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European Funding Toolkit

for Social Enterprise Support
Organisations & Social Enterprises



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Euclid Network is the European Network for social enterprise and civil society support organisations. With our members and partners, we deliver events, peer exchanges and policy work for social entrepreneurs and civil society leaders. Euclid Network currently has 25 member organisations across 14 countries, federating over 8500 social enterprises and NGOs.

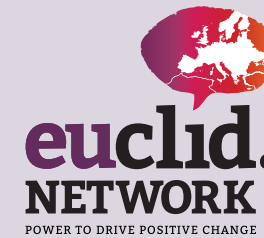


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Learn the latest skills, trends & challenges for social impact



SHARE

Share innovative ideas & practice with fellow changemakers



CONNECT

Connect with investors, researchers & public leaders



FIND

Find new partners for future EU-funded projects



Abbreviations

COSME

The EU programme for the Competitiveness of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

EaSI

European Union programme for Employment and Social Innovation

EC

European Commission

ESF

European Social Fund

EU

European Union

H2020

Horizon 2020

MFF

Multiannual Financial Framework

R&D

Research and Development

SME

Small and Medium-sized Enterprise

Content

Social enterprise in European policies 6

EU funding: the principles and the practice 8

Overview on EU funding instruments

EaSI..... 10

COSME 14

ESF..... 18

Interreg Europe 22

Erasmus+..... 26

LIFE..... 32

Horizon 2020..... 28

Accessing EU funds: Tips & Tricks 44

Glossary 46

Social enterprise in European policies

In 2017, there were 2.8 million social enterprises in the European Union (EU), employing some 19.1 million people, which accounts for 6.3% of the total paid workforce in Europe (EESC 2017).

Though not a new concept or practice, social entrepreneurship moved into the spotlight in the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis. Pioneers in fighting social exclusion, delivering high-quality welfare services and combating environmental issues, social enterprises have been identified by the European Commission (EC) as playing a key role in the EU's response to the crisis. Supporting entrepreneurs from all backgrounds and focusing on enhancing people's skills will help the EU to achieve its goal of 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth', as set out in the [Europe 2020 strategy](#).

In practice, social entrepreneurship and social finance fall under the responsibility of two Directorate-Generals (DGs) at the EC – DG Employment and DG Internal Market. However, the EC has been pushing this agenda through its other areas of work including research, regional cohesion and international development (see chart below).

The first comprehensive EU-level policy initiative for social entrepreneurship was the 2011 [Social Business Initiative \(SBI\)](#), presented as part of the [Responsible Business Package](#). The SBI contained an Action Plan to create a favourable ecosystem for social enterprises and focused on three priority areas: funding, visibility and legal environment. Within these three areas, the EC identified 11 priority measures, such as social investment funds, microcredit, a register of social enterprises, labels and certifications, public procurement and state aid.

Find your best fit!

	COSME	EaSI	Erasmus+	ESF	H2020	Intereg	Finance	LIFE
Sustainability						●		●
Employment		●	●	●				
Innovation	●	●			●			●
Entrepreneurship	●	●						
Skills			●	●				
Cross border cooperation			●		●	●		
Finance	●							

In 2016, the Expert Group published 13 recommendations for how policy-makers could support the development of social enterprises.

It was then decided that the SBI's priority areas should be supported by an Expert Group on Social Entrepreneurship & Social Economy (also known as [GECES](#)), which had a six-year mandate to set the direction for European policy development in this field. In 2016, the Expert Group published 13 recommendations for how policy-makers could support the development of social enterprises as part of the [European Action Plan for the Social Economy and Social Enterprises](#).

The Expert Group's mandate was renewed in October 2018 with a different structure (for details of the new Expert Group, see [here](#)). This group, known as [GECES II](#) and mandated until 2024, will give feedback to the EC on existing policies and instruments for the sector. Since the SBI, the EC has launched a wide range of initiatives providing financial and non-financial support to European social enterprises. The group will also actively support the development of all future European initiatives in favour of social entrepreneurship and social finance.



EU funding: the principles and the practice

The Europe 2020 Strategy sets out a plan to enhance growth and job creation in the EU over a 10-year period. It was the basis of the EU budget 2014-2020 and therefore of all EU funding streams and investment strategies presented in this guide.

European funding mechanisms may be managed in different ways: jointly by the European Commission and national authorities, directly by the European Commission, or indirectly by other authorities inside or outside the EU. About 80% of EU funding is jointly administered by the EC and national authorities – so, in most cases looking for EU funding begins with finding the relevant body in your country.

About 80% of EU funding is jointly administered by the EC and national authorities

The EC provides funding in various forms, including:



Grants

Given to organisations (and, occasionally, to individuals). Grants are awarded in many different fields, usually on the basis of project proposals submitted by applicants in response to calls for proposals. Calls are published regularly and seek to fulfil the overall objective of the relevant funding programme.



Financial instruments

Such as loans, guarantees and equity provided to businesses.



Cash prizes

For businesses as part of organised competitions, in which businesses often also benefit from free publicity and promotion.



Purchasing services

Works and goods from the market by inviting businesses to tender for public contracts.

Civil society organisations, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and public authorities are all encouraged to apply for EU funding: grants, loans and guarantees, as well as to bid for contracts (tenders) to provide goods and services. Non-governmental and civil society organisations are eligible to apply for EU funds where their areas of operation support EU policies. Public bodies (local, regional or national) can also apply for EU funding opportunities, including investment and financial assistance for building capacity, efficiency and local infrastructure.

In many cases the EC only finances a part of the project or programme. The EU contribution to a project or programme is referred to as the 'co-financing rate' and is expressed as a percentage of the total programme cost. This guide specifies the maximum co-financing rate per operational programme.

Disclaimer

This guide gives an overview of some of the European programmes that Euclid Network has identified as relevant for social enterprises, civil society organisations and their support structures. The guide does not seek to be exhaustive and other EU programmes are expected to be added in the near future. In May 2018, the EC presented a proposal for the new EU budget (or 'Multiannual Financial Framework') for 2021-2027. As of early 2019, negotiations on the budget are taking place and it will enter into force in 2021. In this guide, we have tried to reflect the potential changes that the new budget might prompt; however, this document is expected to be updated once the final MFF has been adopted.



The Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme

More information [here](#)



Theme Employment

Budget €919 million

Managed by EU/European Investment Fund

The Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme aims to promote a high level of quality employment, social protection and labour mobility across the EU.

The programme has a total budget of €919 million for 2014-2020, of which 21% is specifically dedicated to access to microfinance and social entrepreneurship.

The programme is managed directly by the European Commission's DG Employment.

What does it support?

The EaSI programme is made up of 3 axes:

- PROGRESS (Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity), which focuses on the modernisation of employment and social policies;
- EURES (European Employment Services), which focuses on job mobility;
- Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship, which focuses on access to micro-finance and social entrepreneurship.

In this guide, we zoom into the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship (MF/SE) axis of the EaSI programme. The MF/SE axis supports activities in two areas:

- Microcredit and microloans for vulnerable groups and micro-enterprises;
- Social entrepreneurship.



Good to know: One funding opportunity especially relevant for financial intermediaries is the EaSI Capacity Building Investments Window, which aims to build the institutional capacity of financial intermediaries that have not yet reached sustainability.

Who can participate?

In the MF/SE axis of the EaSI programme, the European Commission does not provide direct financial support to entrepreneurs or social enterprises, but enables selected microcredit providers and social enterprise investors in the EU to increase lending. Organisations that can apply for funding directly are:

- Public and private bodies providing microcredit for individuals and micro-enterprises;
- Public and private bodies financing social enterprises.

Eligible countries

EU Member States Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey.

How does it work?

The EaSI programme's MF/SE axis aims to promote investment and scale up the work of social enterprises and micro-enterprises. It offers funding through financial instruments which are managed by the European Investment Fund.



Financial instruments

Microcredit providers and social enterprise investors can access funding through the EaSI Guarantee, which enables them to lend to borrowers they would otherwise have avoided due to risk considerations. Guarantees and counter-guarantees provided by the European Investment Fund provide these financial intermediaries with a partial credit risk protection for first-time loans to eligible beneficiaries.

The end beneficiaries are social enterprises and micro-enterprises.

- Social enterprises can access debt financing products (such as loans, mezzanine loans, subordinated debts, leases and profit-sharing loans) of up to €500,000, if their annual turnover does not exceed €30 million.
- Micro-enterprises can access micro-loans of up to €25,000.

Social enterprises or micro-enterprises looking for debt finance can click [here](#) to find out which financial intermediaries offer debt financing products.

Who can I contact?

Microcredit providers and social enterprise investors should contact the European Investment Fund [directly](#). Social enterprises and micro-enterprises looking for a loan should address their questions to the relevant financial intermediary in this [list](#).

What's next for EASI?

For the next EU budget, the EC proposes to bring together the European Social Fund (see below) EaSI, the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), the Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) and the EU Health programme under the ESF+. This new and improved fund will have a budget of €101 billion. The [EC has proposed](#) that the EaSI guarantee becomes part of InvestEU.

Some inspiration

Developing skills inside prisons

Country Italy

Project name Neapolide Cooperativa Sociale

Focus areas Women in prisons / skills development / social inclusion

Financial intermediary Banca Etica

Financing purpose Purchasing equipment

An Italian cooperative wanted to create a coffee roaster inside women's prisons and run the whole production line from there on a circular economy model (using recyclable plastic packaging, avoiding capsules, and recycling coffee waste to make fertilizer).

This would respond to two challenges: adding value to local traditions, and helping prepare offenders to re-integrate into society. With the help of an EU-guaranteed loan from Banca Etica, the cooperative managed to set up a coffee bar, renovate the space and purchase the necessary machinery and furniture. The new bistro, which opened in September 2018, will create jobs for six women in prison plus three more people.

More
information
[here](#)

Increasing employability of vulnerable groups

Country Netherlands

Project name The Colour Kitchen

Focus areas Catering / social entrepreneurship

Financial intermediary Triodos Bank

Financing purpose Scaling-up, opening new restaurants; hiring staff

The Colour Kitchen Foundation is a chain of restaurants and in-house catering services that employs people from vulnerable groups of society (immigrants, ex-prisoners, people from troubled homes or with autism) under a multi-faceted training programme. Its main objective is to help people access the labour market. The company has four restaurants and 19 in-house catering sites across the Netherlands, all of which employ people that have difficulties in finding or keeping jobs.

More
information
[here](#)



Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME)

More information [here](#)



Theme Innovation / Entrepreneurship / Finance

Budget €2.3 billion

Managed by EASME / European Investment Fund



Good to know: Funding opportunities open to financial intermediaries are:

[COSME Loan Guarantee Facility](#)

[COSME Equity Facility for Growth](#)

COSME is the EU programme for Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs running from 2014 to 2020, with a budget of €2.3 billion.

The programme aims to promote entrepreneurship and improve the business environment in Europe, and is implemented by the European Commission’s DG GROW, through the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (EASME).

What does it support?

COSME’s funding falls into the following categories:

- Facilitating access to finance for SMEs;
- Supporting access to markets in the EU and beyond;
- Creating a competitive environment: strengthening education, mentoring, guidance and other support services. The programme supports specific groups such as young people, women and senior entrepreneurs. It also aims to help businesses access digital technologies;
- Encouraging an entrepreneurial culture by reducing the administrative and regulatory burden on SMEs and creating a business-friendly environment. COSME also supports businesses to be competitive by encouraging them to adopt new business models and innovative practices.

Who can participate?

COSME offers funding to:

- Civil society organisations (CSOs);
- SMEs;
- Local, regional, or national authorities;
- Educational institutions;
- Financial intermediaries (such as banks and venture capital organisations).

Eligible countries

EU Member States, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Iceland, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine.

Who can I contact?

All questions should be addressed to the office responsible for COSME.

What next for cosme?

For the next EU budget, the EC proposed to partly integrate COSME into the New Single Market programme that aims to promote the single market and competitiveness for enterprises, including SMEs, with a proposed budget of €4 billion. The New Single Market programme will combine six existing programmes plus numerous other actions to improve synergies, achieve better value for money and provide greater visibility of the single market. The non-financial instruments of COSME will be included in the New Single Market programme, whereas the financial instrument will be part of InvestEU.

How does it work?

In the case of COSME, the EC offers funding through tenders, grants and financial instruments.



Tenders

DG GROW invites organisations to tender for EU public contracts under COSME (to deliver works, supply or service contracts).

- **Frequency of calls for tender:** ongoing
- **Requirements:** depending on the call, sole applicants or consortia are eligible
- **Where to find the calls:** click [here](#)



Grants

DG GROW also gives organisations the opportunity to bid for some grants through calls for proposals. Funds are channelled through local, regional or national authorities, or through financial intermediaries such as banks and venture capital organisations (providing funding to start-ups). Direct aid is only available to projects that specifically contribute to the implementation of an EU programme or policy.

- **Frequency of calls for proposals:** ongoing
- **Requirements:** consortium-based
- **Where to find the calls:** click [here](#)



Financial instruments

SMEs or entrepreneurs looking for debt or equity finance can visit the Access to Finance portal to find out which financial intermediaries are working with COSME. (You can also find success stories about companies that have secured COSME-backed loans or equity.)



Grants: A special case: the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme

This is a cross-border programme promoting the exchange of entrepreneurial and management experience. The exchange sees a newly-established or potential entrepreneur visit another country to learn from an experienced entrepreneur running an SME; between 2014 and 2019, more than 2,500 pairs of entrepreneurs have taken part. Only coordinating organisations can respond to calls for proposals. Individual entrepreneurs who wish to participate in the programme should do so through the participating coordinating organisations. Learn more about Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs [here](#).

- **Frequency of calls:** every two years
- **Co-financing rate:** up to 90%
- **Consortia requirements:** minimum five partners from four different countries
- **Where to find the calls:** click [here](#)

Some inspiration

Migrant Entrepreneurship Growth Agenda

Countries France, Germany, Italy, Spain

Focus areas Support schemes for migrant entrepreneurship

Project name MEGA

Timeline 2020

Budget €415,000

EC contribution €374,000

The project will help cities, regions and national partners in Europe's major destination countries to initiate new policies, sustainable coalitions and long-term agendas to better support migrant entrepreneurship. Actions will include local/regional benchmarking and both national and cross-border activities, with outputs and learning open to organisations in other countries and at EU level. National coalitions will include cities leading in this field, cities newly engaged in the project and relevant local, regional and national stakeholders – including migrants and entrepreneurs themselves. Through networking, existing benchmarking tools and peer-to-peer mentoring, both national and local/regional opportunities and obstacles will be identified and addressed through policies, funding and partnerships.

More information [here](#)

An Erasmus for social entrepreneurs

Countries UK, France, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Croatia

Focus areas Entrepreneurial skills, on-the-job mentoring

Project name Social Entrepreneurs Exchange Development Plus (SEEDPlus)

Timeline 2017-2019 **Budget** €867,000

EC contribution €734,000

This project brings together aspiring and experienced social entrepreneurs to learn from each other (as part of the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme). The programme provides funding for would-be social entrepreneurs to spend 1-6 months in another European country collaborating with and job-shadowing an experienced social entrepreneur. For new entrepreneurs, this is a great opportunity to learn from the best and fine-tune their business case. For host entrepreneurs, the programme offers a unique chance to get a fresh perspective, gain access to international markets and help social enterprise grow in Europe.

More information [here](#)



EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND (ESF)

More information [here](#)



Grants

Theme Employment / Skills

Budget €120.4 billion

Managed by National agencies

The ESF is the EU’s main instrument for supporting job creation, helping people to get better jobs and creating fairer working opportunities for all EU citizens.

With a budget of €120.4 billion, it delivers targeted support for job creation, economic growth and social inclusion and aims to foster social innovation, as a way to meet social, educational and employment needs.

What does it support?

The ESF funds tens of thousands of local, regional and national employment-related projects throughout Europe: from small charity initiatives helping people with disabilities to find suitable work, to nationwide projects providing vocational training for everyone.

ESF’s priorities differ for each Member State. National governments agree on these priorities with the EC, for a period of seven years. The overarching priorities for 2014-2020 are:

- Boosting the adaptability of workers by teaching new skills, and supporting enterprises to adopt new ways of working;
- Improving access to employment by helping young people make the transition from school to work, and training less-skilled job-seekers to improve their job prospects;
- Helping people from disadvantaged groups to get jobs through vocational training and lifelong learning opportunities.



Good to know: Have a look at how ESF funding is spent in your country on this [new Open Data platform](#)

Who can participate?

The ESF offers funding to:

- Public administrations;
- Workers’ and employers’ organisations;
- NGOs;
- SMEs.

End beneficiaries of ESF projects are usually individuals (these include, for example, older workers being trained in new skills, young job-seekers on work placements, or people seeking advice on how to set up a business). In some cases, the ultimate aim of the funding is the development of a company or organisation – but only if the project will ultimately lead to job creation and skills development.

Eligible countries

EU Member States

How does it work?

The European Social Fund offers funding through grants. It is managed by the European Commission, which sets the overarching priorities of the programme, but is implemented by national and regional authorities. This means that funding is distributed to Member States and regions, who then publish calls for proposals and select grantees.

ESF activities are based on the 'operational programmes', agreed between each Member State and the EC, which set out the country's priorities and objectives for the seven-year programming period.



Grants

The ESF funds employment-related projects. Calls for proposals are published at national and/or regional level (according to the Member State's preference), tend to have a very broad scope and are open or a long period of time. ESF-funded projects can last for up to 36 months.

- **Frequency of calls:** decided at national/regional level (usually beginning of the year)
- **Average budget:** it varies per country and per call
- **Co-financing rate:** varies according to the wealth of the region – between 50% and 85% (95% in exceptional cases)
- **Where to find the calls:** see ESF Managing [Authority in your country](#)

Finding partners and best practice projects

- Find [national projects](#)
- Find the [operational programme](#) for your country

Who can I contact?

ESF funding is available through the Member States and regions. The ESF does not fund projects directly from Brussels. Interested organisations/individuals should contact the ESF Managing Authority in their country or region (see [here](#) for the list).

What next for ESF?

For the next EU budget (2021-2027), the EC proposes to further strengthen the EU's social dimension with a new and improved ESF, the [European Social Fund Plus \(ESF+\)](#). The European Commission has proposed a total budget of [€101 billion, of which €761 million](#) which will be directed towards employment and social innovation (including social entrepreneurship).

Some inspiration

Fostering employment through social enterprise cooperation

Country Belgium
Beneficiary Job&Co
Focus area Access to employment
Project name Work is the key
Total budget €1,7 million
ESF contribution €675,000

Work is key to social integration, believes Job&Co, a Flemish organisation which combines the expertise of three social enterprises that promote access to employment. With ESF funding, Job&Co targets people facing particular difficulties in getting work, such as the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities and immigrants. Job&Co believes that once someone is in a stable job they can usually get by without help, both in work and in their personal life.

More information [here](#)

Combining training and work to develop skills and employability

Country France
Beneficiary AGEFOS-PME
Focus area Access to jobs for women
Project name Female job seekers struggling to access jobs
Total budget €29,950
ESF contribution €15,600

This year-long project, part-funded by ESF, gave participants the opportunity to receive a salary while completing a training course on customer services. The project had an excellent success rate: nine women were involved in the programme over the period of a year and all found a job at the end of the training period.

More information [here](#)



INTERREG EUROPE

More information [here](#)



Grants

Theme Cross border cooperation

Budget €359 million

Managed by National agencies

Interreg Europe supports regional and local authorities across Europe to share ideas, best practices and experience on public policy, helping them improve strategies for job growth and local development.

€359 million has been allocated to Interreg's budget for 2014-2020.

What does it support?

Interreg is one of the EU's key instruments that supports cooperation across borders. It seeks to jointly tackle common challenges and find shared solutions in various fields.

To secure financial support from Interreg Europe, projects must fall into one of the following categories:

- Research and innovation;
- SME competitiveness;
- Low-carbon economy;
- Environment and resource efficiency.



Good to know: Interreg Europe is part of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) addressing the main regional imbalances in the EU. More [here](#)

Who can participate?

Interreg Europe offers funding to:

- Public authorities (local, regional and national);
- Managing authorities/intermediaries
- Agencies, research institutes, thematic and non-profit organisations (although not the main target group, these types of organisations can work with their local policy-makers to identify options for collaboration with Interreg Europe).

Eligible countries

EU Member States, Switzerland, Norway.

How does it work?

The EC Interreg programme offers funding through grants.



Grants

Interreg finances two types of action: interregional cooperation projects and the Policy Learning Platform. Each of these has different eligible countries and different deadlines for applying. Calls for proposals are published by Interreg every year.

Interregional cooperation projects are partnerships between policy organisations from different countries in Europe, who work together for 3-5 years to exchange experiences on a particular policy issue. Each region involved in the cooperation project produces an action plan, specifying what will be done in the region to ensure that lessons learned are put into action. Project participants are also required to monitor the progress of their action plans. Calls for project proposals are launched throughout the programming period.

The Policy Learning Platform is an online space for continuous learning, where any organisation dealing with regional development policies in Europe can find solutions and request expert support to improve the way they manage and implement their public policies in the four Interreg topics listed above.

- **Frequency of calls:** once a year
- **Average total budget of projects:** €1-2 million
- **Co-financing rate:** up to 85%
- **Consortia requirements:** at least three countries represented, at least two EU Member States
- **Where to find the calls:** click [here](#)

Finding potential partners and best practice projects

Those interested can join the Interreg Europe community to connect with potential project partners.

You can also use the community to search for partners for your project idea, or to find ideas (have a look at the [project idea and partner search page](#)). The recently approved projects might also offer some inspiration.

Who can I contact?

[Interreg Europe Contact points](#) are based in all EU Member States, Switzerland and Norway.

What next for Interreg?

For the next long-term EU budget, the EC proposed radical changes to interregional cooperation. In the new proposal Interreg Europe would be discontinued. Instead, the EC has proposed to integrate interregional cooperation into the [Investment for Jobs and Growth Goal programme](#).

Some inspiration

SOCENT SPAs: social entrepreneurs' empowerment in sparsely populated areas

Project name SOCENT SPAs

Countries Finland, Germany, Slovakia, Spain

Focus area SME competitiveness (social entrepreneurs)

Timeline 01.2017 – 07.2021

Total budget €1 million

Interreg contribution €830,000

SOCENT SPAs is fostering interregional cooperation among six public and private entities in Finland, Germany, Slovakia and Spain with the aim of supporting the visibility, incubation and acceleration of social entrepreneurs in sparsely populated areas (SPAs). In the region of Castile and León (Spain) for example, the objective was specifically to support social entrepreneurs to develop skills and to scale up their business.

The project highlights the importance of putting a comprehensive integration and acceleration programme in place for social entrepreneurs who are developing projects in SPAs. It has also underlined the need for a dedicated programme of grants and guarantees to provide the funds to start, grow, or diversify businesses in order to foster economic growth, create employment and help alleviate the problems caused by depopulation.

More information [here](#)

Social enterprises as drivers of social inclusion and work integration in Central Europe

Project name SENTINEL

Total budget €2,100,000

Timeline 06/2017 – 06/2020

Interreg contribution €1,952,000

Countries Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Italy, Germany

Focus area Social entrepreneurship development in central Europe

SENTINEL is developing and testing tools and methods for helping social enterprises in the region. The main objective is to help these enterprises to be real drivers of social inclusion and work integration in central Europe. The partnership is testing new operating models and mentoring services designed to strengthen social enterprises in less developed regions. At the same time innovative methods are being developed to facilitate networking and cooperation among these organisations.

More information [here](#)



Theme Employment / Skills / Cross border cooperation

Budget €14.7 billion

Managed by Executive Agency EACEA / National agencies

Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. It provides studying, training and volunteering opportunities to over 4 million Europeans through a budget of €14.7 billion for the period 2014-2020.

The European Commission's DG Education and Culture is responsible for running this programme.

What does it support?

The Erasmus+ programme is made up of three key actions:

- **Key Action 1:** Mobility of Individuals. This is about providing opportunities for individuals to improve their skills, enhance their employability and gain cultural awareness.
- **Key Action 2:** Cooperation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices. This is about enabling organisations to work together in order to improve their provision for learners and share innovative practices.
- **Key Action 3:** Support for Policy Reform: This covers any activity helping to modernise education and training systems.



Good to know: The European Commission has recently established the 'European Solidarity Corps' which financially supports volunteering, traineeships and jobs and solidarity projects. [Click here for more.](#)

Who can participate?

Erasmus+ is open to individuals and organisations:

- **Individuals** can apply for funding from Erasmus+ Key Action 1 (although will have to apply through a participating organisation).
- **Organisations**, SMEs and local businesses can apply for funding from Erasmus+ Key Actions 1, 2 and 3, although eligibility varies from one action to another and from one country to another.

Eligible countries

EU Member States, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey, and [partner countries](#). Eligible countries are divided into two groups: programme countries and partner countries. More information on eligibility [here](#).

The eligibility of individuals and organisations depends on the country in which they are based.

How does it work?

The Erasmus+ programme offers funding to organisations through calls for tenders and grants.

While the European Commission manages Erasmus+, it does not implement the programme directly. The [Education, Audiovisual, and Culture Executive Agency \(EACEA\)](#) is responsible for Erasmus+ implementation at European level, while at the national level this is done by national agencies in programme countries, and national offices in some partner countries (list available [here](#)). Organisations should submit applications online to the [National Agency](#) in the relevant country, via the [Erasmus+ forms website](#), or to the [Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency](#).

Individuals seeking Erasmus+ funding should apply through an organisation, institution, or educational establishment.



Grants

General and specific calls for proposals are published by the European Commission or by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. Every year an [annual work programme](#) is published which outlines the priorities for that year.

Under Key Action 1 organisations can apply for funding to run exchange projects between:

- Vocational training students and apprentices;
- Young people taking part in youth exchanges and volunteering;
- Teachers, youth trainers and other staff.

Under Key Action 2 organisations can apply for funding to partner and exchange good practices with organisations from other countries.

Under Key Action 3, the Erasmus+ programme funds strategic activities supporting policy reform across the EU in education, training and youth.

- **Frequency of calls:** ongoing
- **Co-financing rate key action 1:** up to 80%
- **Co-financing rate key actions 2 and 3:** up to 100%
- **Consortia requirements:** depending on the call, sole applicants or consortia are eligible
- **Where to find the calls:** click [here](#)



Calls for tender

The Erasmus+ programme also includes actions implemented via calls for tender, or through works, supply or service contracts.

- **Frequency of the calls:** ongoing
- **Requirement:** depending on the call, sole applicants or consortia are eligible
- **Where to find the calls:** Click [here](#).

Who can I contact?

The Erasmus+ programme is implemented by the [Education, Audiovisual, and Culture Executive Agency \(EACEA\)](#), by national agencies in programme countries, and by national offices in some partner countries (list available [here](#)).

Outside the EU, in partner countries participating in Erasmus+ in the area of higher education, most of the work of the national agencies is carried out by [National Erasmus+ Offices](#).



Finding potential partners

To find potential partners to team up with for Erasmus+ projects, check EPALÉ, the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe. EPALÉ exists in multiple languages and is a community for teachers, trainers, researchers, academics, policy makers and anyone else with a professional role in adult learning across Europe. Click [here](#). Communities of practice are available [here](#).

What next for ERASMUS+?

For the next EU budget (2021-2027), the EC proposes doubling the current budget of Erasmus+ to €30 billion. The new Erasmus programme will contribute towards setting up a European Education Area by 2025 where, increasingly, participants will spend time studying in another EU country. This will consolidate people's understanding of common values across the EU and what it means to have a European identity. The new programme proposal focuses specifically on:

- Lifelong learning;
- Language learning;
- Digital skills;
- new knowledge and competences for the future, such as data analysis, robotics, artificial intelligence and climate change.

Some inspiration

Social entrepreneurship as a tool for innovation

Project name Social entrepreneurship as a tool for innovation
Countries UK, Russian Federation, Moldova, Latvia, Spain and Poland
Focus area Key Action 1 Youth & social entrepreneurship
Timeline 08.2017 – 03.2018

This project's main objective is to teach participants what social entrepreneurship is and why it's so important. The training course will support participants to reflect on youth unemployment in Europe and how this ties in with social exclusion, discrimination and xenophobia. Most importantly, the course will challenge participants' creativity, empower them and develop their own social entrepreneurship skills.

More
information
[here](#)

Strengthening entrepreneurial leadership in the third sector

Project name EU3Leader
Countries UK, Spain, Belgium, Austria, Croatia
Focus areas Key Action 2: Entrepreneurial leadership
Budget €375,000
EC contribution €375,000
Timeline 12.2016 – 05.2019

The objective of EU3Leader is to strengthen leadership and entrepreneurship capacities in the third sector, so that organisations are better able to drive positive change. Working with leaders, trainers and researchers across Europe, the project is developing a framework of competences for leaders in the third sector. Focusing on a range of competences such as entrepreneurialism, advocacy, social innovation and impact evaluation, EU3Leader is the first Europe-wide initiative for improving leadership in the third sector.

More
information
[here](#)



LIFE

More information [here](#)



Theme Sustainability / Innovation

Budget €3.5 billion

Managed by EU/European Investment Bank

The LIFE programme provides financial assistance to organisations working on environmental issues and climate action. The main objective of the programme is to support the implementation, updating and development of EU environment and climate policy and legislation by financing projects with European added value in this area. The current LIFE programme has €3.5 billion of available funding for 2014-2020.

DG Climate Action and DG Environment from the European Commission manage the LIFE programme.

What does it support?

The LIFE programme supports small-scale projects that aim to share best practices, test small-scale technologies and speed up the implementation of relevant EU legislation and policy.

Environment strand

The Environment strand of the programme covers three priority areas:

- Environment and resource efficiency;
- Nature and biodiversity;
- Environmental governance and information.



Good to know: One funding opportunity especially relevant for financial intermediaries is the [Private Finance for Energy Efficiency \(PFEE\) Instrument](#) which aims to address the limited access to adequate and affordable commercial financing for energy efficiency investments.

Climate Action

The Climate Action strand covers:

- Climate change mitigation;
- Climate change adaptation;
- Climate governance and information.

The LIFE programme supports Europe's transition away from a linear economic model, towards a circular economy (which ensures that goods are recycled instead of going to landfill). LIFE projects are known for enabling collaboration between diverse stakeholders. This is important for all environment projects, but it is fundamental when developing a circular economy since the creation of 'closed-loop' economies and markets relies on public and private organisations working together.

How does it work?

The LIFE programme offers funding to organisations through grants and financial instruments.

The European Commission has delegated the implementation of many components of the LIFE Programme to the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME). The European Investment Bank manages the financial instruments of the LIFE programme.



Grants

Calls for proposals are published by the European Commission or by EASME based on the [Multiannual Work Programme](#) of the LIFE programme.

- **Frequency of calls:** yearly (businesses can apply for LIFE funding every 12 months)
- **Average total budget of projects:** LIFE has previously co-funded several ambitious projects with total costs exceeding €5 million. Proposals for small projects, on the other hand, with total costs below €500,000, have rarely been selected due to limited output and consequently low added value
- **Co-financing rate:** up to 55% of total eligible project costs
- **Consortia requirements:** very flexible – run a project on your own, or join forces with partners from your own country or another country
- **Where to find the calls:** click [here](#).



Financial instruments (LIFE+)

LIFE funding also aims to promote investment and scale up the work of small businesses. The European Investment Bank manages the financial instruments of the LIFE programme.

The Natural Capital Financing Facility (NCF) instrument:

Halting the loss of biodiversity and adapting to climate change requires increasing investment in natural capital. The Natural Capital Financing Facility (NCF) is a financial instrument that supports projects delivering on biodiversity and climate adaptation through tailored loans and investments, backed by an EU guarantee.

- Click [here](#) to contact the European Investment Bank about your eligibility for these loans.

Who can participate?

Any legal entities or persons in the EU can submit a proposal for LIFE funding and become what is referred to as a 'coordinating beneficiary'. These are often:

- SMEs;
- Public bodies;
- Non-commercial organisations.

Eligible countries

EU Member States. In exceptional cases, the LIFE programme can also finance activities outside the EU and in overseas countries and territories. Such projects need to fulfil two conditions:

- The project leader ("coordinating beneficiary") must be based in the EU.
- Applicants must prove that the activities that will be carried out outside the EU are necessary to achieve EU environmental or climate objectives. They must provide strong qualitative and quantitative evidence that interventions in EU countries would not be effective or successful unless actions are also carried out in non-EU countries.

Who can I contact?

Member States have set up a network of Life National Contact Points (NCPs, [see list](#)). NCPs can provide support to applicants during the preparation and submission phase. Note that certain NCPs have set dates to contact them.

Finding partners and best practice projects

The [Research and Innovation Participant Portal](#) allows you to find partners for your project ideas among the organisations that have already participated in past EU projects.

Best practice projects can be found [here](#).

What next for LIFE?

For the EU 2021-2027 budget, the EC proposes an enhanced LIFE programme that contributes to the shift towards a clean, energy efficient, circular and climate-resilient economy. This aims to protect and improve the quality of the environment, and halt and reverse biodiversity loss. The EC proposes to increase the budget and allocate €5.45 billion to the new programme.



Some inspiration

Producing beer more sustainably

Country Spain

Focus area Circular economy

Project name LIFE-Brewery

Project budget €1,550,000

EC contribution €875,000

Timeline 09.2017-12.2020

More
information
[here](#)

The LIFE-Brewery is reusing beer waste to reduce the little-known environmental impacts of brewing. The LIFE project shows the contribution brewing can make to the circular economy by using by-products of the brewing process in the production of food, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and animal feed. Around 70% of the largest waste stream, brewer's spent grain (BSG), is already used as animal feed, but due to its high moisture content and microbial load, it has a shelf life of less than 48 hours. The project is thus developing low-moisture meal prototypes for this waste, along with brewer's yeast, through the application of an innovative drying process that achieves the desired moisture content of less than 10%.

Improving waste management

Country Finland

Focus areas Circular economy

Project name CIRCWASTE:

An Integrated Project for Finland

Project budget €18,500,000

EC contribution €11,100,000

Timeline 2016-2023

More
information
[here](#)

The aim of CIRCWASTE in Finland is to implement the Finnish National Waste Plan (NWP), by providing new waste management practices, and by enhancing capacity building and cooperation to prevent waste, keep materials circulating in the economy for longer and encourage the reuse of by-products. CIRCWASTE in Finland also takes into consideration the wider impact of the waste management sector, for example, by encouraging the industry to adopt green procurement. The project focuses on five regions of Finland. By covering both urban environments and sparsely-populated rural areas, this LIFE Integrated Project is able to serve as a model for other parts of the country and other regions in the EU.



HORIZON 2020

More information [here](#)



Grants

Theme Innovation / Cross border cooperation

Budget €80 billion

Managed by EU

Horizon 2020 (H2020) is the biggest EU research and innovation programme ever, with nearly €80 billion of funding available for 2014-2020. It aims to ensure that Europe produces world-class science, to remove barriers to innovation and to make it easier for the public and private sectors to innovate together.

What does it support?

The H2020 programme has three focus areas:

Excellent science

This area focuses on raising the level of excellence in Europe's science base by:

- Supporting the best ideas;
- Developing European talent;
- Providing researchers with access to a research infrastructure.

Industrial leadership

This area stimulates the growth potential of European companies by:

- Offering access to risk finance;
- Encouraging private investment in research and development;
- Offering support for innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).



Societal challenges

This area aims to tackle the biggest challenges facing modern society. It reflects the policy priorities of the EC and covers all stages of research and innovation, from concept to market.

One project of H2020, the European Innovation Council pilot (EIC pilot), aims to support top-class innovators, start-ups, small companies and researchers with bright ideas that are radically different from existing products, services or business models, are highly risky and have the potential to scale up internationally. The EIC pilot offers €2.7 billion in funding for the period 2018-2020. This funding is via:

- The [SME Instrument](#);
- The [Fast Track to Innovation](#) (FTI);
- [Future and Emerging Technologies](#) (FET) [Open](#) and the [Horizon Prizes](#);

Good to know: The European Commission recently launched the European Innovation Council (EIC) pilot. The EIC pilot supports top-class innovators, entrepreneurs, small companies and scientists with innovative ideas and the desire to scale them up internationally. More info [here](#).

How does it work?

H2020 programmes provide funding for consortia of organisations through grants. The European Commission manages H2020 directly.



Grants

The H2020 offers an open, simple structure for accessing funding, aiming to remove barriers to collaborative innovation and get new projects off the ground. Funding opportunities are set out in [multiannual work programmes](#), which cover the large majority of support available.

Consortia requirements: Most funding is allocated to collaborative research projects carried out by consortia of at least three organisations. However, there are a number of opportunities available for projects run by just one organisation:

European Research Council (ERC)

research grants: supports frontier research by individual researchers and teams.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie grants: supports researcher mobility. Besides accessing funding for research, scientists can gain experience abroad and in the private sector, building competencies useful for their careers.

SME instrument: financially supports both individual SMEs and SME groups that have ambitions to turn strong, innovative business ideas into market leaders.

- **Frequency of the calls:** ongoing
- **Co-financing rate for research and development projects,** the EU may contribute up to 100% of total eligible costs
- **Co-financing rate for innovation projects,** the maximum contribution is up to 70% of costs (where the applicant is a non-profit legal entity it can receive up to 100%)
- **Where to find the calls:** click [here](#)

Who can participate?

Any natural or legal persons can participate, including:

- Companies of any size;
- Research organisations;
- Universities;
- NGOs.

Eligible countries

Horizon 2020 is open to participation from across the world, meaning that (except where this is explicitly excluded) European researchers can cooperate with their counterparts in third countries on any topic of their choice. This does not automatically imply that entities from third countries are eligible for funding under the H2020 budget. To check whether an entity from a particular third country is eligible, see the Annex on General Conditions of the Horizon 2020 work programme.

Who can I contact?

The network of [National Contact Points \(NCPs\)](#) provides guidance, practical information and assistance on participating in Horizon 2020. There are also NCPs in many non-EU and non-associated countries ('third countries').

What next for h2020?

'Horizon Europe' is the EC's proposal for a research and innovation funding programme for 2020 and beyond. With a budget of €100 billion it aims to strengthen the EU's scientific and technological bases, boost Europe's innovation capacity, competitiveness and jobs, and sustain Europe's socio-economic model and values.

Horizon Europe will be divided into three pillars:

- 1. Open Science** aims to reinforce and extend the excellence of the EU's science base.
- 2. Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness** aims to boost key technologies and solutions that underpin EU policies and the Sustainable Development Goals. It will cover five (cross-disciplinary) areas: health, inclusive and secure society, digital and industry, climate, energy and mobility; and food and natural resources.
- 3. Open Innovation** aims to stimulate new innovative business ideas.



Some inspiration

More
information
[here](#)

Accelerating the future of AgriFood

Countries Germany (coordinator), Denmark, Netherlands, Spain, Serbia, Greece, Italy & UK

Focus area Agrifood innovation

Project name KATANA

Timeline 2016-2019

Total cost € 5,440,000

H2020 contribution € 4,590,000

The EU-funded KATANA project has supported the set-up of new European tech-based agrifood products and services and has helped to ensure their ongoing success. Acting as a business accelerator, KATANA has provided selected SMEs and start-ups with grants, training, support, and opportunities to develop ideas and create new products or services. It has brought farmers, food producers and technologists together to create consortia that have addressed pressing needs in agrifood, ICT and emerging industries such as eco-industries, mobile services and personalised health. Throughout the project, KATANA will distribute an additional €1.2 million to European start-ups and SMEs.

More
information
[here](#)

Innovative Social Investment (InnoSI)

Countries UK, Poland, Greece, Finland, Spain, Netherlands, Italy & Sweden

Focus area Social investment

Project name InnoSI

Timeline 2015-2017

Total cost €2,376,000

H2020 contribution €2,376,000

The EU funded InnoSI project identified innovative approaches to social investment at national and regional levels across the 28 Member States. An in-depth case study evaluation of 10 Member States allowed the researchers to map best practices; special attention was paid to the legal and regulatory frameworks required for innovation in social welfare policy. Through evidence-based research and tested practices, InnoSI has presented a case to policy-makers at all levels for investment in social welfare.

Accessing EU funds: Tips & Tricks

Define your fundraising strategy based on the mission and needs of your organisation

If raising public funds (including EU funds) fits into your fundraising strategy, make sure that the projects you commit to are relevant to your interests, cause, membership or beneficiaries in the first place. The projects should also be a good fit with strategic priorities for a given period. Do not favour potential financial resources over your mission! A good way to start is with a SWOT and a risk analysis of your own organisation.

Be clear on your available human resources

EU projects can be highly time-consuming and require staff dedicated to the project for management, drafting and reviewing reports and articles, dissemination, financial management and so on. Make sure to discuss available resources and other funding possibilities thoroughly within your organisation, with potential partners, and where possible, with funders, before committing to an EU-funded opportunity.

Summarise your current financial situation including all your sources of income

The EC will want to see proof of financial capacity, so make sure your own resources are sufficient to guarantee the pre-financing of the project. EU project funds are not always paid out regularly or as expected, and sometimes, part of the money is only provided after the end of the project.

When writing your application, pay particular attention to eligible and non-eligible costs.

Gradually build up your network

Build strong relations with European networks in your sector and with organisations across Europe that are relevant to you. By collaborating on occasional activities (e.g. events, volunteering, field visits) on a regular basis and not only on specific projects, you'll develop trusting relationships and a good understanding of each other. This helps to raise your visibility. Use your networking skills to build relations across a wide range of organisations, including academia, EU institutions, etc. As your activities develop, your credibility and capability to shape and lead projects grows, putting you in an even better position to lead a consortium or partner with others. Thus advancing your cause.

Define your main selling point as a project partner and do not commit to more than you can deliver

Define the strengths of your organisation and apply them to project proposals. Do not over-promise in the proposal phase, or you may have problems delivering when the project starts.

Dare to take the initiative

Dare to take a leading role in the design and implementation of a project – don't underestimate the knowledge and skills

you can bring. Being close to a particular social or environmental issue, you have good knowledge about the needs and gaps in your area of work. However, do make sure that you are partnering with the right (number of) partners, that you've got the geographic representation requested and that all partners are eligible legal entities.

Plan ahead

Writing project proposals and collecting all necessary documents can take a long time. Bear in mind that proposal writing often takes place a year before the project is implemented.

Manage expectations

Be mindful that the success rates of applying to some funding streams are very low; you will need to manage expectations.

Keep your EU radar on

Attend EU funding events and workshops. Sign up for relevant newsletters and keep an eye out for relevant calls.

Good to know: Your organisation can apply only if it has existed for at least three years

Useful links

General

- [Toolkit on European Funding and Project Management](#)

Programme-specific

- [Toolkit to manage EFS projects](#)
- [Toolkit on the Use of EU Funds for the Integration of People with a Migrant Background](#)
- [Programme manual for Interreg projects](#)

Existing platforms and online communities

- [Eucalls.net](#)
- [Vision2020](#)
- [F6s.com](#)

Glossary

Operational Programme

Exists for Erasmus+ and Cohesion Funds. Sets the overall rules, guidelines and orientations of all the streams of funding within a given programme.

Grant

Direct financial contributions in support of projects or organisations which further the interests of the EU or contribute to the implementation of an EU programme or policy. (You receive a grant after having responded to a call for proposals).

Tender

Public contracts to buy goods and services - studies, technical assistance and training; consultancy, conference and publicity services; books and IT equipment etc. (You are awarded a tender after having responded to a call for tender).

FPA

Framework Partnership Agreement - Implementation strategy, longer (usually between four and six years).

SGA Specific Grant Agreement

Description of the action (=project) (usually between 18 and 36 months).

The Action

Synonym for 'the project'.

DoA or DoW

Description of the Action/of the Work – the 'bible' of each project, the description of all activities and who does what.

Milestone

Key step within the project – sometimes appears in the DoW (used to evaluate the progress of a project)/

WorkStream / Work Package / Intellectual output

DoAs (DoWs) are divided into WS/WP/IO which are chunks of the project comprising sets of activities.

Workpackage leader

Project partner that coordinates the work of others on the WP/WS/IP.

Deliverable

Concrete output of a project: it can be a report, an event, a website, a publication, etc.

Programmation (seven years)

EU funding streams are implemented through a multiannual financial framework of seven years (currently 2014-2020).

Co-financing/co-funding

The EC rarely funds 100% of a project; rather, it co-funds a portion of the project, which varies according to the calls.

Project officer (PO)

Your designated EC civil servant in charge of overseeing your project's implementation and reporting.

Progress report

Narrative report that sums up progress of activities implemented within a project.

Interim report

Project report to be delivered half-way through the project (can be narrative only, or with a financial report).

Final report

Final overall report on an action; includes both narrative report and financial claim (=financial statement).

Maximum EU Grant

this is what the EC has agreed to give you for the project (if fully accomplished/ full performance or equivalent).

Person Months (Person Days, Person Hours)

Unit used by the EC to report on staff time spent on a project.