

# ESF TRANSNATIONALITY NEWS

NEWSLETTER  
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## Key moments of the ESF community

As we work towards our annual conference on 21-22 May 2019, Newsletter 9 reports on some key moments for the ESF Community in recent months.

### CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Editorial</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Lead</b>  |           |
| Shaping ESF+ for citizens  | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>Grassroots</b>  |           |
| Digi4all: 3-in-1 ESF project teaching digital skills while promoting circular economy and social inclusion | <b>4</b>  |
| Fighting homelessness with the help of the ESF   | <b>6</b>  |
| ESF as a tool to improve gender equality   | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Policy</b>  |           |
| The Employment TN helps to mainstream socially-innovative entrepreneurship                                 | <b>9</b>  |
| Creating synergies between ESF and Erasmus+  | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Tools</b>   |           |
| Lessons learned from Transnational Cooperation   | <b>13</b> |
| New Technical dossier on Digital Skills  | <b>13</b> |
| Two online papers on career management and labour market transition now available                          | <b>13</b> |
| The 9 Key Steps of the LTU project   | <b>14</b> |

We lead with a report on the political messages delivered at the *ESF+, a PLUS for our future* conference in Bucharest in April in which Marianne Thyssen, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, called for a “swift adoption of the European Social Fund Plus” to ensure that the EU continues to be a social convergence machine.

We then describe an innovative and successful ESF project providing digital skills to migrants and people far from the labour market. The project, funded by ESF Luxembourg, offers great replicability potential for tackling some of society’s most pressing issues in an environmentally-friendly way.

Next we discuss how the ESF Transnational Platform’s Employment Thematic Network (TN) is helping to mainstream socially-innovative entrepreneurship. This relatively new concept is designed to provide a viable alternative to regular employment, including for disadvantaged people. In a similar vein the Migrants TN is promoting innovative approaches to boosting gender equality, while the Inclusion TN is encouraging the spread of housing-led solutions to tackle homelessness.

Finally, we cover the work being carried out by the Youth Employment and Learning and Skills TNs to create synergies in the next programming period between ESF and Erasmus+. This will ensure



that young people from a disadvantaged background enjoy the same opportunities as others.

This year’s annual ESF Transnational Platform conference will be our closing event, as the ESF TP has now entered its final stage of implementation. As such it will be a key moment for our community. We are looking forward to meeting you in Brussels on 21-22 May. Follow us on twitter **#ESFTP19**.

#### Further information

Remember, these articles and more can also be read online at <http://www.transnationality.eu>  
The conference programme is available [here](#)

LEAD

## Shaping ESF+ for citizens

Romania, which currently holds the rotating EU Presidency, invited policy-makers, ESF managing authorities, and other key stakeholders to Bucharest on 11 April. They discussed how ESF+ can help the future of social Europe and address key challenges in our societies. The event, [ESF+, a PLUS for our future](#) gave special attention to youth employment, integrated approaches to social inclusion, transnationality, community-based services and partnerships. Alexander Elu reports.



Marianne Thyssen and Rovana Plumb

In her opening [speech](#), Marianne Thyssen, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility emphasised the key role of the ESF+ as a link between the EU and its citizens, bridging gaps and responding to new societal challenges. She also underscored the crucial role of the ESF+ not only as a lever to fully release the social ambition contained in the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) but also as a key instrument to underpin the recommendations and country analysis contained in the [European Semester](#).

Rovana Plumb, the Romanian Minister of European Funds said the ESF+ negotiations were a top priority for the Romanian Presidency and some very positive outcomes had already been achieved. Ms Plumb insisted that putting people at the centre of the debate was essential to build a sustainable and competitive future for the EU. She added that investing in people should be the starting point for all European social policies.

Ms Plumb also explained that the decision to focus the event on youth and social inclusion had been chosen in light of the multiplying positive impact of investing in these.

Such an approach mirrors the priorities of ESF+. Andriana Sukova, Deputy Director General at the European Commission's [DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion](#) (DG EMPL), pointed out that the thematic focus on youth had been a major objective of the Commission's proposal for ESF+. She referred in particular to the requirement that Member States where the number of NEET (young people neither in employment nor in education or training) is above average devote 10% of their shared management fund allocation to measures supporting youth employment, including youth entrepreneurship (In its final position adopted by MEPs on 4 April, the European Parliament calls for this rate to be increased to 15%). The emphasis on

social inclusion is also in line with the ESF+ proposal, according to which 25% of shared management funds should be allocated to improving social inclusion (27% for MEPs) and at least 2% to fighting material deprivation (at least 3% for the EP).

## Transnational cooperation and ESF+

The key role of transnational cooperation in ESF actions around youth employment was highlighted by Caroline Van der Linden, from the [ESF Agency in Wallonia](#) (Belgium). She pointed out the key importance of the mutual learning opportunities created by the ESF Transnational Platform's [Thematic Network on Youth Employment](#), which helped develop new projects and initiatives on youth employment in Wallonia, such as the [ANCRE](#) project. In her view, the lessons and outcomes of the Thematic Network, in areas such as outreach, activation and service integration<sup>1</sup>, should constitute primary input for ESF+ action in the field of youth employment.

## Community-based services and partnerships

Loris di Pietrantonio (Head of Unit, ESF and FEAD: Policy and Legislation, DG EMPL) stressed the role of ESF+ in tackling poverty and social exclusion through community-based services. Mr di Pietrantonio stressed how the call for integrated services and a local approach to addressing social needs lie at the heart of the current ESF. He singled out the critical role played by the ESF in putting an end to the institutionalisation of vulnerable people in large-scale, segregating care facilities and promoting the transition towards community-based services. The support of civil society organisations has been crucial to progress in this area, an example of the importance of partnership. Several other speakers also emphasised partnerships as being key to increasing the effectiveness and reach of shared management funds.

Building on those outcomes, participants stressed that ESF+ should continue promoting the transition towards person-centred services that empower and accompany people throughout their life-cycle.

## Next steps

On 4 April the European Parliament (EP) adopted in plenary its final [resolution](#) on ESF+. The EP proposes to increase ESF+ funding in the new [Multiannual Financial Framework](#) (MFF) by approximately 19%, from €101.2 billion in the European Commission's initial proposal to €120.5 billion, current prices. In Council meanwhile, the Commission's proposal was examined by the [Working Party on Structural Measures](#). Member States have



adopted a provisional position and trilogue negotiations between the three institutions will start as soon as the new Parliament is in place following the European elections in May.

As Ms Thyssen pointed out in her speech, time is now of the essence: "As soon as the new European Parliament is elected, we need to start negotiations. We need an agreement, by autumn. This target date is important for all involved," said the Commissioner.

Keeping to deadlines is important to allow Member States enough time for preparing their operational programmes. Member States also need sufficient time to set up coordination mechanisms between the different funds delivering on complementary objectives, like the Asylum and Migration Fund (AMF).

## Further information

To read the European Commission proposal on ESF+ go to: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-european-social-fund-plus-regulation\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-european-social-fund-plus-regulation_en.pdf)

<sup>1</sup> Summarised in [Technical Dossier 9](#)

## GRASSROOTS

## Digi4all: 3-in-1 ESF project teaching digital skills while promoting **circular economy** and **social inclusion**

A European Social Fund (ESF) project in Luxembourg is successfully tackling some of society's most pressing issues- digitalisation, migration, social inclusion and the circular economy - while also improving the lives of migrants.



A Digi4all IT class

Patrick de la Hamette is an IT engineer working for the Luxembourg government. One day in December 2015, he walked into a migrant shelter and his life changed forever. There he met displaced Syrian, Iraqi and Eritrean technicians and engineers who, like him, were IT enthusiasts. He listened as they told him that what they missed in the shelter was a computer with internet access to keep them connected to the world and their families back home.

“Luxembourgers have too many computers; migrants in shelters have too much free time and no computers”. It was time to make the link.

Once back home, Mr de la Hamette took to Facebook to launch a call for unwanted laptops. “Initially

I just wanted to help a bunch of people” but, when laptops started pouring in, he realised that he could do much more than just that. Labour costs are so high in Luxembourg that it rarely makes economic sense to have a computer refurbished locally. Yet many asylum seekers are young, educated and enthusiastic, eager to keep themselves busy while they wait for their status to be approved.

With the help of a couple of tech-savvy refugees, he started dismantling, repairing and installing new software in the computers to offer them free-of-charge to refugees or families living in poverty. Mr de la Hamette's small one-man project soon became a fully-fledged not-for profit organisation called [Digital Inclusion](#) which currently employs 14

staff and some 40 volunteer refugees. To date, it has prepared for reuse and distributed over 1 500 computers. Initially funded by the [Oeuvre Nationale de Secours Grande Duchesse Charlotte](#), Digital Inclusion is now receiving funding from [ESF Luxembourg](#). It has widened its scope to include digital skills training and computers classes in 9 different languages to improve people's access to the labour market. The IT classes, part of the Digi4all ESF project, fall under the [European Computer Driving Licence Programme](#) (ECDL).

As Mr de La Hamette explains, "in our society, not having access to digital tools can become a factor of social exclusion. Refugees arriving in Luxembourg already face an array of challenges. Digital Inclusion ensures that access to the digital world and society is not one of them".

## A holistic philosophy for an inclusive approach

For Mr de la Hamette, a computer is the digital equivalent to a Swiss army knife, a versatile tool to solve multiple problems and he sees his project as "socially lucrative": by helping people gain digital autonomy the aim is to accelerate their passage to the labour market.

Beyond social integration and digitalisation, the project also focuses on environmental action and the circular economy. By supplying refurbished computers, Digital Inclusion is not only helping people and social organisations save money, it is also extending the lifetime of resource-intensive electronic devices. Mr de la Hamette is pushing the concept of the circular economy even further by using vacant office space and second-hand furniture. Digital inclusion is legally occupying an old building soon to be demolished that would otherwise be empty: an eco-friendly and affordable space furnished with donated tables and chairs and insulated with discarded clothes.

With a philosophy of re-using unused resources, Mr de la Hamette is raising awareness about the need to reduce our consumption of electronic devices. "As long as some people do not have a mobile phone or a computer, we should not throw them away but find ways to extend their lifetime. We would like to spread the principle of zero waste in Luxembourg and, given the size of the country, we should be 100% inclusive at the digital level. It is wrong to waste abundant IT resources while some do not have digital access. This is a message we would like everyone to hear."



*The Digital Inclusion team*

## Digi4all, digital skills and transnationality

The ESF Digi4all project was presented at a meeting on the Learning and Skills Thematic Network (TN) of the ESF Transnational Platform (ESF TP) which took place in Luxembourg in February 2019. The TN has just released a [publication](#) highlighting how digital skills can be supported by the ESF in different countries. Digi4all is one of the promising ESF projects included in the publication.

Although Digi4all is not a transnational project, its holistic approach can be transferred to a variety of contexts. Its combined approach to IT, social inclusion and the circular economy takes widespread human and material resources into account. The project is an excellent learning example because it showcases how an innovative, flexible and inclusive training programme can help address learning challenges faced by migrants and people far from the labour market.

### Further information

For more information on the digi4all project: <http://www.fonds-europeens.public.lu/fr/projets-cofinances/fse/2014-2020/1070/index.html>

For more information on the work of the Learning and Skills Thematic Network: <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/forums/learning-skills>

## GRASSROOTS

# Fighting homelessness with the help of the ESF

**The ESF plays a crucial role in providing social housing to people at risk of homelessness and social exclusion in Czechia. Members of the [Inclusion Thematic Network \(TN\)](#) recently paid a study visit to a successful Housing First project in Brno. This shows the added value of using the ESF to end homelessness rather than just managing it.**

The Housing First concept was first developed in New York City. It reverses a previous model of working on homelessness that focused on steps towards housing: shelter, followed by supported accommodation then a house. Under Housing First, homeless people are moved into permanent housing as quickly as possible and offered intensive social support.

In April 2016, a Housing First pilot project was launched in Brno, the second largest city in Czechia with a population of 400 000. When the pilot was launched there were 421 homeless families living in the city, 19 of them lived in temporary hostels, 64 in shelters while the rest stayed in overcrowded households or “couchsurfing” where they could.

Two thirds of the families were headed by a single parent, two thirds were Roma, the average age of the mothers involved was 35 and on average the families had spent 6 years homeless. Disability, illness, debt and institutional care were some of the factors impacting on the lives of those families.

*A Housing First official helping a beneficiary with her forms*



The key partners in the project, Brno municipality, flats owners, social services, the University of Ostrava and the Platform for Social Housing, randomly selected 150 families out of the 421 to take part in the project. 50 families were giving immediate access to housing and the necessary support (the treatment group), while the other 100 continued to receive support as usual (the control group).

## Results

The University of Ostrava followed the families over a 12-month period and found that 48 of the 50 treatment group families remained housed after a year. The health and quality of life of this group improved significantly with three times less hospital visits, 4.5 times less risk of severe mental illness among the parents and half the number of respiratory diseases among children. The Housing First approach was also shown to reunite families. Children in the treatment group spent on average 33 days less in institutional or foster care than those in the control group. As one mother put it: “When we lived in the hostel, my daughter would hardly communicate, she was silent all the time ... And now that we have the flat she has started to communicate, she has her own room, she talks she learns, she is happier”.

In addition, the experiment showed the Housing First approach helped make public expenditure savings totalling 1 573 850 CZK (€61 002) in 12 months.

## Multidisciplinary approach needed

TN Members heard how the key to the Housing First approach is the multidisciplinary support provided to the families. After following a customised training course, social workers supported the families as long as necessary. The support was unconditional and did not depend on behaviour. This tailored

support facilitates gender-sensitive provisions and responses. Another success factor was the involvement of a wide range of actors from the voluntary, public and private sectors in the project from beginning to end.

### Next steps

For all these reasons, the Brno project (Housing First for Families in Brno) won the 2017 FEANTSA's [Ending Homelessness Award](#). It will now be upscaled in Brno and across Czechia to ensure the knowledge gained is used to its full potential. An ESF call for the period 2018-2021 expects to support between 30 to 50 Housing First projects and 500 to 750 households.

This is in line with the European Commission's ambition to change the way homelessness is tackled across the EU. The aspiration is to reduce the amount of money spent on emergency responses like shelters and temporary accommodation and instead promote investments in social housing.



*A single mum and her children in their new flat provided by the Brno Housing First project*

Though the primary responsibility for organising and funding measures to combat homelessness lies at local, regional and national level, the ESF can provide added value as a leverage for improving policies and services.

## GRASSROOTS

# ESF as a tool to improve gender equality

**Gender gaps are one of the most pressing challenges in labour markets across the EU, especially in the case of migrant women. One ESF project, which the ESF Transnational Platform Thematic Network (TN) on Migrants visited in April, has developed a particularly interesting and innovative approach to integrating women in the workforce. Nicolas Oliveri reports.**

The European Commission recently published its [2019 Report on equality between women and men in the EU](#). It shows that while there has been progress in terms of gender equality across Member States, gender gaps remain one of the most pressing challenges in the labour market. Women are substantially less likely to be employed than men and when they do work, they often earn less.

The situation gets significantly worse when it comes to migrant women who face the double penalty of being both female and from a migrant background.

Consequently, they tend to fare far worse than both migrant men and native born women. In Germany or Belgium, for example, the [difference in employment rates](#) between native and non-EU born women is more than 35 percentage points.

During its study visit to Madrid, the TN Migrants discussed the importance of projects targeting migrant women and visited the regional coordination centre of the ESF-funded [Adelante programme](#) in Ciudad Real. Participants were most impressed by its holistic and integrated approach.



*The TN Migrants visiting the Adelante project in Madrid*

### Adelante- a one-stop shop for migrant women

ESF-funded Adelante is run by the [CEPAIM Foundation](#) and aims to improve the labour market integration of vulnerable women, including migrant women, from different Spanish regions.

While in Spain projects working with migrants focus, in general, on psychological assistance, Adelante offers a more holistic approach to integration based on three main pillars:

- activation: developing individual work plans for women based on an analysis of their employability alongside psychological support
- training and insertion in the labour market: this includes a special focus on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and green jobs, as well as validation of skills, traineeships and a personalised follow-up
- sensitisation and awareness-raising: to make companies and other organisations more aware of the need to share responsibilities for care, encouraging men to play an active role in the fight for gender equality, and raising awareness to prevent gender-based violence.

Adelante's success is a result of this integrated approach. It merges psychological assistance with practical training, work-placements and awareness-raising about gender equality, discrimination and work-life balance. In the region of Castille-La Mancha for example, over 270 women have taken part in the programme in the past two years, 116 participated in vocational training activities and 32 companies offered traineeships and work placements.

During the study visit, the members of the Migrants TN had the opportunity to meet and discuss the project with some of the beneficiaries. They heard how these women who fled their countries for different reasons soon felt part of the community thanks to the innovative components of the Adelante programme. The combination of individual work plans, coaching and regular contact on the one hand, and psychological assistance to overcome trauma, and help with assimilation on the other, really made a difference to them.

As Carmen Ramirez Banegas a 55-year-old Bolivian migrant said: "Adelante helped me to improve my skills and apply for jobs, but most importantly it empowered me to believe in myself and apply my experience in fields I would have never imagined".

#### Further information

For more information on the work of the Thematic Network on Migrants:  
<https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/forums/migrants>

## POLICY

# The Employment TN helps to mainstream socially-innovative entrepreneurship

**At a meeting in Berlin in March, members of the ESF Transnational Platform's Thematic Network (TN) on Employment discussed how to develop a coherent and shared understanding of the concept of socially-innovative entrepreneurship so it can be supported by the ESF more effectively. Alexander Elu reports.**

**S**ocial entrepreneurship, social enterprise, and social innovation have grown in importance in policy and practice across Europe in recent years. Social enterprises, by definition, seek to address socio-economic challenges and unmet social needs in innovative ways. The participation of people, especially those facing social exclusion, is also a core component of the mission of many social enterprises. By coining the term "socially-innovative entrepreneurship", the TN aims to highlight the fact that entrepreneurship can be both socially innovative and a viable alternative to regular employment, including for disadvantaged people.

The ESF is a key lever for supporting employment and social inclusion across the EU. The Berlin meeting was an opportunity for managing authorities and other stakeholders to consider how it can help establish a coherent approach to the different concepts<sup>1</sup>, interlink them and use the resources available in a more effective manner as a result.

Anette Scoppetta, Thematic Expert of the Employment Network, pointed out that the ESF is already promoting socially innovative-entrepreneurship in various ways, for instance through training, mentoring, business-support services, access to finance and the creation of learning environments where stakeholders can develop new ways of tackling societal challenges.

## Defining concepts, streamlining procedures and promoting partnerships

To bolster socially-innovative entrepreneurship in future, a number of issues will need to be investigated further by:



*Anette Scoppetta Thematic Expert of the Employment Network*

- establishing a common understanding of socially-innovative entrepreneurship at EU level
- defining boundaries between the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors
- ensuring that sufficient support is in place to make new socially-innovative business ventures and initiatives sustainable in the long run.

Procedures should also be streamlined to ensure that emerging societal challenges, including those affecting vulnerable groups, are addressed swiftly. Streamlined procedures would also allow to reconcile the experimental dimension of entrepreneurship and innovation with the administrative requirements of the ESF to produce tangible results.

For Risto Raivio, from the European Commission's DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (DG EMPL),

<sup>1</sup> See box below

## Key concepts

- A **social enterprise** is an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and uses profits primarily to achieve social objectives. (Social Business Initiative, COM(2011) 682 final).
  - **Social entrepreneurship** is a specific form of entrepreneurship which refers to the use of entrepreneurial approaches to tackle social problems.
- It often, but not always, leads to the creation of social enterprises.
- **Inclusive entrepreneurship** is a policy approach in which the social aspect refers to enabling members of disadvantaged groups to become entrepreneurs.
  - **Social innovation** can be defined as the development and implementation of new ideas (products, services and models) to meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations (EC Guide to Social Innovation, 2013).

the European Commission is committed to socially innovative entrepreneurship and has undertaken a series of actions to promote it. For example, social innovation is specifically mentioned in the current ESF regulation (article 9) and this allows for both experimentation and mainstreaming of social innovation across ESF actions<sup>2</sup>. In this regard, transnational cooperation is acknowledged as a key tool in achieving this. In the next programming period, the new proposal on **ESF+** foresees support for social innovation both under direct and indirect management (article 13 on innovative actions; article 23 i. and article 24 on transnational cooperation).

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the contribution of ESF to social innovation in the current programming period, see *The ESF support to social innovation: final report - Study (2018)*.

To bring these objectives forward, managing authorities and stakeholders should build on existing tools, such as the good practice gathered under the **EQUAL programme**, including the **CoPIE diagnosis tool** for inclusive entrepreneurship. One of the lessons of Berlin was that to thrive, socially-innovative entrepreneurship needs an enabling ecosystem. This is precisely the objective of the joint **EC-OECD Tool for Better Entrepreneurship** which is designed to enable a more effective policy dialogue between institutions.

One of the key recommendations coming out of the two-day meeting is that it is essential to mainstream socially-innovative entrepreneurship across social economy policy and legislative initiatives at EU and Member State level. This will ensure the sustainability of initiatives beyond the start-up phase. Finally, initiatives in the field of socially-innovative entrepreneurship would be better supported by social protection systems if these were more apt at addressing variable income and the risk involved with these types of pioneering initiatives.



### Further information

For more information on the work carried out by the Employment TN:  
<https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/forums/employment>

## POLICY

# Creating synergies between **ESF** and **Erasmus+**

**Encouraging programme synergies between the European Social Fund (ESF) and Erasmus+<sup>1</sup> would lead to more efficiency and coherence and would secure greater impact for beneficiaries. Yet cooperation between the two programmes has, until now, rarely happened. To help the process, the Youth Employment and Learning and Skills Thematic Networks (TN) of the ESF Transnational Platform (ESF TP) recently organised the first ever joint meeting with Erasmus+ national authorities.**

**A**fter initial scepticism, most managing authorities are now warming to the idea of synergies between the ESF and Erasmus+ as they realise such collaborations could greatly benefit young people including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. There are, however, a number of operational and structural barriers that need to be overcome if this is to be achieved. The joint meeting in Barcelona which took place in March 2019 was organised to create a momentum ahead of the new programming period (2021-2027) to see how those synergies can be improved in future.

Currently the two programmes are rather distinct with separate target groups, administrative structures and regulations. An important obstacle to efficient synergies relates to the regulations and the extent to which the operationalisation of these synergies are centrally driven or left to the Member States. For example, it is easier when the two programmes are delivered by the same ministry or by ministries that work well together. While this is currently happening in Greece, Italy, Poland and Spain, this is not the case in other Member States.

## Examples of efficient collaborations in Lithuania, Poland and Spain

The event showcased three projects which have successfully combined ESF and Erasmus+ funds in the current programming period (2014-2020):

- In Lithuania, under the Erasmus+ National Agency's "Lithuanian higher education internationalisation development" project students can either go abroad to study at a partner university/higher education institution or do a traineeship/work placement. Over 4500



*The first ever joint meeting between ESF managing authorities and Erasmus+ national authorities in Barcelona*

students have taken part in this project that uses funds from both programmes.

- In Poland, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System combines ESF and Erasmus+ to support ten mobility projects aimed at different beneficiaries including education staff, higher and vocational education students. ESF funding is used to finance the mobility of students from a disadvantaged background.
- The Spanish city of Gijon combines ESF and Erasmus+ to provide disadvantaged young people with opportunities for international mobility. Their Youth Activation Model provides a comprehensive menu of support for young people (15-30) not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) which includes access to international experiences. The city's Second Chance School also has a pioneering technological ambassadors' programme with a mobility component.

<sup>1</sup> Erasmus+ is an EU programme supporting opportunities for education, training, young people and sport in Europe. It started as a student exchange programme in 1987, but since 2014 also offers opportunities for teachers, trainees and volunteers of all ages.

## Steps needed to build synergies on the ground

Participants at the joint meeting agreed that moving from a series of sporadic good practices to a more systemic and consistent model of cooperation will not happen automatically. A wide dissemination of good practices is needed along with clear political support. Political will is a prerequisite for systemic change and this is required at the EU, national and regional levels.

Suggestions of ways to build synergies on the ground have already been put forward and were discussed again at the meeting. At EU level, for example, a high level shared structure could be set-up to function as a permanent space for collaborating and exchanging on inter-programme synergy. Ideally, this would link into existing structures such as the ESF and Erasmus+ Committees (the two committees, consisting of government representatives and social partners, assist and advise the EC in overseeing the overall programming and implementation of Funds). In addition, incentives could be introduced to encourage and recognise collaboration between the programmes. Ideally, these should be in place from the start of the programming period in 2021.

At national level proactive measures could be introduced to encourage and promote operational synergy. As the examples from Poland and Lithuania show, this is possible in various ways.

A clear message came out of the joint meeting: one needs and should encourage a dialogue that can engage key players on different levels, including the regional one. As the Gijon case proved, city authorities can make creative use of both funds to add value to their activities – in this case to support marginalised young people.

## Technical support

Achieving operational synergy means overcoming the structural and procedural barriers. These are not insignificant. In most cases the two funds are managed quite separately with little convergence.

Three suggestions came out of the meeting to address this issue:

- establishing an EU-level working group to produce a set of shared procedures and common guidelines to support collaboration;
- launching a multi-media campaign gathering and sharing good practice cases; and
- ensuring dedicated staff are in place in the implementing bodies of both programmes – change agents with the role of creating dialogue and stimulating collaboration and identifying practical steps to reduce the potential administrative burden.

## Building a collaborative culture

Synergy on the ground between these two programmes would benefit hugely from the creation of a new collaborative culture between those managing the funds. The work led by the Transnational Platform has showed that not only is there an appetite for this amongst ESF Managing Authorities and Erasmus+ National Agencies but, despite the barriers, there is also scope for improved synergy on the ground. The time has now come to move from isolated cases to a more systemic framework that optimises the potential of both programmes, reaching out to more beneficiaries with real impact. Discussions on this topic will continue in a dedicated workshop during the ESF TP annual conference taking place in Brussels on 21-22 May. A paper on the synergies will be released in June.

## A survey on current synergies

Prior to the Barcelona meeting, members of the Youth Employment TN and the Learning and Skills TN were invited to complete a questionnaire on existing connections between ESF Managing Authorities and Erasmus national agencies. 17 representatives of the ESF managing authorities responded. The key findings were as follows:

- 53% of responding ESF managing authorities had no contact with their Erasmus+ equivalent. This underlines the fact that in many Member States, the two programmes are managed by different parts of the government machinery.
- 70.6% of respondents had no experience of combining the two programmes. At the other end of the scale, 17.6% reported a positive experience.

- The majority of respondents said there is scope for high levels of synergy between ESF and Erasmus+, however, current organisational structures do not assist this.
- 29.4% of respondents believe guidance on combining ESF and Erasmus+ would help build synergies. The same percentage believe that capacity-building events would contribute to increased synergies.
- The most prominent barriers were identified as being:
  - different procedures
  - different managing organisations
  - lack of experience in combining the programmes.

Exchanges with representatives of Erasmus+ national agencies during the meeting confirmed these responses.

## TOOLS

## Lessons learned from Transnational Cooperation

**A publication consolidating the lessons learned from transnational cooperation since 2015 is now available.**

Written by the ten Thematic Experts of the European Social Fund's Transnational Platform (ESF TP), Valentina Caimi, Team Leader of the ESF TP and Caroline Meyers of ESF Flanders, the publication illustrates some lessons learnt around five themes:

- ways of working tested by the Thematic Networks (including collaboration between different authorities);
- developing synergies between the ESF and other EU Funds or Programmes;
- stakeholder engagement;
- transfer of learning from transnational cooperation; and
- mainstreaming.

The five themes of this publication were chosen by the Thematic Experts during two seminars organised

in May and November 2018. Lessons from the mutual learning processes analysed in the publication are accompanied by case studies to show how the ESF TP facilitates such learning in practice.

The publication also addresses the barriers to transnational cooperation and shares some recommendations for boosting mutual learning in future. In the words of one representative of an intermediate body "Partnership is a key instrument of local or regional authorities; it should be also taken into account at EU level. High-quality partnerships are a significant factor in guaranteeing the effectiveness of cohesion policy. Despite the risks associated with the execution of partnership projects, they can yield many diverse benefits."

It will be published online soon. More information will be available in our next newsletter.



## New Technical dossier on Digital Skills

**The European Social Fund's Transnational Platform (ESF TP) has recently published its Technical Dossier 10 on Inspirational practices for tomorrow's inclusive digital world.**

Digitalisation is not only transforming the economy; it is transforming our society as a whole. The pace of change makes forecasts quickly out-of-date or near impossible. This raises the question whether digitalisation represents a threat or an opportunity. Many questions remain unanswered regarding the future of work, the future of skills, the future of the economy and, finally, the future of Europe. How can we ensure that we maximise the growth potential of the European digital economy, so that every citizen can enjoy its full benefit and no one is left behind? These are some of the issues addressed in the 36-page dossier, written by Armelle Ledan, the expert for the [Learning and Skills Thematic Network](#), with the help of the TN members.

The dossier presents the contribution of the Learning TN and Skills to the ambitious policies developed both at EU and national levels: building an inclusive, knowledge-based digital economy and society in Europe.

The Learning and Skills Network has enabled mutual learning since the beginning of 2016 and this dossier gathers examples of projects and programmes funded by the ESF that have been implemented in EU countries.

Each case study includes a short description, an outline of achievements, learning outcomes, and the potential for transferability.

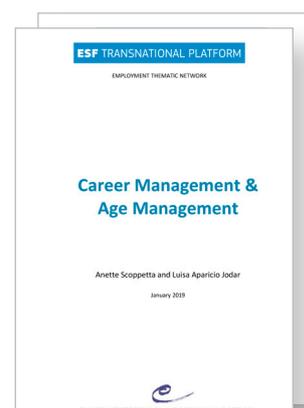
**Technical Dossier 10:** Inspirational practices for tomorrow's inclusive digital world will be available at the upcoming ESF TP conference. It is also available on the [website](#) of the Publications Office of the EU



## Two online papers on career management and labour market transition now available

**The EU is facing the double challenge of an ageing population and rapidly evolving labour markets. With her two new papers, Anette Scoppetta, the expert for the Employment Thematic Network (TN) addresses those key topics and provides recommendations for the future.**

The first paper Career Management and Age Management informs on career and age management practices currently implemented by ESF Managing Authorities and their partner organisations, draws recommendations for future action within the ESF, especially the ESF+ (2021-2027) and discusses concepts closely





linked to career and age management that should be taken into consideration when implementing practices.

The second paper **Future of Work: Labour Market Transitions in the Spotlight** summarises key trends regarding individual transitions that are especially due to digitalisation and automation processes.

It builds on desk research as well as inputs and discussions held during the meeting of the Employment Transnational Network that took place on 12-13 December 2018 in Brussels, Belgium.

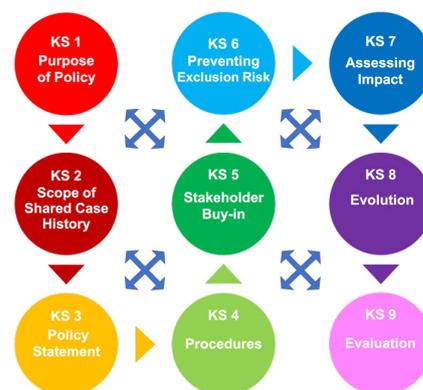
The two online papers are available here: <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/filedepot/folder/423>.

## The 9 Key Steps of the LTU project

The ESF project on tackling long-term unemployment, the LTU project, has been in operation since September 2017. Ahead of its [closing conference in June](#), the project has now published, on the website of the European Social Fund's Transnational Platform, a detailed description of its mission and achievements.

The LTU project was developed in the context of the ESF Transnational Platform's [Employment Thematic Network \(TN\)](#). Over its duration, it enabled learning exchanges between donor projects and recipient countries on good practices that can be tailored for different national contexts. The recipients developed pilot projects facilitating the use of ESF to combat LTU.

The [webpage](#) dedicated to the project introduces the 9 Key Steps (KS) necessary to establish a record system with a single customer view. The idea is to develop



a single view of a client's case history that can be shared among different actors, to ensure the continuity of services and individualised approaches. Beyond providing guidance for defining a LTU policy, the steps also help evaluating its impact.

By clicking on the Bubble Graph of the 9 KS, you will be directed to documents and presentations from best practice case studies as well as videos produced for the LTU Project with interviews of beneficiaries.

The Key Steps pages will be further updated with more videos, case studies and documents. If you want to be kept updated, please log in with your user account, and use the "Subscribe" function at the bottom of the webpage or of a particular KS page.

### Events diary

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 21-22 May 2019  | Annual ESF TP Conference, Brussels, Belgium     |
| 6-7 June 2019   | Simplification TN, Hamburg, Germany             |
| 13 June 2019    | Social Partners' peer review, Brussels          |
| 13-14 June 2019 | Social Economy TN, Warsaw, Poland               |
| 17-18 June 2019 | Inclusion TN, Brussels, Belgium                 |
| 25-26 June 2019 | Learning and Skills TN, Madrid, Spain           |
| 27 June 2019    | LTU Project Final Conference, Brussels, Belgium |

### Your feedback is welcome

We welcome your feedback on the content of this newsletter and would encourage you to contribute and suggest content. Please contact us at:

[esf@aeidl.eu](mailto:esf@aeidl.eu)

ESF TRANSNATIONAL PLATFORM

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