and transport costs are repaid.

"This course has been a lifeline to me," says Shameem. "I'd like people to know what a major positive step it's been."

The others agree. "This is the first time in our lives that we're doing something for ourselves," they explain. They all believe that they are gaining the skills and confidence needed to go into the job market for the first time. As an interim measure, the course organisers help place the women in local organisations – mainly in the public sector – for a period of work experience.

Further promotional initiatives for the ESF in the UK include a monthly newsletter and a specific website (<http://www.esfnews.org.uk>).

For more information consult: Department of Employment – European Communities branch, level 1, ESF Unit, Caxton House, Tothill Street, UK – London SW1H 9NF. Tel (+44) 171 273 50 32



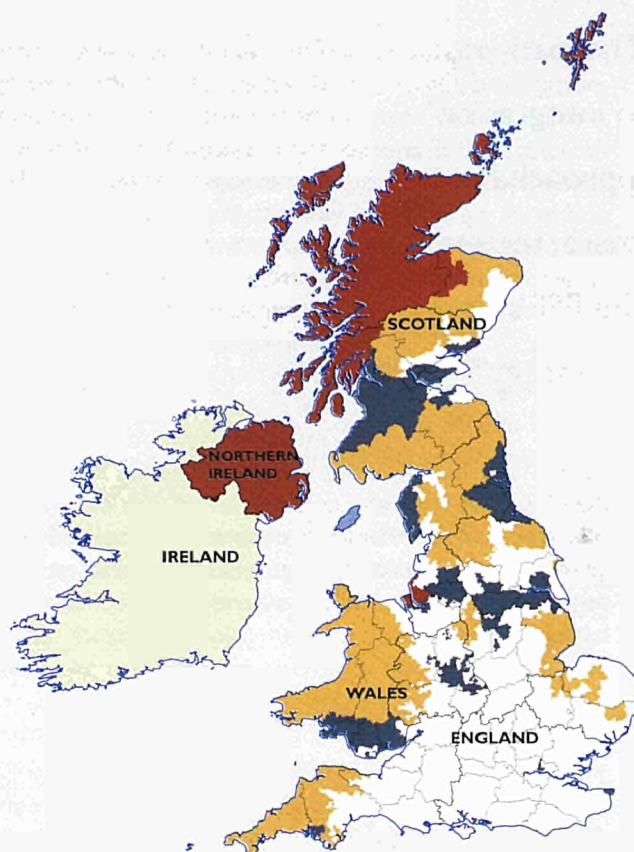
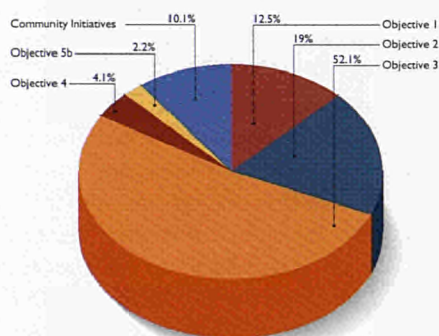
Frieda, Shameem and Naharun – three of this year's AWAAZ participants

Facts and figures – UK

National statistics

Official languages	English, Welsh (in Wales)
Currency	£ 0.67 = ECU 1
UK GDP per capita	98% of EU average
Population	58.8 million
Unemployment rate	7.4% (EU: 10.6%)
Trade with EU	imports – 54% exports – 57%

Breakdown of ESF funding (1994-1999)



Objective 3 and unemployment

The role of the ESF in the fight against exclusion

Within the framework of Objective 3, the European Social Fund (ESF) co-finances vocational training and occupational integration initiatives in Europe for the most disadvantaged job-seekers in the labour market. These activities have a sizeable budget; almost ECU 2 billion per year. Taken together, they address the needs of several million unemployed people throughout the European Union.

Objective 3 has four priorities:

- combating long-term unemployment
- facilitating the integration of young people into working life
- the vocational integration of persons excluded from the labour market
- equal opportunities for men and women.

Co-financing is also focused on services that facilitate access to training and employment activities, in particular those which provide care for job-seekers' children or their elderly or sick dependants.

Integration today

Up to now, employment policies have appeared incapable of reabsorbing certain groups of unemployed people, such as those who have been out of work for more than a year and the least-qualified job-seekers in urban centres. Employment policies to date have thus failed to prevent the creation of what amounts to a new social group consisting primarily of young people, who oscillate between precarious employment, education, training and unemployment.

Employment strategies have long been satisfied to provide job-seekers with the tools they lack to improve their chances of finding employment. But new political scenarios have emerged that aim to distance themselves from 'adaptive' strategies and seek to create alternative forms of employment for individuals or groups. Such measures include promoting the production of goods in the framework of the social economy using jobs that could be defined as protected or negotiating employment for disadvantaged unemployed people in the private sector following their participation in a tailor-made training programme.

“The ‘pathways to integration’ approach best characterises the ESF’s new strategy”

justice and health. Integrated approaches have been developed at local and regional levels that coordinate the work of all project promoters concerned with aspects of integration to improve their ability to reintegrate individuals who face exclusion from the labour market.

The need to link action designed to provide employment with that promoting social integration is becoming increasingly apparent. The extent of the economic crisis suggests that we need to think in terms of a multi-dimensional approach to the employment problem. Solutions must take a range of factors into account: employment, housing, income, family,

The ESF – providing ‘pathways to integration’

The ESF has kept pace with these various developments which have come to characterise the 1990s and the 1994 to 1999 programming period in particular. This is especially true where target groups face exclusion from the job market. Objective 3 initiatives are thus designed as a ‘complete set’ of coordinated measures especially adapted to the recipients’ specific needs.

The ‘pathways to integration’ approach best characterises the ESF’s new strategy. It combines a series of interdependent factors aimed at rationalising existing employment procedures and providing practical support for project promoters’ activities. In particular, this approach seeks to:

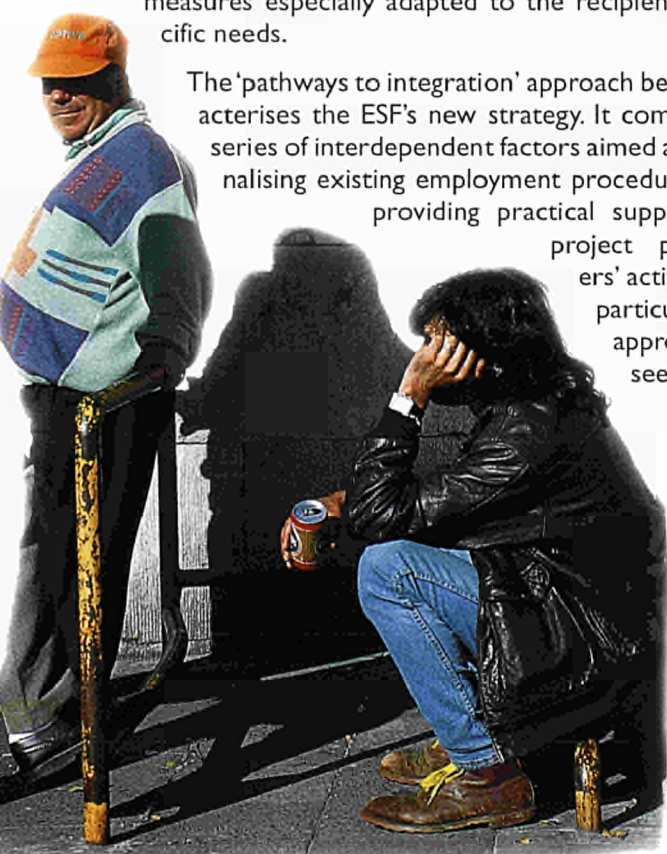
- make the provision of vocational training more coherent and visible
- provide trainees with more individualised and tailor-made supervision
- develop and expand partnerships among local project promoters as well as between promoters and political authorities, employers and trade unions and unemployed trainees
- encourage trainees to participate in the management of actions and employment measures (e.g. along the lines of the Herbeumont Forum)
- consolidate the results in terms of access to employment.

The concept of a pathway to integration takes on different meanings depending on the institutional and socio-economic context within a Member State. However, the primary criterion of a pathway to integration always involves establishing a coherent route to be followed by each participating job-seeker. Initiatives are drawn up at local, regional and individual levels, and must also take environmental factors into account. In order for integration to be successful – and this is particularly true for the most sensitive sectors of the labour market – people must be integrated in an economic, social and cultural sense whilst also developing first contacts, receiving preliminary training and on-the-job support.

There are two aspects to the pathways concept. On the one hand, it is an individualised approach with a personalised plan for supervision, training and employment, while on the other, it involves integrated projects, partnerships, and the creation of networks. It focuses on both the individual and the structure.

Pathways to integration throughout the Union

Each EU Member State has implemented pathways to integration in its own way. In France, the pathways function in practice as an essential component of certain employment programmes such as the ‘Itinéraires personnalisés d’insertion professionnelle des jeunes’ (‘personalised paths to vocational integration for young people’). In the Netherlands, pathways to integration constitutes one of three priority operational strands for the 1997 to 1999 period. In Belgium since 1997, each action under Objective 3 has been subject to the condition that co-financed actions must be organised within the framework of a pathway to integration.



People must be integrated in an economic, social and cultural sense

“...the ESF has everything to gain from pooling ideas and exchanging best practices”

Austria: finding a new job and keeping it

In the Tyrol region of Austria, the 'Engpass-orientierte Wiedereingliederung' ('From impasse to integration') project initiated by the Ibis Institute, is for people who have been rejected by the labour market for reasons such as alcoholism, addiction to drugs or medication, psychological problems, a prison record, or debt. In many cases, the people concerned face a combination of these problems and have been out of work for over ten years.

The public employment agency requires these people to attend sessions or lose their claim to housing and social benefits. Between 40% and 60% complete the sessions successfully and a third find stable employment.

Ibis takes the specific nature of target groups into account. It relies on group dynamics to provide an initial phase of social stabilisation to prepare the participants for the series of sessions that follow. A goal is then established for each participant involving such measures as detoxification, therapy or resettlement. Following a period spent working on these problems, Ibis supervises participants in a training programme in a firm or vocational training centre. It provides further social supervision for six to 15 weeks.

Ibis illustrates both the way in which the ESF initiatives are adapted to national policies and the need to act on multiple dimensions of the integration issue at the same time.

Finland: organising a programme of 'tailored' integration

In Finland, 20% of young people are threatened by long-term unemployment. The primary goal of Objective 3 is to help these young people integrate into working life. 'Pathways to employment' is one of the four priorities established for co-financed action to help young unemployed people. This approach uses a series of tailor-made tools to establish routes to employment. Together with the employment agency, participants draw up a career plan and then follow it through. Plans usually include a period of vocational training, which provides trainees with new qualifications, followed by employment supported by public authorities or a training course.

France: PLIE – a network of partners to develop new pathways

The 'Plan Local d'Insertion par l'Économie (PLIE) de Lille' aims to develop and supervise various routes to employment and to ensure their success by stimulating and coordinating all the elements necessary to create the pathways.

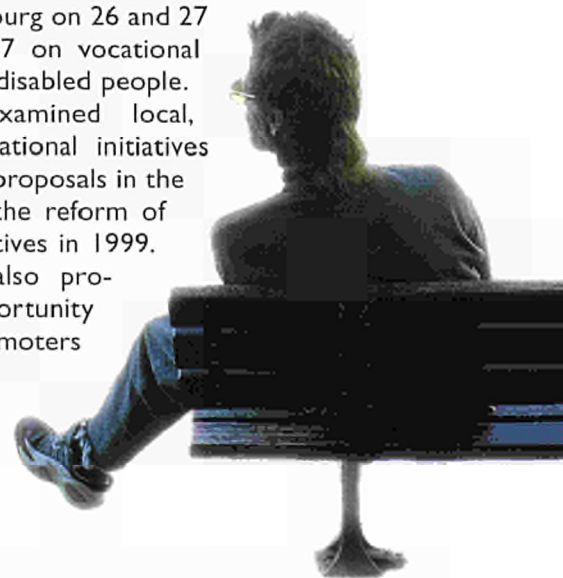
PLIE includes a network of partners who organise different employment actions: first contacts, orientation, vocational training, and employment. For the most part, these partners are organisations in the conurbation of Lille interested in the socio-professional aspects of employment. They provide an interface between employment promoters and employers and help to resolve the wide range of social problems encountered by participants.

More than 150 PLIE networks operating in France receive co-financing within the framework of Objective 3. Each city with more than 30 000 inhabitants has set up a PLIE and the results so far have been very encouraging.

Clearly, there is no one way to define a given pathway to integration. Instead, these pathways provide a way to think about the problem and to reform and reorganise existing employment practices and arrangements. As new policies emerge, a way must be found to support, describe, and transfer innovative solutions. The ESF addressed this issue at a conference on 'Pathways to integration' held in Bruges on 16 and 17 October, which brought together nearly 300 participants from the European Union's 15 Member States. Their aim was not to create a single European approach but rather to become more aware of action taken to clarify the underlying issues and to find appropriate solutions. In the wake of Agenda 2000, which has opened the floor to a discussion of how the Structural Funds should be reoriented for the next programming period (2000-2006), the ESF has everything to gain from pooling ideas and exchanging best practices in order to lay solid foundations for tomorrow's priorities.

The ESF and vocational integration for the disabled

A two-day seminar was held in the city of Luxembourg on 26 and 27 September 1997 on vocational integration for disabled people. Participants examined local, regional and national initiatives and developed proposals in the framework of the reform of the ESF's objectives in 1999. The seminar also provided an opportunity for project promoters in the field to meet and exchange experiences.



Focusing on the needs of the individual

Commissioner Pádraig Flynn, speaking at the opening session of the seminar, emphasised that occupational integration in the labour market for the most vulnerable was a priority for the European Union. Accordingly, the ESF's contribution to support disabled people in this area amounted to ECU 1.3 billion for the period 1994 to 1999. Mr Flynn also announced that the European Commission's recommendations to the Member States at the Employment Summit in Luxembourg on 21 November 1997 would include an explicit reference to the disabled.

Creating opportunities for the disabled in commercial employment

Most of the papers and meetings of project promoters in the field focused on three workshops dedicated to training, pathways to integration and new forms of employment. A dozen innovative projects co-financed by the ESF were presented (two of which are highlighted opposite). Each case demonstrated a need for the development of projects leading to the employment of disabled personnel in the commercial workplace and a need to move away from protected workshops.

A number of suggestions for further reflection were also discussed.

- The concept of partnership as an essential component of integration and a social responsibility. The most successful projects are those which involve the ESF and a variety of players such as local, regional and national authorities, together with private promoters.
- The ESF has made it possible to initiate and develop certain changes and this support should not be withdrawn too quickly. The integration of disabled people into the commercial environment does not happen automatically; it is a long-term process requiring long-term strategies.
- The evaluation process should include more than just economic factors. It should also address issues relating to the quality of life of participants, while at the same time focusing on examples of successful training and integration.

Focusing on innovation and flexibility

Speaking on behalf of the European Commission, Mr Lluís Riera (who heads Directorate C of DGV) expressed his delight in the quality of the debates that had taken place and the fruitful exchanges between

the Commission, representatives of national administrations, and project promoters. He also stated that, "In the current context, economic and social integration can still only be achieved by means of employment. The Helios and Horizon programmes have proved, and continue to prove all too well, that there is no magic formula for this integration. We must focus," he concluded, "on our capacities for adaptation, innovation, and flexibility."

Skills assessments during training

Project organisers at the Rehabilitation Centre, Ligue HMC (Capellen, Luxembourg), start with the premise that training methods must be adapted to take account of structural realities and the demand for employment. Consequently, the project has put several handicraft workshops in touch with therapeutic groups and cooperatives (active in fruit-growing and in the catering trade). They have achieved encouraging results, particularly with regard to restaurant skills, for example, where the positive reactions of customers have increased the self-confidence of disabled participants, and with information-processing, where equal opportunities are strongly supported through the use of quality equipment.

New forms of employment play the integration card

The innovative concept underlying the Job Centre project established in Spain (Promi) and Sweden (Fosietjänst), seeks to integrate all approaches during the rehabilitation process. In Sweden, three functional units work under the same roof:

- the first unit deals primarily with vocational guidance and training; it also acts as a placement office for the disabled
- the second unit functions as a training centre focusing on multimedia, pre-press, documentation and information
- the third unit is a protected workshop.

In order to support the service enterprise, Fosietjänst, the Job Centre managed by people with learning difficulties, has developed an observation post that closely monitors trends in the labour market in general, and in the market for disabled people in particular.

Speakers at the 'vocational integration' conference, Luxembourg



Adapt and Employment Update

Halfway through the life of the two human resources Community Initiatives, a number of European conferences are taking place that focus on some of these projects and partnerships to take stock of what has been learned and to relay these interim conclusions to decision-makers and key actors. The outcome of these discussions will be important in shaping the activities of those projects which have just been selected in the second call for proposals and which will operate until the very first year of the new millennium.

In this issue we will focus on the Youthstart conference held in Stockholm on 9 and 10 October 1997.

Access to the world of work: young people's future

This conference, organised by the Swedish authorities and the European Commission, was an important event in the context of the priority which the European heads of government place on a concerted effort across the Union to tackle the continuing problem of youth unemployment. The good practice and methodologies on display in Stockholm illustrated clearly that effective methods of integrating disadvantaged young people into the labour market now exist, despite the failure of many mainstream programmes over the last twenty years.

The conference addressed the following issues in its six workshops:

- how to help young people to prepare their future
- how to create progressive pathways to employment
- how to engage the key actors
- how to exploit new job opportunities
- how to combat social or geographical isolation
- how to make training more relevant.

All workshops came up with firm recommendations and conclusions which will be included in the conference report and which, if implemented, will drive Youthstart and other training programmes forward in meeting the skills needs of the next century, and the personal needs of young people for an active and fulfilling social and working life.

As Commissioner Flynn said in his opening speech, "Youthstart was based on principles of quality and relevance of qualifications and work experience to the labour market, and the participation of young people in the programme... Youthstart has proved itself as a

"Youthstart will not work unless young people see that they play an active and recognised role in constructing their own future"

catalyst for innovation. The most successful approaches to integrating young people are the ones which involve young people in the process."

And, indeed, it was the active participation of young people which made this conference so different from many other European events. It is Commissioner Flynn's belief that "Youthstart will not work unless young people see that they play an active and recognised role in constructing

their own future". In the end, about 100 young people from Youthstart projects across Europe and over 40 projects, participated on an equal footing with policy makers and Youthstart project promoters who made up the remainder of the 450 delegates. Bringing this number of young people together from all over the European Union was a considerable challenge, especially as many had never travelled abroad before, and some had never even been out of their immediate neighbourhoods. But all the Swedish Youthstart projects and the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs went out of their way to welcome the young delegates to the conference and to show them the sights and delights of Stockholm. Their participation was also assisted by the fact that each of them had a specific task to carry out during the event which had been prepared in advance with their project promoter.

Expressing their views

Inter-cultural learning was high on the agenda the day before the conference, when all the Youthstart participants came together in Stockholm's Zinkensdamms youth hostel for their own meeting. Lots of music, confidence-building and communication exercises prepared them to take part in small working groups to consider the results of their youth survey. The survey was primarily intended to promote such a discussion and to pose new questions about future work within Youthstart. It was compiled and analysed by young people from a Swedish project in Skara, Lidköping and Götene, in cooperation with Stockholm University. The survey questionnaire had been completed before the conference by some participants from some 30 Youthstart projects. Although a total of 199 respondents cannot be regarded as fully representative, a very clear and homogeneous picture emerged of young people's views on issues such as work and its value, looking for work, guidance,

self-employment, job mobility, and new growth sectors for youth employment.

In the opening session of the conference, a team of young people shared the results of this youth meeting with the policy-makers and promoters and the results of their discussions and their views on the different issues were in turn, relayed to the six workshops.

Making an exhibition of themselves



Commissioner Flynn with Youthstart participant and Margareta Winberg, Stockholm

The youth contribution was also evident in the exhibition which featured projects that were considered to be examples of good practice in areas such as arts, information technology and multimedia, teaching tools, building, renovation

and crafts. These projects really brought to life what might otherwise have been a relatively static exhibition. Young people from the EUROTRAIN transnational partnership set up a loudspeaker sculpture, broadcasting digitally stored recordings which they had made of everyday sounds in their local communities. Another group from the DROP IN/TREND-BREAKERS project in Finland performed mime on the exhibition stage, while young people from the Italian project LINKING made and decorated traditional ceramic items. On another stand, young people from the UK project TWENTY composed garage music on a keyboard linked to a computer and on the opposite stand, the Spanish project PERSEO offered visitors a chance to try out their guidance board game "Finding Work" which will soon be on sale throughout Europe.

Exploring the information highway

The last main contribution which young people made to this conference was the provision of internal and external information relays. Representatives from the Swedish URKAFT project, constructed and ran an exciting interactive conference website which brought the two days of the Youthstart conference live

to young people and key actors throughout the Union. Some 300 young people from all over Europe accessed the website and a few had the chance to chat live with Margareta Winberg, Swedish Minister of Labour and Commissioner Pádraig Flynn just after they had officially opened the conference and exhibition. In addition, URKAFT shot footage for a video report of the event, and the conference's young news crew from the Swedish IUCU project was responsible for the production of three issues of the conference newsletter.

Having such youth involvement in a major conference was a learning experience for everyone involved: the young people; policy-makers; promoters and the organisers. Admittedly, some conference participants were initially surprised to see members of the Youthstart target group participating as equal partners with policy-makers in exploring new ways of combating low qualifications and youth unemployment across the European Union. But this active involvement proved that Youthstart not only challenges traditional forms of guidance, training and work experience schemes – it also provides a model which could influence how young people are treated or regarded by other national or European programmes. The conference, and the way in which it was organised, reinforced the fact that Youthstart is a new commitment to young people: a pact between Member States, the European Commission and young people to do better for the youth of Europe.

Further information about Adapt and Employment is available from EUROPS, the organisation which assists the European Commission in the implementation of these two Community Initiatives:

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Fax (+32-2) 511 1960

You can also visit the Adapt and Employment website (www.europs.be) where you will find out more about all of the conferences mentioned above and you can order or download publications concerning the human resources Community Initiatives.



Youthstart conference – the WORKSTART project: building a brighter future for Swedish youth

Headlines

Integra: inaugural conference in Barcelona on 27 and 28 October 1997

Barcelona was the venue for the first ever conference on Integra, the new strand of the Employment Community initiative. Hosted by the Spanish Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs in collaboration with the European Commission, the conference brought together 400 key actors and project promoters, all with a common goal: to combat social exclusion by promoting reintegration into the labour market. The six conference workshops highlighted the remaining obstacles that must be overcome and examined the potential for the transfer or mainstreaming of best approaches and practices. An exhibition gave project promoters and beneficiaries the opportunity to present their activities, products, and results, and to exchange ideas on methodology and future plans.

Now seminar poses the question: 'Is a woman's business different?'

The Employment Community Initiative's Now seminar, held in Brussels on 1 and 2 December 1997, highlighted the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, and examined ways to optimise women's vast potential for job creation and economic growth. The 100 participants event included decision-makers, project-promoters and women entrepreneurs, all eager to

pool their ideas on ways to overcome the gender-related barriers which so often hamper women's efforts to create new businesses or consolidate and develop existing ones. While the seminar workshops were confined to key actors, a larger audience was invited to the exhibition and reception in an effort to widen the visibility of the impact of Now on business creation.

Job rotation – spreading the word

Job rotation '97, an ESF seminar in Copenhagen on 20 and 21 November, gave participants the chance to compare their experiences on this subject, which is a particular priority of Danish employment policy and of the ESF programming (see article on the Danish programme in Euro 15 News).

The seminar aimed to disseminate some of the expertise and experience gained to date, and to consider what the opportunities (or problems) might set for other Member States.

Three hundred representatives from administrative bodies, training centres, social partners, the voluntary sector and companies, met to discuss all the aspects of job rotation: training, cost-benefits, its contribution to upgrading skills and the various social and legal issues. The seminar, jointly organised by the European Commission and the Danish Labour Ministry and Labour Market Authority, also involved visits to view job rotation at work in six different companies.

What the papers say

- ① "Projects for strengthening the labour market"
To BHMA (Greece)
- ② "Training, here come the EU Funds"
Il Sole 24 Ore (Italy)
- ③ "Valcárcel asks for 500 million pesetas for youth employment from the European Social Fund"
La Opinion de Murcia (Spain)
- ④ "Long-term unemployed get the chance of a job"
Kurier Bundesländer (Austria)
- ⑤ "Namur: for 10 years the "Young people at work" project helps young people to take life into their own hands"
Vers L'Avenir (Belgium)

Τα σχέδια για την ενίσχυση της αγοράς εργασίας

Τα σχέδια για την ενίσχυση της αγοράς εργασίας...

Valcárcel solicita al Fondo Social Europeo 500 millones para empleo juvenil

El presidente de la Comunidad Autónoma de Murcia, Juan Valcárcel, y el consejero de Industria, Trabajo y Turismo, José María Ruiz Albaladejo, solicitan ayer al director general del Fondo Social Europeo, en Bruselas, una subvención de 500 millones de pesetas para la elaboración del Plan de Empleo Juvenil...

Namur : depuis dix ans, « Jeunes au travail » les aide à se reprendre en main

Les jeunes au travail ont été créés en 1987. Cette initiative de formation par le travail a permis à de nombreux jeunes de retrouver un emploi ou de créer leur propre entreprise...

ENTRO FINE MESE LE DOMANDE PER I PROGRAMMI MULTIREGIONALI '98

Formazione, arrivano i fondi Ue

Previsi interventi per la riqualificazione del personale bancario e assicurativo

Progetti in Europa. Come prevedono i programmi operativi multiregionali...

Langzeitbeitslose erhielten eine Chance auf einen Job

14 Generationen in Schramm: AMS und Gewerkschaften schaffen Beschäftigung

Die langzeitbeitslosen Jugendlichen in Schramm erhalten nun die Chance auf einen Job...

Namur : depuis dix ans, « Jeunes au travail » les aide à se reprendre en main

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European Social Fund publications

Available publications

- **The European Social Fund brochure**, July 1995 (available in all EU languages)
- **Leaflets on the ESF in each Member State**
Available in the national language(s), plus English
'The ESF in...
Austria, Ireland, Italy, France, Germany, Portugal, Sweden, Greece, Finland (English only), Netherlands, Spain and UK.
Appearing shortly: 'The ESF in...
Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, Finland (Finnish version).



- **Meeting the challenge of change at work**, ESF project examples, October 1997 (available in English, French and German)
- **Territorial Employment Pacts: Examples of good practice**, September 1997 (available in all EU languages)
- **Local development and Territorial Employment Pacts, Report of the Rome seminar**, September 1997 (available in English, French, German and Italian)

- **'Building the European information society for us all'** - First reflections of the High Level Group of Experts, Interim Report, January 1996 (available in all EU languages)
- **'Living and working in the information society: People first'** - Green paper, July 1996 (available in all EU languages)

Community Initiatives

- **Information leaflets**, December 1996 (available in all EU languages)
Employment - Now; Employment - Horizon; Employment - Youthstart; Employment - Integra (Oct 1996); Adapt.

- **Special reports**, Feb/May 1997 (available in all EU languages)
Employment - Now; Employment - Horizon; Employment - Youthstart; Employment - Integra; Adapt.
- **Summaries of Member State operational programmes** (available in English and French)
Employment, December 1995
Adapt, January 1996
- **Provisional directory of projects**, March/September 1996. 4 editions
Employment - Now; Employment - Horizon; Employment - Youthstart; Adapt.
- **New Perspectives - Youthstart: a new commitment**, March 1996 (available in English, French, German and Spanish)
- **Special Report n°4: Employment - Now: New opportunities for women**, March 1996 (available in English, French and German)

Forthcoming publications

- **Four brochures covering the ESF's work in the areas of**
 - Long-term unemployment
 - Youth
 - Exclusion from the labour market
 - Equal opportunities
- **The European Social Fund, 1994-1999 programmes**

The ESF on Internet

Consult the Europa server on:

europa.eu.int

For specific information about the ESF:

europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg05/esf/esf_home.htm
(currently only in English)

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