



# The European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027

## *Funding Opportunities for Libraries*

A Paper preliminary to the *“First European Report on Sustainable Development Goals and its Implementation in European Libraries”*

(Draft, May 2020)

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## Foreword

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The Paper “European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027” is the second in the series of reports to be released by the EBLIDA European Sustainability House. EBLIDA has already published the report “a European Library Agenda for the Post-Covid 19 Age”, which was based on the profiles of library situations in 17 countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. The Paper on the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2021-2027 is, at the same time, a companion to the Post-Covid 19 Report and opens up to the “Sustainable Development Goals and Libraries: First European Report”, which will be published next. The magnitude of the Covid-19 crisis and its potential impact on library activities will be so great that the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2021-2027 may provide for a solution for strained library budgets in 2021, and beyond. European libraries have to broaden the scope of their activities and the 2030 Agenda is a possible framework for an extended concept of the library.

The ESIF Paper is particularly timely, since partnership agreements between the European Commission and Member States are being signed in the second half of 2020, in spite of delays due to the persistence of the Covid-19 crisis and belated discussions on the European Commission final budget. Managers willing to use ESI Funds should now contact ESIF authorities in each state in order to make the case for libraries and future library developments which may be compliant with ESIF’s main objectives.

EBLIDA action on ESIF 2021-2027 will not come to an end after the publication of this Paper. With a view to offering support for libraries and library associations throughout their difficult journey in the post-Covid 19 age, EBLIDA will offer consultancy services to its members in order to gain a better understanding of ESI Funds and how they can align with the library’s missions, in particular if linked with the European 2030 Agenda on sustainable development.

*Ton van Vlimmeren, President EBLIDA*

## 0. Executive summary

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The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) conjure up ideas of a Europe based on hard infrastructure: railway corridors, motorways, broadband wirelines and subsidies to farmers, to name but a few. In the ESIF overall objective to shape a more cohesive Europe, however, the cultural dimension is not excluded from ESIF and a large amount of money is devoted to the improvement of cultural infrastructure. Library projects and policies are often funded in a “hidden” form through ESIF operational programmes which apparently do not seem to be at the core of library missions. The aim of this Paper is to help European libraries raise additional funding for their activities and support them in coping with the new library “normals” emerging after the Covid 19 crisis. EBLIDA will be opening a temporary consultancy service on how to link ESIF to the Agenda 2030, how to apply ESIF in libraries and to accelerate library recovery after the Covid 19 crisis.

In the ESI Funds, several notions of culture are identified and promoted. In addition to the anthropological meaning of culture - a set of attitudes, beliefs, customs, values and practices commonly shared by a (political, geographical, religious, ethnic) group - the ESI Funds seem to address two precise domains of cultural policies. The first concerns cultural content and the creative industries. The second is related to the instrumental role of culture in urban regeneration, landscape attractiveness, tourism, entrepreneurship, economic development, social integration and innovation. The role of the social library is particularly emphasised within the ESIF framework with activities that promote a self-aware and fully employed citizenry and the development of a democratic and sustainable society.

ESI Funds 2021-2027 set out common provisions for seven shared management funds at EU level:

- CF: Cohesion Fund
- EMFF: European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
- ERDF: European Regional Development Fund
- ESF+: European Social Fund Plus
- AMIF: Asylum and Migration Fund
- ISF: Internal Security Fund
- BMVI: Border Management and Visa Instrument

Among the seven Funds, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) are those where libraries can find the most attractive funding opportunities. The majority of ERDF funding (65 % to 85 %) is focussed on smart growth and the green economy, but also supports other activities such as connectivity, social issues and local development. The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) is the main financial instrument to strengthen Europe’s social dimension.

Five main objectives (also designated as PO, Policy Objectives) determine the development of ESI Funds in 2021-2027:

- **A smarter Europe**, through innovation, digitisation, economic transformation and support to small and medium-sized businesses (PO 1);
- **A greener, carbon free Europe**, implementing the Paris Agreement and investing in energy transition, renewables and the fight against climate change (PO 2);
- **A more connected Europe**, with strategic transport and digital networks (PO 3);
- **A more social Europe**, delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare (PO 4);
- **A Europe closer to citizens**, by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU (PO 5).

There is practically no sector nor geographic area which is not covered by ESIF 2021-2027 with differences from fund to fund. For instance, ERDF POs support twenty-one specific objectives and particularly relevant for libraries are the ERDF specific objectives included in PO 4 and 5. The bulk of ESF+ specific objectives may also be applied in libraries successfully, since all of them contribute to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

ESIF projects are applied in Member States in compliance with several ESIF criteria. These constraints affect projects in relation to their geographic scope, whether they are implemented for the Convergence Objective – in regions whose GDP per capita is below 75% of the EU average -, for the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective - the ability of a region to offer an attractive and sustainable environment for firms and residents to live and work - or for the European Territorial Cooperation – whose ultimate goal is to strengthen the inter-regional socio-economic cohesion of the Union.

According to the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 which legislates provisions common to all ESI Funds, two additional constraints regulate ESIF implementation: ex-ante conditionality and thematic concentration. An ex-ante conditionality is one or more conditions (normally, national or regional policies) which are regarded as necessary for the effective and efficient use of ESI funds. Thematic concentration means that the majority of resources must be concentrated on a maximum of few thematic objectives in order to reach a "critical mass" of real impact. Both ex-ante conditionality and thematic concentrations are part of the partnership agreement stipulated between the EC and Member States.

A partnership agreement consists of setting up national Operational Programmes (OPs) for each Member States. ESIF “beneficiaries” cover a broad public: enterprises, non-governmental and civil society organisations, universities, students, researchers, community, farmers or fishermen. Action at EU level adds value to action at national level for several reasons:

- In many countries, the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund represent at least 50% of public investment – these Member States would not otherwise have the financial capacity to make such investments;
- There are significant potential spillovers across national and regional boundaries and the EU level has an important role in delivering these spillovers and preventing underinvestment;
- In most regions, including more developed ones, “smart specialisation” strategies represent a consistent strategic framework for investments and bring about high added value. The benefits of such strategies tend to be highest in the most developed regions (particularly in the Nordic countries, Austria, Germany, Benelux and France);
- ESI Funds promote EU priorities, including structural reforms of labour market, transport, environment, climate change adaptation and mitigation, energy, education and social policies and programmes, as well as administrative modernisation;
- ESI Funds deliver tangible results in areas which matter to European citizens. Helping regions adapt to the challenge of globalisation, creating 420,000 jobs and supporting 1.1 million SMEs, tackling urban poverty – all these are priorities for Europeans.

Libraries could greatly benefit from the use of ESIF Funds, especially in R&D activities likely to become mainstream activities in the long term and in initiatives having a substantial social impact. Nevertheless, managing and implementing ESIF programmes may be a complex and demanding task in terms of staff, overhead, and external costs for beneficiaries to comply with obligations imposed by the ESIF regulations. In order to cope with this complexity, several solutions can be found. In some countries, the administration of ESI Funds is taken on by national authorities; in other cases, a regional stakeholder sub-contracts the administration of the project to a local beneficiary managing a wide

range of local projects, including library projects; sometimes, it may be useful to resort to commercial companies to manage the administrative parts of the project.

Chapter 5 of this report includes a simulation in seven tables, where ESIF-funded and SDG-oriented library projects are matched with specific ESIF 2021-2027 objectives and sub-objectives: under which presumed ESIF specific objective could have these library projects been funded, had they been presented within the ESIF 2021-2027 framework? These tables also list outputs and results which are in principle requested to ESIF beneficiaries when implementing ESIF-oriented programmes.

## **1. Introduction: The aim of the present paper and library policies after the Covid-19 crisis**

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The European Structural and Investment Funds conjure up ideas of a cohesive Europe based on hard infrastructure: railway corridors, motor highways, broadband wirelines and subsidies to farmers to name but a few. According to this perspective, ESI Funds would deal with cars and wagons, plants and cows, cables and labels, and would know little about human souls and cultural needs. It is true that big ESIF money is dedicated to the construction of a large scale European infrastructure. But in general, the image of ESIF discarding culture in general, and libraries in particular, is false. Not only do the ESI Funds take into consideration the cultural dimension in the cohesion policy of the European Union. They also show that a large amount of money is devoted to the improvement of the cultural infrastructure and that this money is normally spent in a wise and effective way.

The aim of this Paper is to show that, despite basic impediments in EU legislation to include culture within the scope of the European Commission's work, ESI Funds have been applied to structural investments in libraries. Library projects and policies may have been funded in a "hidden" form, through ESIF operational programmes which apparently do not seem to be at the core of library missions. National policies for library development, therefore, should look more closely at the specific objectives of ESI Funds; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development seems to be the optimal framework through which library projects can be implemented.

This Paper is largely a compilation resulting from official EU documentation. Basic information on ESI Funds has been drawn from various EU webpages; the illustration of the mechanics and dynamics of ESIF implementation in cultural activities is extracted from two official European Union reports outlining the cultural dimension of the ESI Funds from 2007 to 2013 and from 2014 to 2020.<sup>1</sup> The bulk of the Paper, however, is devoted to the presentation of ESI Funds 2021-2027, with a particular attention to the specific objectives of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+).

ESIF represents the direction in which Europe will progress in the next decade and the way this vision is interpreted by local actors. It is worth remembering that administrators are now in the process of making choices that will determine the future of Europe on the financial basis of what accounts for more than one third of the EU budget. The opportunity for libraries to play a role in this European vision lies in the hands of librarians, library policy-makers and national/local administrators. It is up to professionals to get in touch with national and local administrators and to modulate the professional definition of a library into a functional perspective where libraries, too, are identified as links in the ESIF value chain.

Ideal readers of the "European Structural and Investment Funds 2021-2027" Paper are therefore cultural administrators, library directors, and library mid-managers in charge of research and

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<sup>1</sup> Information for this paragraph is extracted from: European Parliament. Directorate General for Internal Policies. Policy Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies. Culture and Education. Use of Structural Funds for Cultural Projects. KEA European Affairs: Maria Iglesias, Philippe Kern, Valentina Montalto, Brussels, © European Union, 2012,

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL-CULT\\_ET\(2012\)474563](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL-CULT_ET(2012)474563);

and European Parliament. Research for CULT Committee - ESIF and culture, education, youth & sport – the use of European Structural and Investment Funds in policy areas of the Committee on Culture & Education. Author: The Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services LLP (CSES), Mike Coyne, Malin Carlberg, Caroline Chandler, Eugenie Lale-Demoz. Bruxelles, 2018,

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL\\_STU\(2018\)617475](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU(2018)617475)

development and/or SDG-oriented services. We hope that cultural administrators will use libraries as an instrument to broaden their social, economic, environmental and cultural policies; that library directors will find inspiration for library planning and operations; and that library mid-managers will feel how the events they organise and often inspire, perhaps circumscribed in time and space, are links in a much broader strategic chain which opens up new horizons to library work.

EBLIDA is committed to supporting libraries in their passage through the post-Covid 19 crisis. The impact of the pandemic on libraries has been examined in the report “A European Library Agenda for the Post-Covid 19 Age” through the identification of five “new normals”: 1) Exponential social distancing: a well-connected two-meter library; 2) Technologies are mutating and shaping libraries in new ways; 3) Uncharted economic territory: review the library budget composition; 4) Library governance is taking a new centre stage; 5) Do not forget the climate change opportunity and threat. This Paper may help European libraries in raising additional funding for their activities and support them in coping with the new library normals.

In dealing with ESI Funds, EBLIDA is also opening an avenue in its course of action and providing its members with new services. We wish to open a temporary consultancy service on how to link ESIF to the Agenda 2030, how to apply ESIF in libraries and to accelerate library recovery after the Covid 19 crisis. This is the strategy EBLIDA is currently pursuing; paraphrasing the well-known statement ascribed to Jean Monnet - *If I were to do it again from scratch, I would start with culture* – we may come to the conclusion that if EBLIDA were to start its Europe-wide library action from scratch, it would start with the European Structural Funds.

The ESI Paper matured within the framework of the Culture Group of ASviS (the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development). I am very grateful to Ms Paola Dubini (Professor at the Bocconi University, Milan and Chair of the ASviS Culture Group), an inspiring and enthusiastic chairperson, and to Ms Valentina Montalto (Joint Research Centre, European Commission), a real cultural advocate, for their input, suggestions and constant encouragement.

*The EBLIDA Secretariat*



## 2. ESI Funds: which library concept?

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Last January, EBLIDA and the French Ministry of Culture circulated a Questionnaire on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe among EBLIDA Members (largely library associations and some library institutions). Responses to the Questionnaire showed two attitudes emerging in the library profession, varying from tradition to innovation and from real to progressive visions.<sup>2</sup> A set of responses to the Questionnaire identified in a public library an institution hosting a collection of books/ media and information resources, in a plurality of published/released formats and media, working on a continuity chain. As one respondent nicely put it, what the library offers is along a continuum going “*from collection to connection*”.

A different set of responses highlighted the importance of libraries in society with their focus on education (“*serving further education*”, the development of “*people’s reading habits*”), lifelong learning for the younger and older layers of population, and integration. In line with a previous EU study on public libraries,<sup>3</sup> the role of the social library is also advocated when respondents put the promotion of an active citizenry and the development of a democratic and sustainable society at the core of library missions. It is worth noticing that two thirds of respondents made the remark that their professional representation of libraries is mirrored in national library acts or, where national library acts do not exist, in public policy documents.

At a larger scale, this extended concept of library corresponds to an evolving concept of culture. In the ESI Funds several notions of culture are identified and promoted. In addition to the anthropological meaning of culture - a set of attitudes, beliefs, customs, values and practices commonly shared by a (political, geographical, religious, ethnic) group - the ESI Funds seem to address two precise domains of cultural policies. The first concerns cultural content and the creative industries – all sectors linked with the development of a prosperous cultural industry which relates to publishing, music, film, audio-visual, artistic, and art performance. The second is related to the instrumental role of culture in urban regeneration, landscape attractiveness, tourism, entrepreneurship, economic development, social integration and innovation.<sup>4</sup>

The fact that libraries make available a wide offer of cultural and educational products along a continuum going from collection to connection, and provide services to citizens aimed at social inclusion, make them key players in lifelong learning, citizen science, research, innovation and the promotion of an active citizenry for a democratic and sustainable society. This definition of a library is functional for SDG-oriented library projects to be funded through ESI Funds.

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<sup>2</sup> EBLIDA – Ministère de la Culture. Library Legislation and Policy in Europe. Results of a Questionnaire - Interim Report (Draft March 2020), prepared by Ms Apolline Sans, French Ministry of Culture (to be released soon).

<sup>3</sup> Directorate – General for Internal policies – Policy Department B. Public Libraries – their new role, cit.

<sup>4</sup> Culture and Education. Use of Structural Funds for Cultural Projects, cit., p. 15.

### 3. What are European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2021-2027

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The ESI Funds are embedded in a normative framework and follow an implementation process resulting from a negotiation between the European Commission and each Member State. The final product is a partnership agreement between EC and Member States, which also involves stakeholders at the local and/or regional levels.

At the time of writing this Paper, the European Commission, Member States and regional and local stakeholders are in the process of signing a Partnership Agreement for ESIF 2021-2027. ESI Funds take the lion's share of the EU: the two main funds – ERDF and CF – manage almost one third of the total EU budget. Regional development investments will strongly focus on objectives 1 (“Supporting development in the less prosperous regions”) and 2 (“Transition regions”); 65% to 85% of ERDF and Cohesion Fund resources will be allocated to these priorities, depending on Member States’ relative wealth. This issue will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 5.

#### 3.1 Seven Funds and Five Main Objectives<sup>5</sup>

To enable consistency with other EU policies, the rules on delivery and implementation of ERDF and the Cohesion Fund are governed as far as possible by the Common Provisions Regulation. ESI Funds 2021-2027 set out common provisions for seven shared management funds at the EU level:

- CF: Cohesion Fund
- EMFF: European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
- ERDF: European Regional Development Fund
- ESF+: European Social Fund Plus
- AMIF: Asylum and Migration Fund
- ISF: Internal Security Fund
- BMVI: Border Management and Visa Instrument

ERDF (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development), a Fund included in ESIF 2014-2020, will be part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) which draws its funding also from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF). Still to be adopted, the majority of ERDF funding (65 % to 85 %) will focus on smart growth and the green economy, but also support other activities such as connectivity, social issues and local development; the CF will continue to focus predominantly on environmental and transport infrastructure.<sup>6</sup>

Being part of the EU's budget from 2021-2027, the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) will be the main financial instrument to strengthen Europe's social dimension.<sup>7</sup> ESF+ is the result of a merging of the existing European Social Fund, the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), the Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) and the EU Health programme. ESF+ will be more coherent with and complementary to other Funds that provide support

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<sup>5</sup> What follows summarizes the content of the document: European Commission. Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund Strasbourg, 29.5.2018 COM(2018) 372 final 2018/0197(COD), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0375&from=EN>

<sup>6</sup> Agnieszka Widuto. European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund 2021-2027. Briefing EU Legislation in Progress 2021-2027, PE 625.141 Members' Research Service PE 625.141 – January 2020, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/625141/EPRS\\_BRI\(2018\)625141\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/625141/EPRS_BRI(2018)625141_EN.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=62&langId=en>

to people, such as Erasmus, the Asylum and Migration Fund, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund and the Reform Support Programme.

Three Funds - AMIF (the Asylum and Migration Fund), ISF (Internal Security Fund), BMVI (Border Management and Visa Instrument) – will strengthen and develop a Common European Asylum System, promote legal migration to EU States and improve solidarity among EU Member States.<sup>8</sup>

Five main objectives (also designated as PO, Policy Objectives) will determine the development of ESI Funds in 2021-2027:

1. **A smarter Europe**, through innovation, digitisation, economic transformation and support to small and medium-sized businesses (PO 1);
2. **A greener, carbon free Europe**, implementing the Paris Agreement and investing in energy transition, renewables and the fight against climate change (PO 2);
3. **A more connected Europe**, with strategic transport and digital networks (PO 3);
4. **A more social Europe**, delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare (PO 4);
5. **A Europe closer to citizens**, by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU (PO 5).

The Cohesion Policy keeps on investing in all European regions on the basis of three objectives (less-developed, transition, more-developed regions). The allocation method for the funds is still largely based on GDP per capita. New criteria are added (youth unemployment, low education level, climate change, and the reception and integration of migrants) to better reflect the reality on the ground.

Cohesion Policy further supports locally-led development strategies and empowers local authorities in the management of the funds. The urban dimension of Cohesion Policy is strengthened, with 6% of the ERDF dedicated to sustainable urban development, and a new networking and capacity-building programme for urban authorities, the European Urban Initiative. Interregional Innovative Investments will be made on regions with matching ‘smart specialisation’ assets in priority sectors such as big data, circular economy, advanced manufacturing or cybersecurity.

In relation to ESIF 2014-2020, these are the main changes of ESIF 2021-2027:

| Criteria for allocation                | ESIF Budget share (2014-2020) | ESIF Budget share (2021-2027) |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| GDP                                    | 86 %                          | 81%                           |
| Labour market, education, demographics | 14%                           | 15%                           |
| Climate                                |                               | 1%                            |
| Migration                              |                               | 3%                            |
| Total                                  | 100%                          | 100%                          |

Such criteria are based on the following indicators:

- a) Labour market: unemployment rate, youth unemployment rate, employment rate;
- b) Education: early school leavers, tertiary level of education, low level of education;
- c) Demographics: population of regions, low density of population;
- d) Climate: Greenhouse gas emissions in the non-ESD sectors;
- e) Migration: Net migration of non-EU citizens.

<sup>8</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/asylum-migration-integration-fund\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/asylum-migration-integration-fund_en)

To enable consistency with Horizon Europe, this latter will focus on "European excellence" - the generation and exploitation of new knowledge - while ERDF will focus on "regional relevance" - diffusion of existing knowledge and technology to places that need it, embedding it locally via smart specialisation strategies.

What follows is a series of reasons why action at EU level adds value to action at national level:

- In many countries, the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund represent at least 50% of public investment – these Member States would not otherwise have the financial capacity to make such investments;
- There are significant potential spillovers across national and regional boundaries and the EU level has an important role in delivering these spillovers and preventing underinvestment;
- In most regions, including more developed ones, “smart specialize” strategies represent a consistent strategic framework for investments and bring about high added value. The benefits of such strategies tend to be highest in the most developed regions (particularly in the Nordic countries, Austria, Germany, Benelux and France);
- They promote EU priorities, including structural reforms of labour market, transport, environment, climate change adaptation and mitigation, energy, education and social policies and programmes, as well as administrative modernisation;
- The ERDF and the Cohesion Fund deliver tangible results in areas which matter to European citizens. Helping regions adapt to the challenge of globalisation, creating 420,000 jobs and supporting 1.1 million SMEs, tackling urban poverty – all these are priorities for Europeans.

### 3.2 Specific ESIF 2021-2027 objectives (ERDF and ESF)

There is practically no sector nor geographic area which is not covered by ESIF 2021-2027. Exclusions from the scope of the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund are specifically mentioned in Article 6 of the Common Provisions and concern various sectors going from nuclear to tobacco and tobacco products, from investment in facilities for the treatment of residual waste to fossil fuels, and broadband infrastructure in areas, rail transport. Projects in overseas countries and territories are not eligible for support from the ERDF or the Cohesion Fund, but may participate in Interreg programmes.

According to Article 4 the scope of support from ERDF regards: (a) infrastructure; (b) access to services; (c) productive investments in SMEs; (d) equipment, software and intangible assets; (e) information, communication, studies, networking, cooperation, exchange of experience and activities involving clusters; (f) technical assistance.<sup>9</sup>

General Policy Objectives (PO) of ERDF support twenty-one specific objectives listed in Article 2 of the proposed Regulation on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund.<sup>10</sup> These specific objectives are:

PO 1 “A smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation” ('PO 1') unfolds into the following specific objectives:

- I. enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies;
- II. reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies and governments;
- III. enhancing growth and competitiveness of SMEs;
- IV. developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0372&from=EN>

<sup>10</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0372>.

PO 2 “A greener, low-carbon Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management” ('PO 1') unfolds into the following specific objectives:

- I. promoting energy efficiency measures;
- II. promoting renewable energy;
- III. developing smart energy systems, grids and storage at local level;
- IV. promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience;
- V. promoting sustainable water management;
- VI. promoting the transition to a circular economy;
- VII. enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution.

PO 3 “A more connected Europe by enhancing mobility and regional ICT connectivity” includes the following specific objectives:

- I. enhancing digital connectivity;
- II. developing a sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent, secure and intermodal TEN-T (Trans-European Network - Transport);
- III. developing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility;
- IV. promoting sustainable multimodal urban mobility.

PO 4 “A more social Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights” includes the following specific objectives:

- I. enhancing the effectiveness of labour markets and access to quality employment through developing social innovation and infrastructure;
- II. improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and life long learning through developing infrastructure;
- III. increasing the socioeconomic integration of marginalised communities, migrants and disadvantaged groups, through integrated measures including housing and social services;
- IV. ensuring equal access to health care through developing infrastructure, including primary care.

PO 5 “A Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives” includes the following specific objectives:

- I. fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental development, cultural heritage and security in urban areas;
- II. fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental local development, cultural heritage and security, including for rural and coastal areas also through community-led local development.

The Cohesion Fund supports investments in the environment, including investments related to sustainable development, and in Trans-European Network – Transport, but can also be used for PO 2 and specific objectives under PO 3 set out in points (ii), (iii) and (iv), as well as to support activities aiming at jobs and growth goal.

The ESF is Europe’s main instrument for supporting jobs, helping people get better jobs and ensuring fairer job opportunities for all EU citizens. It works by investing in Europe’s human capital. Article 4 of

the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus<sup>11</sup> lists the specific objectives for this Fund, which contributes to the Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights:

- (i) improving access to employment of all jobseekers, in particular youth and long term unemployed, and of inactive people, promoting self-employment and the social economy;
- (ii) modernising labour market institutions and services to assess and anticipate skills needs and ensure timely and tailor-made assistance and support to labour market matching, transitions and mobility;
- (iii) promoting women’s labour market participation, a better work/life balance including access to childcare, a healthy and well–adapted working environment addressing health risks, adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change, and active and healthy ageing;
- (iv) improving the quality, effectiveness and labour market relevance of education and training systems, to support acquisition of key competences including digital skills;
- (v) promoting equal access to and completion of, quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, and to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all;
- (vi) promoting lifelong learning, notably flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility;
- (vii) fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability;
- (viii) promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals and of marginalised communities such as the Roma;
- (ix) enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection; improving accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services;
- (x) promoting social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including the most deprived and children;
- (xi) addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived, including accompanying measures.

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<sup>11</sup> Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), COM/2018/382 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0382>

#### 4. How do Structural and Investment Funds work?

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The understanding of ESI Funds is further complicated by the presence of several constraints and limitations in their assignment to Member States which exclude/include regions on the basis of several criteria.

The first of these criteria is GDP. A well-established political aim of the European Union is convergence among regions and its attainment is hampered by huge differences in GDP existing among the regions. The “Convergence objective” covers regions whose GDP per capita is below 75% of the EU average and aims at accelerating their economic development. The Convergence objective is financed by the ERDF, the ESF and the Cohesion Fund so that a large part of EU grants are allocated in the least favoured regions of the Member States. Eligible regions under the convergence objectives are the totality of Eastern European countries (except some regions) as well as several regions in Italy, Portugal and Spain.

The second regional objective pursued by ESI Funds concerns regional competitiveness, i.e. the ability of a region to offer an attractive and sustainable environment for firms and residents to live and work. A Regional Competitiveness Index<sup>12</sup> measures where regions stand on aspects such as governance, infrastructure (including digital networks), health, human capital and labour market and innovation. The “Regional Competitiveness and Employment” objective covers all regions of the EU territory, except those already covered by the Convergence objective. It aims at reinforcing competitiveness, employment and attractiveness of these regions.

The “European Territorial Cooperation” (ETC) is an objective of the European Union’s Cohesion Policy, serving its ultimate goal to strengthen the economic and social cohesion of the Union. Better known as Interreg, ETC provides a framework for the implementation of joint actions and policy exchanges between national, regional and local actors from different Member States. The overarching objective of European Territorial Cooperation is to promote a harmonious economic, social and territorial development of the Union as a whole. Interreg is built around three strands of cooperation: cross-border (Interreg A), transnational (Interreg B) and interregional (Interreg C).

The three regional objectives - the Convergence Objective, the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective as well as the European Territorial Cooperation - aim at contributing to reduce regional disparities across Union's territory.

##### 4.1 The normative framework

In order to understand how public libraries can implement ESIF, an appreciation of the status of culture within the legal ESIF framework must be made.<sup>13</sup> Article 167 Title XIII of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union<sup>14</sup> is on Culture; it states that the Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity. As a result, action envisaged by the Union consists of encouraging cooperation between Member States in cultural matters such as improving the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples, conserving cultural heritage of European significance and non-commercial cultural exchanges

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<sup>12</sup> <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/Regional-Competitiveness-Index-2019/363v-4uq6/>

<sup>13</sup> A full Guide (the Blue Guide) to ESIF is in European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020: Official Texts and Commentaries. European Union, 2015,

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/guides/blue\\_book/blueguide\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/guides/blue_book/blueguide_en.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT:EN:PDF>.

and fostering cooperation with third world countries and international organisations, in particular the Council of Europe. Any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States on cultural matters is excluded.

At the level of the ESIF Regulations, the Common Provisions Regulation<sup>15</sup> regulating ESIF 2014-2020 makes a single reference to culture in the form of an ex-ante conditionality with a view to pursuing the ERDF investment priority 'Strengthening ICT applications for e-government, e-learning, e-inclusion, e-culture and e-health'. In other words, in these special areas, the Member State authorities might envisage using e-culture as a vehicle for engaging businesses and citizens as part of a strategy to develop access to, and use of ICT.

Other references to culture are to be found in the separate ERDF and ESF Regulations. In the ERDF Regulation, reference is made to the creative and cultural industries and to sustainable tourism.<sup>16</sup> A more social role is suggested in Recital 15: "in order to promote social inclusion and combat poverty, particularly among marginalised communities, it is necessary to improve access to social, cultural and recreational services, through the provision of small-scale infrastructure, taking account of the specific needs of persons with disabilities and the elderly."

#### 4.2 The implementation process

Direct attention and funding to culture in ESIF operate at different levels and the interaction between these levels is an important factor in determining what happens in practice. There are important differences in the way ESIF is able in principle to support culture. These differences arise in the way Member States have shaped the Partnership Agreements and the formulation of Operational Programmes at national and regional levels.

For a better understanding of ESIF 2014-2020, two important concepts have to be introduced: ex-ante conditionality and thematic concentration, both working as pre-requirements for ESIF assignment. An ex-ante conditionality is one or more conditions which are regarded as necessary for the effective and efficient use of ESI funds. Member States need to show that they have policies in place that can give rise to the intended processes envisaged as contributing to the achievement of specific Objectives. The choice of the key sectors has to be based on perceived competitive advantages of the countries and regions concerned following what is designated as "Smart Specialisation Process". A smart specialisation is a place-based approach, where Member States build on the assets and resources available to regions and address specific socio-economic challenges in order to identify unique opportunities for development and growth. On this basis, Member States make choices for investment and support a limited number of well-identified priorities for knowledge-based investments and/or clusters.

Thematic concentration means that the majority of resources must be concentrated on a maximum of few thematic objectives in order to reach a "critical mass" of real impact. It is up to Member States to choose the thematic objectives for which the largest part of the Funds will be allocated.

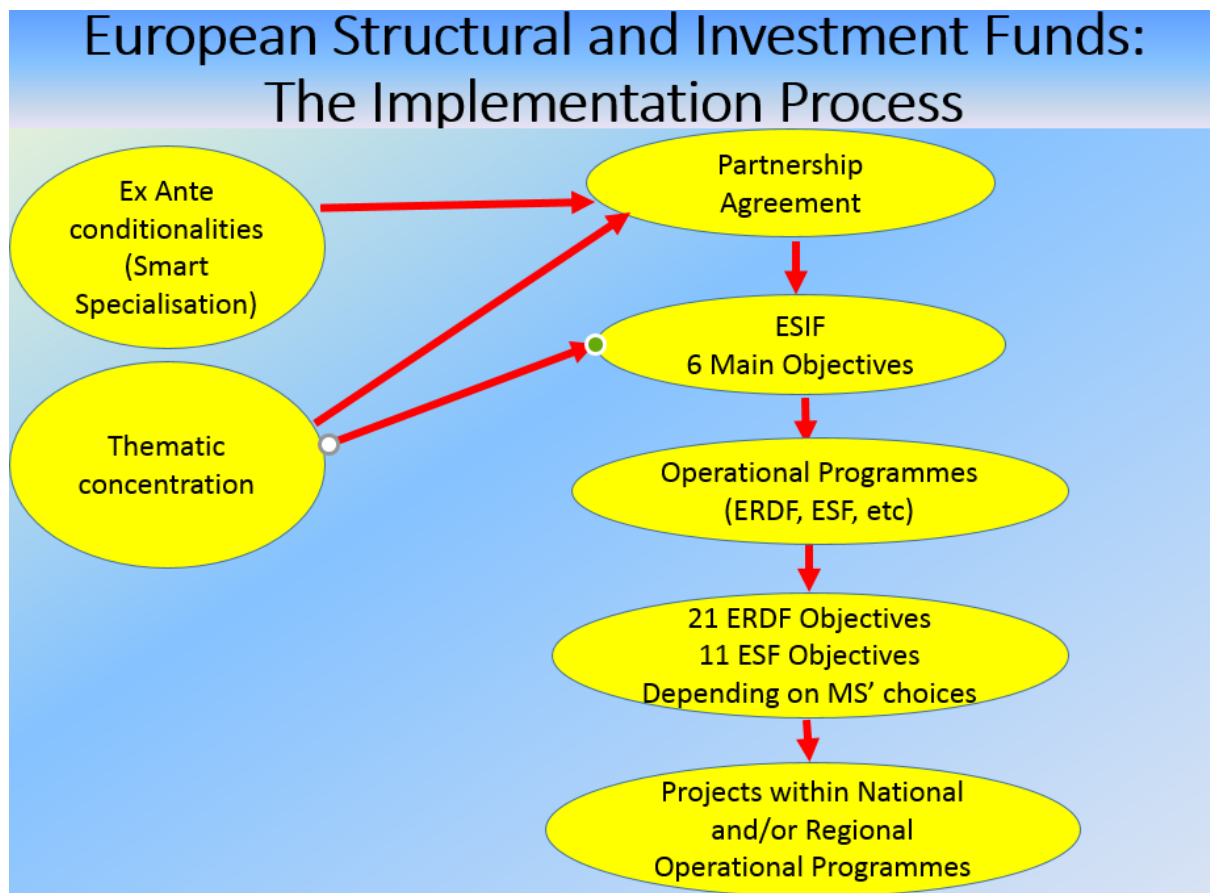
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<sup>15</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, regulating laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

<sup>16</sup> Respectively, Recital 8 and Recital 11.



No ESIF specific objective explicitly addresses culture, although cultural action is perceived as a suitable means to reach key ESIF objectives. The “value chain” of the EU regional cohesion policy 2014-2020 can be described in the Table below:



On the basis of the two or more specific objectives chosen by Member States (thematic concentration) and of the national or local smart specialisation strategies, the next stage to consider is when the Operational Programmes for each of the Funds are established. These can take the form of national or regional Operational Programmes (OPs) in the larger Member States or just national OPs in smaller Member States, although as in the case of Denmark and Sweden, national OPs can be implemented with regional variations. Some of the national OPs are dedicated to particular policy areas and a small number have been specifically or partially dedicated to culture.

However organised, it is with the OPs that we begin to find the real detail of how the ESI Funds are implemented on the ground in specific countries or regions. ESIF ‘beneficiaries’ cover a broad public, ranging from small and medium size enterprises to large enterprises, and from public bodies to non-governmental and civil society organisations. These beneficiaries can also be universities, students, researchers, community and civic organisations, farmers or fishermen. They are intermediary organisations, which may then provide services for free or at a subsidised rate to businesses or other final beneficiaries. These organisations seek to expand cluster membership and, above all, provide services to cluster members. This might be in terms of building the competences of member firms and project-holders, arranging match-making or networking events, establishing relationships with knowledge institutions or assisting with international marketing.

This aspect of the development of the ESIF is quite important for the process of accessing funds. It is less and less a matter of individual enterprises seeking to access funds and needing to know if they are eligible or not. It is more a matter of sectoral organisations being able to design, propose and, if

successful, administer projects that meet the terms of the relevant OP. Libraries may promote their policies and get funding for projects falling within the national and/or regional programmes selected by the country where they are based which meet ESIF specific objectives.

4.3 The “hidden” nature of ESI Funds allocated to library projects

Question 29 of the above mentioned Questionnaire on Library Legislation and Policy in Europe, launched by EBLIDA in January 2020, asked whether libraries in the respondent’s country normally resorted to Structural Funds of the European Union (European Social Fund, Social Cohesion, etc.). The following Table summarises responses provided to Question n. 29.

**Number of countries resorting to ESI Funds**

|                                    |        |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Yes                                | 33.33% |
| No                                 | 39.39% |
| Do not know                        | 24.24% |
| Not applicable<br>(NON-EU Country) | 3.03%  |

Countries responding positively to the Questionnaire were: Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Spain.

This table is an apparent demonstration of how ESI Funds are allocated to library projects in a “hidden” way. ESIF beneficiaries may not even be cultural actors and very often they are alien to library work. Libraries themselves may be the second, or third recipients of EU funding within schemes having been engineered at local level for non-cultural purposes. To give an example, Lithuanian libraries started the production of face masks on request during the Covid-19 crisis. This is an unintended result of fifty-eight 3D printers supplied to all major public libraries in Lithuania “as part of the project “Promoting Smart Use of Refurbished Public Internet Access Infrastructure Among Residents”.<sup>17</sup> In Bulgaria, too, “Digital Skills for SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) in Bulgaria”, implemented by the regional libraries of Plovdiv, Smolyan and Stara Zagora districts, offer equal access to information and communication, lifelong learning, collaboration with SME workers and their families. The project is funded by the European Social Fund.<sup>18</sup>

A random investigation made on the Italian Opencoesione website, the one-stop source for all ESIF projects in Italy, shows for instance that within the ADRION geographic area, a book project has been funded for the preservation of cultural heritage within the Interreg ESI Fund. The project also includes non EU countries.<sup>19</sup>

These three examples, of totally different nature and scope, bring two elements up for consideration:

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<sup>17</sup> The project was financed by the Operational Programme of EU Structural Funds Investments 2014-2020, <https://www.lnb.lt/en/news/5242-lithuanian-libraries-offer-support-to-healthcare-professionals>.  
<sup>18</sup> <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/en/digisme>.  
<sup>19</sup> <https://www.adrioninterreg.eu/index.php/2020/03/13/the-goal-of-adrinetbook-project-develop-a-digital-library-to-help-preserve-cultural-heritage-in-the-adriatic-ionic-region/>. ADRION covers eight Partner States, of which four are EU Member States (Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia), three are candidate countries (Albania, Montenegro, Serbia) and one is a potential candidate country (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

- a) For a library to be actively involved in ESI Funds, a knowledge of both the general/EU programme and the local context is needed;
- b) The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the ideal framework in which ESI Funds can usefully be applied.

#### 4.4 ESIF's administrative burden

ESIF may be essential for R&D departments working now on library projects which are likely to become mainstream activities in the long term. They spark innovation and are very often associated with new library developments. Managing and implementing ESIF programmes, however, may be a highly complex and demanding task in terms of staff, overhead, and external costs for beneficiaries to comply with obligations imposed by the ESIF regulations. In some cases, national regulations add complexity and raise the administrative costs of a project. This is particularly true for small-scale library projects which tend to be relatively more costly than financially larger programmes. The opposite is also true. Since ESIF beneficiaries have contacts only with local or regional authorities, they get a better understanding of local procedures and needs; therefore, the ESIF administrative burden may be less complex than in the case of projects directly funded by the European Commission.

Part of ESIF administrative complexity lies in its decentralised delivery system. ESIF is implemented through shared management and multi-level governance. This means that programmes are managed at member state, regional and local level and, usually, there are a large number of relevant stakeholders involved in the implementation of ESIF programmes. Member states and regions are also responsible for setting up appropriate management and control systems to ensure that funds are used appropriately.

The administrative burden has been made lighter for ESIF 2021-2027. The process of accessing funding for the potential beneficiaries of the EU financial support was simplified through some eighty simplification measures and procedures, such as single reimbursement rates, flat rates for indirect costs, a 90-day payment deadline for beneficiaries, electronic exchange of data between beneficiaries. All this may help reduce the ESIF administrative burden.

The management of significant financial allocations to cultural projects – in Italy, almost half a billion Euro has been allocated for cultural heritage projects – and the complexity of reporting procedures have suggested solutions which may prove to be useful in implementing ESI-funded SDG projects in libraries. These solutions largely depend on the kind of partnership agreements made by the European Commission with each Member State. In some cases, it may be useful to resort to commercial companies to manage the administrative parts of the project. In some Eastern European countries the administration of ESI Funds is taken on by national authorities (ministries of culture or social affairs, for instance), which act as ESIF beneficiaries and have management responsibilities. In other cases, a regional stakeholder sub-contracts the administration of the project to a local beneficiary managing a wide range of local projects, including library projects. What follows is a non-exhaustive collection of case studies in Bulgaria, Germany and the Netherlands. Information refers to ESIF 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 applied in libraries.

##### 4.4.1 Case studies in Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, the governance of ESI Funds in libraries has followed different directions. Bulgarian libraries have used the “Science and Education for Smart Growth” Operational Programme to implement library projects. The Operational Programme is administered by the Executive Agency, Science and Education

for Smart Growth, one of the nine ESIF managing authorities in Bulgaria. Also important have been the Interreg programmes for Cross-Border Cooperation, managed by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, aimed to foster cooperation between Bulgaria and EU Member States on the one hand, and between Bulgaria and candidate/potential candidates for accession to the European Union, on the other hand. Library projects have been triggered with Romania, Turkey, Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia.<sup>20</sup>

Within the ERDF Operational Programme “Science and Education for Smart Growth” the “St. Cyril and Methodius” National Library of Bulgaria has been established as a Centre of Excellence for the Bulgarian Heritage (Priority Axis 1 “Research and Technological Development”, “Construction and Development of Centers of Excellence”, “New Technologies in the Creative and Recreational Industries”). The main objective of this initiative is to build a modern infrastructure for research and innovation in the creative and recreational industries involving integrated teams for interdisciplinary research, policies and practices. The expected result is creating conditions for developing advanced technologies and developing market-oriented research. A distributed research system is envisaged with network connectivity between project modules, alternative communication channels, state-of-the-art research and development, economic, social and environmental contributions through dissemination and knowledge transfer. The overall budget for the twelve institutions amounts to € 15,206,856.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, the Library at the Medical University – Plovdiv received funding for subscription access, including remote, to information resources in support of the research activities of scientific teams from the Medical University as a “Competence Center Personalized Innovative Medicine”.

Interreg Funds have been used for the following library projects:

- Written treasures of the Lower Danube common to libraries, museums and archives. The overall goal of the project is to promote the joint preservation, protection, promotion and development of the written intangible cultural heritage in cross-border cooperation by diversifying tourist services and the development of literary tourism as a major factor in using and exploiting common advantages and potential and overcoming of discrepancies. The leading organisation is “Global Libraries Foundation – Bulgaria” and partner libraries are Biblioteca Județeană “Alexandru și Aristia Aman (in Craiova, Romania) and „Lyuben Karavelov“ Regional Library (Ruse, in Bulgaria). This project is implemented with the support of the cross-border cooperation program ERDF INTERREG Romania - Bulgaria program V-A. The project value is worth EUR 95,701 and ERDF budget amounts to EUR 81,345.<sup>22</sup>
- Regional Library “Hristo Botev” – Vratsa: project partner of the Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation Program. Together with Dolj district - lead partner, “Alexander and Aristia Amman” district library in Craiova and Vratsa district administration, Romanian-Bulgarian cultural and information centres in the cities of Vratsa and Craiova were developed. A common web portal between the two largest public libraries in the two border areas - Vratsa and Dolj, was developed to provide free access to the population of Bulgaria and Romania to the valuable digital wealth of the collections of the two libraries. Regional library “Hristo

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<sup>20</sup> Information about ESIF investments in libraries in Bulgaria was kindly forwarded by Ms Marina Encheva, member of the EBLIDA Executive Committee, and Ms Spaska Tarandova, Director of Global Libraries - Bulgaria Foundation.

<sup>21</sup> Project „Building and development of Center of Excellence “Heritage BG”, <http://www.bas.bg/en/2018/03/26/project-building-and-dvelopment-of-center-of-excellence-heritage-bg/>.

<sup>22</sup> Written treasures of the Lower Danube, <https://twtd.com/web/partners/> and The Written Treasures of Lower Danube, Programme 2014 - 2020 INTERREG V-A Romania - Bulgaria <https://keep.eu/projects/19903/>.

Botev” digitised 5 collections from the fund of the local history department. The project started in March 2013 and its duration was 30 months. The total value is EUR 3,280,442, of which EUR 206,698 was provided for the activities in the regional library “Hristo Botev”.<sup>23</sup>

- Regional library “Hristo Smirnenski”( Edirne) – Haskovo (<https://project-haskovo-edirne.eu/>) is a leading partner in the implementation of the project “Haskovo and - cultural and historical destinations” funded by the INTERREG IPA Program for CBC Bulgaria Turkey 2014-2020. The aim of the project is to promote intercultural dialogue and improve access to cultural heritage through the wider use of digital technologies. One of the most important activities in the framework of the project were the digitisation of postcards, photographs, unique local periodicals and books from the two border areas from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Scanners and digital cameras for the partners were purchased as the main tools for digitalisation. The project is worth EUR 93,460 and European Union’s funding amounts to EUR 79,441.<sup>24</sup>

Another set of library projects in Bulgaria are funded through ESF+. The "Digital Skills for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in Bulgaria" project is implemented by Global Libraries - Bulgaria Foundation (GLBF), whose board associates both library and non-library organisations.<sup>25</sup> Partners of the GLBF project are the Bulgarian Union of Small and Medium Business Association and the Latvian Information and Communication Technology Association (LIKTA). Its aim is to develop an innovative educational model and establish regional libraries in Plovdiv, Smolyan and Stara Zagora as a centre for acquiring modern digital skills by owners and employees of SMEs.<sup>26</sup> The project, implemented in close cooperation with the regional libraries of Plovdiv, Smolyan and Stara Zagora districts, is funded under the "Transnational and Danube Partnerships for Employment and Growth" procedure of the "Human Resources Development" 2014-2020 Operational Programme, co-financed by the European Union through the European Social Fund. The total value of the project amounts to EUR 86,162 of which the European financing is € 81,673.

The library at the University of Economics – Varna participated in a project: “Support for the development of doctoral students, postdoctoral students, graduates and young scientists” - phase 1 (02.06. 2017 - 31.12. 2018). In the framework of the project the library provided access to scientific databases and scientific information and paid a subscription for a platform verifying the originality of scientific works and publications.

The Global Libraries Foundation and University of Library Studies and Information Technologies also run several projects within the Erasmus+ framework related to the improvement of the digital skills of the librarians (BIBLIO project) and the enhancement of the information literacy competences of the library users (NAVIGATE project). Erasmus+ also aims to contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy for growth, jobs, social equity and inclusion but project requirements are different.<sup>27</sup>

#### 4.4.2 Case studies in Germany

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<sup>23</sup> About the project: <http://portal.libvratsa.org/wp/en/about-the-project/>.

<sup>24</sup> Haskovo and Edirne - cultural and historical destinations, <https://keep.eu/projects/21064/>.

<sup>25</sup> They are: Bulgarian Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications, National Association of Municipalities, “13 Centuries Bulgaria” National Endowment Fund, National Chitalishte Union and the Bulgarian Library and Information Association.

<sup>26</sup> Digital skills for small and medium enterprises in Bulgaria, <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/en/digisme>.

<sup>27</sup> Information on GLBF Erasmus+ projects is available at <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/bg/node/29178>.

At federal level, the decision-making authority for ERDF is the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi). Each of the 16 German Bundesländer (Federal States), however, determines the guidelines for financial assistance and sets up the funding programmes in the recognition that regional policy works most effectively where people know precisely what the need is.<sup>28</sup> Altogether, there are 24 ESIF managing authorities in Germany, more than the number of the Länder, for the very reason that eight authorities also deal with Interreg programmes developed by several institutions with neighbouring countries: with Poland (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Brandenburg), Austria-Switzerland-Liechtenstein (Alpenrhein-Bodensee-Hochrhein), Denmark (Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein), Netherlands (Rhein-Waal), Czech Republic (Bavaria and Saxony), Baltic Sea (Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein).

In spite of this fully-oriented regional approach, one exception applies to the ESF, where a programme of federal nature worth 2.7 billion Euro has been jointly developed by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs on the one hand, and the Federal Ministries of Economic Affairs, Education, Environment, and Family Affairs, on the other. ESF regional programmes in individual Länder may vary from one Land (a German federal State) to another, but all of them align to the ESF federal programme in terms of content and policy orientation (“operational programmes”). All programmes, however, follow the rules established in the “Partnership Agreement”, which decides on eligibility for financial support in Germany.

All ESI Funds in Germany are co-financed with national sources. The individual Land makes its own investment through a national contribution that ranges from 15% in less-developed regions to 50% in more strongly-developed regions.

Within ERDF 2007-2014, two projects were funded in Oranienburg - a city of 40,000 inhabitants in the region of Brandenburg - and Waltershausen - 13,000 inhabitants, in Thuringia. Oranienburg identified two strong points in its urban planning: the Baroque-style city centre and the water landscape on the banks of the Havel river. Therefore, the region decided to restore the library with a tourist information and a Galerie after having requalified the Old Castle, the Castle Park and the Havel promenade. The library project, worth €4,762,869, benefited from EFRD support in the reason of €3,432,750.

Building restoration was also the objective of the reconstruction of the Stadtbibliothek Waltershausen in 16<sup>th</sup> century premises. In an historical complex which also includes the town hall (1441), the requalification of the Stadtbibliothek includes the re-discovery of historical paper walls and of the inner courtyard, which was converted into an inner atrium. ERDF support was in the order of €1,111,538; the sum allocated for the whole project amounted to €1,398,100.

The city of Berlin supported an ERDF library project of a totally different nature. A sub-programme of the Zukunftsinitiative Stadtteil (ZIS, Future Initiative in City areas), the library-related programme was called BIST (Bibliotheken im Stadtteil, “Libraries in the City area”). BIST I benefited from an ambitious ERDF investment equal to €6.67m, which was combined with Land support worth € 13.17m with a view to increasing the number of readers well beyond the 100,000 current users.<sup>29</sup> This implied a fully-fledged library initiative structured in three clusters:

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<sup>28</sup> Apart from the brochure published by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy and the European Union (The European Structural and Investment Funds in Germany, March 2017, [https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/european-structural-and-investment-funds-in-germany.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=4](https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/european-structural-and-investment-funds-in-germany.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4)), information for this paragraph was kindly forwarded by Ms Hella Klauser, Member of the EBLIDA Executive Committee.

<sup>29</sup> Stellungnahme für die Europäische Kommission zum Bedarf einer Förderung für Öffentliche Bibliotheken im ZIS-Teilprogramm „Bibliotheken im Stadtteil II (BIST II)“, 10.9.2014, [file:///fs-srv-p100/users\\$/gvi010/Desktop/bedarfsnachweis.pdf](file:///fs-srv-p100/users$/gvi010/Desktop/bedarfsnachweis.pdf).

- a) improvement and adaptation of the social infrastructure (construction or renovation and modernisation of libraries);
- b) social development of library services in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (intercultural library work, welcome culture, family library);
- c) Further development of library services (active services, collection development, new services).

The BIST II programme (2014-2020) aims to improve social integration in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and to ensure opportunities for participation targeted at all population groups. The library space is offered for partnerships with schools, kindergartens, after-school care centres, neighbourhood centres, businesses and other actors in neighbourhood. These partnerships also address socio-economic problems such as the digital divide and the media competence deficit. In Spandau (a Berlin district), a daycare facility for children (Kita, Kindertageseinrichtung) has been provided to disadvantaged families with a view to fostering children's language skills. The project ran from 2016 to 2018 successfully and is now pursued further with the implementation of 10 day-care centres in the years from 2019 to 2021.<sup>30</sup> There are 21 library projects running in various Berlin districts, which are supported by ERDF from 2017 to 2023 for an overall budget of € 6 m.<sup>31</sup>

#### 4.4.3 Case studies in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, ESIF implementation follows quite simplified rules both in terms of content and number of managing authorities.<sup>32</sup> ERDF support has focused on two purposes only: innovation and a low-carbon economy, with strong points on renewable energy or more efficient energy use. Financial support is generally allocated to small and medium-sized businesses. When resorting to ESIF, programmes of a social nature in the Netherlands are mainly funded through the European Social Fund with social inclusion and higher employment being at the core of the Dutch strategy. ESF investment offers disadvantaged people the chance to acquire skills and to improve their employability with two main objectives: increasing the overall employment level to 80% of the working age population, and reducing the number of workless households by 100,000 by 2020. A second major ESF theme involves older workers. Against a background of an ageing population, the Netherlands wants to give people opportunities to work for longer. ESF projects are helping older workers resolve their "work vs health" dilemma by offering training opportunities in new skills and improve their job prospects.<sup>33</sup>

The Netherlands is also providing extra ESF help in its four largest cities – Rotterdam, Amsterdam, The Hague and Utrecht – to help improve job opportunities for young people and non-European immigrants through coaching and training programmes.

There are five ESIF managing authorities in the Netherlands and one of them, the Province of Limburg, is dealing with Interreg programmes with Belgium and Germany also focused on education and training.

<sup>30</sup>Bibliotheken im Stadtteil II (BIST II), <https://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/foerderung/eu-foerderung/efre/foerderperiode-2014-2020/artikel.570056.php>.

<sup>31</sup> Stellungnahme für die Europäische Kommission, [file:///fs-srv-p100/users\\$/gvi010/Desktop/bedarfsnachweis.pdf](file:///fs-srv-p100/users$/gvi010/Desktop/bedarfsnachweis.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> Information for this paragraph has been kindly forwarded by Mr Ton van Vlimmeren, President EBLIDA and Member of the EBLIDA Executive Committee.

<sup>33</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=392&langId=en>

Dutch libraries have created Stichting Bibliotheekwerk (SBW), an independent library foundation dedicated to employment, work and training issues in libraries and governed by representatives of the labour unions on behalf of the employees and the libraries as employers.<sup>34</sup> With the exception of a collective agreement for library workers, SBW mission is to promote a well-functioning labour market in the public library sector with several projects in the areas of labour flows and (further) competence development of employers and employees. SBW intends to stimulate innovative activities; when applicant libraries submit their proposals, SBW budget can be matched with EU funding, mainly in staff training.

In the four biggest cities of the Netherlands, an ambitious project focussed on vulnerable elderly citizens is funded by the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD, included in ESF+ 2021-2027) which supports EU countries' actions in providing food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived. Material assistance needs to go hand in hand with social inclusion measures, such as guidance and support to lift people out of poverty; therefore, national authorities may also support non-material assistance to the most deprived people in order to help them integrate better into society.<sup>35</sup> Library projects in the Netherlands aim to improve the skills, social networking and information level of elderly citizens so they can live in an autonomous way for a longer period of time.

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.bibliotheekwerk.nl/>.

<sup>35</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1089>.



## 5. How to use ESIF 2021-2027 to implement Sustainable Development Goals in library projects

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Evidence for this Chapter has been found in two fundamental pieces of EU legislation. The first is the “Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund”, which has been submitted to the European Parliament and expects to be approved in an EP Plenary session before adoption. The proposal concerns the next multi-annual financial ERDF framework for the period 2021-2027 and provides for a date of application as of 1 January 2021.<sup>36</sup> The second is the “Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)”, a fund whose aim is essentially job improvement in Europe.<sup>37</sup> Among the seven funds, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund (CF) and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) are those where libraries can find the most attractive funding opportunities.

ESIF managing authorities, which are different in every Member State,<sup>38</sup> are now making fundamental choices concerning the directions to be given to the policy objectives and the future allocation of funds. In order to ensure consistent monitoring of progress towards performance, the regulation also maintains a common set of output and results indicators.

In the following pages, seven tables corresponding to the specific ESI Funds 2021-2027 objectives and sub-objectives are combined with library projects for which information has been included in the answers to the “Survey on Sustainable Development Goals and their implementation in European libraries” - a Questionnaire sent to EBLIDA Members last March. For each ESIF objective, Column 1 designates the ERDF or ESF+ specific objective. Column 2 and 3 set, respectively, the related outputs and results indicated by ESIF official documents. It can be easily inferred that European Commission criteria for evaluation are quite general and do not get into the detail of the programmes. It is up to Member States to set additional criteria for evaluation.

Finally, Column 4 lists examples of library projects set up to pursue ESIF objectives or to attain specific Sustainable Development Goals. ESIF-funded and SDG-oriented library projects are therefore matched with specific ESIF 2021-2027 objectives and sub-objectives. *What is shown in the table is therefore a simulation*: under which presumed ESIF specific objective could SDG-oriented library projects have been funded, if they were to be presented within the ESIF 2021-2027 framework?

For each specific objective, one or more relevant EC programmes have also been indicated. This indication may provide for additional sources of funding opportunities or can be used as reference purpose for ESIF implementers.

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<sup>36</sup> Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund, Strasbourg, 29.5.2018, COM(2018) 372 final 2018/0197(COD) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0372&from=EN>.

<sup>37</sup> Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) Brussels, 30.5.2018 COM(2018) 382 final 2018/0206 (COD), <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2018/EN/COM-2018-382-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>

<sup>38</sup> The list, country after country, and region after region is available at the following link, [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/atlas/managing-authorities/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/managing-authorities/).



## 5.1 ESIF Objective 1 - ERDF: A smarter Europe from a library perspective

The specific objective (ii) Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies and governments, can be of interest to libraries in so far as it supports the development of digital products, services and applications in public institutions. Column 4 lists library projects which have shaped the implementation of the Agenda 2030 in several countries, as reported in the answers to the “Sustainable Development Goals and libraries: First European Report”, which are incoming at the EBLIDA Secretariat.

Horizon Europe and COSME are two of the EC programmes that should be taken into account for ESIF Objective 1. Horizon Europe identifies, among other things, key areas for research and innovation. COSME is the EU programme for Competitiveness of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises.

**ESIF Objective 1: Synoptic Table ERDF-SDG**

| Specific Objective  | Outputs   | Results   | Library projects  |
|---|---|---|---|
| (i) Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies    | CCO 01 - Enterprises supported to innovate<br>CCO 02 - Researchers working in supported research facilities   | CCR 01 – (SMEs introducing product, process, marketing or organisational innovation   |   |
| (ii) Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies and governments           | CCO 03 - Enterprises and public institutions supported to develop digital products, services and applications | CCR 02 - Additional users of new digital products, services and applications developed by enterprises and public institutions | National Library established as a technological Centre of Excellence (Bulgaria)<br>Digital literacy (Spain and many other countries)<br>Fight to fake news (France, Germany, Italy) |
| (iii) Enhancing growth and competitiveness of SMEs  | CCO 04 - SMEs supported to create jobs and growth   | CCR 03 - Jobs created in SMEs supported   |   |
| (iv) Developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship | CCO 05 - SMEs investing in skills development   | CCR 04 - SMEs staff benefiting from training for skills development   | Digital Skills for SME (Bulgaria)   |

## 5.2 ESIF Objective 2 - ERDF: A greener, low-carbon Europe

ESIF Objective 2 largely covers the environmental pillar of the European Union 2030 Agenda.

For reference purposes, the EC programme LIFE is dedicated to the environment and climate action.

**ESIF Objective 2: Synoptic Table ERDF-SDG**

| Specific objective  | Outputs  | Results  | Library projects   |
|---|--|--|--|
| (i) Promoting energy efficiency measures  | CCO 06 – Investments in measures to improve energy efficiency              | CCR 05 – Beneficiaries with improved energy classification   | Green libraries (France, Germany, Netherlands, etc)<br>Citizen Science projects            |
| (ii) Promoting renewable energy   | CCO 07 - Additional renewable energy production capacity                   | CCR 06 – Volume of additional renewable energy produced  |  |
| (iii) Developing smart energy systems, grids and storage at local level                             | CCO 08 - Digital management systems developed for smart grids              | CCR 07 - Additional users connected to smart grids   |  |
| (iv) Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience                   | CCO 09 - New or upgraded disaster monitoring, warning and response systems | CCR 08 - Additional population benefiting from protection measures against floods, forest fires, and other climate related natural disasters |  |
| (v) Promoting sustainable water management  | CCO 10 - New or upgraded capacity for waste water treatment                | CCR 09 - Additional population connected to at least secondary waste water treatment   |  |
| (vi) Promoting the transition to a circular economy   | CCO 11 – New or upgraded capacity for waste recycling                      | CCR 10 - Additional waste recycled   | Library projects concerning circular economy (Bulgaria)                                    |
| (vii) Enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution | CCO 12 - Surface area of green infrastructure in urban areas               | CCR 11 - Population benefiting from measures for air quality   | Air seekers (Belgium)<br>Restructuring Libraries and Libraries and urban gardens (Germany) |

## 5.3 ESIF Objective 3 - ERDF: A more connected Europe

ESIF Objective 3 mainly deals with mobility and enhanced and high-speed transporting systems. Therefore, it is of little relevance for library projects. Nevertheless, the enhancement of digital connectivity - Specific Objective (i) - cannot be realized without what IFLA defines as “meaningful” access to the Internet in its four facets: physical internet connectivity, skills, social and cultural context, and laws.

### ESIF Objective 3: Synoptic Table ERDF-SDG

| Specific objective  | Outputs   | Results  | Library projects                                  |
|---|---|--|---|
| (i) Enhancing digital connectivity  | CCO 13 - Additional households and enterprises with coverage by very high capacity broadband networks | CCR 12 - Additional households and enterprises with broadband subscriptions to a very high capacity networks | Digital literacy (Spain and many other countries) |
| (ii) Developing a sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent, secure and intermodal TEN-T  | CCO 14 – Road TEN-T: New and upgraded roads   | CCR 13 - Time savings due to improved road infrastructure  |   |
| (iii) Developing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility | CCO 15 – Rail TEN-T: New and upgraded railways  | CCR 14 - Annual number of passengers served by improved rail transport                                       |   |
| (iv) Promoting sustainable multimodal urban mobility  | CCO 16 - Extension and modernisation of tram and metro lines  | CCR 15 - Annual users served by new and modernised tram and metro lines                                      |   |

## 5.4 ESIF Objective 4 - ERDF and ESF+: A more social Europe

The European Social Pillar of Social Rights is structured in three chapters - equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions and social protection and inclusion - and twenty principles - going from education, training and life-long learning and gender equality to equal opportunities and access to essential services.<sup>39</sup> The European Social Pillar of Social Rights largely overlaps with the Social and Economic Pillars of the Agenda 2030. The reference EC programme for social rights is Erasmus +.

**ESIF Objective 4: Synoptic Table ERDF-SDG**

| Specific objective   | Outputs  | Results  | Library projects  |
|--|--|--|---|
| (i) Enhancing the effectiveness of labour markets and access to quality employment through developing social innovation and infrastructure   | CCO 17 - Annual unemployed persons served by enhanced facilities for employment services | CCR 16 - Job seekers using annually enhanced facilities for employment services        | BIST ( Bibliotheken im Stadtteil) I and II (Germany)<br>Ecrivain public in French public libraries  |
| (ii) Improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing infrastructure   | CCO 18 - New or upgraded capacity for childcare and education infrastructure             | CCR 17 - Annual users served by new or upgraded childcare and education infrastructure | Many education, training and lifelong learning projects all over Europe (also to be matched with Erasmus+)<br>Digital literacy (Spain)<br>Gender Equality (Spain) |
| (iii) Increasing the socio-economic integration of marginalised communities, migrants and disadvantaged groups, through integrated measures including housing and social services; | CCO 19 - Additional capacity of reception infrastructures created or upgraded            | CCR 18 - Annual users served by new and improved reception and housing facilities      | BIST ( Bibliotheken im Stadtteil) I and II (Germany)<br>FEAD projects (Netherlands)<br>Ecrivain public (France)<br>Treffpunkt Deutsch (Germany)                   |
| (iv) Ensuring equal access to health care through developing infrastructure, including primary care  | CCO 20 - New or upgraded capacity for health care infrastructure                         | CCR 19 - Population with access to improved health care services                       | 3D printers supplying masks (Lithuania)<br>Book start (Belgium, Netherlands)<br>Born to Read (Italy)  |

<sup>39</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en)

The ESF is Europe’s main instrument for supporting jobs, helping people get better jobs and ensuring fairer job opportunities for all EU citizens.<sup>40</sup> Specific objectives (i) to (iv) concern access to employment, labour market, education, training and lifelong learning.<sup>41</sup>

**ESIF Objective 4: Synoptic Table ESF+-SDG (i-iv)**

|       | Specific objective  | Output   | Results   | Library projects  |
|-------|---|--|---|---|
| (i)   | improving access to employment of all jobseekers, in particular youth and long term unemployed, and of inactive people, promoting self-employment and the social economy;   | * Personal data (Art 4(1) Regulation (EU) 2016/679)<br>** special category of data (Art 9 Regulation(EU) 2016/679).<br><br>(1a) Common output indicators for participants<br>– unemployed, including long-term unemployed*, – long-term unemployed*, – inactive*, – employed, including self-employed*, – below 30 years of age *, – above 54 years of age*, – with lower secondary education or less (ISCED 0-2)*, – with upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary education (ISCED 4)*, – with tertiary education (ISCED 5 to 8)*.              | (3) The common immediate result indicators for participants are:<br>– participants engaged in job searching upon leaving*, – participants in education or training upon leaving*, – participants gaining a qualification upon leaving*, – participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving*.<br><br>(4) Common longer-term result indicators for participants:<br>– participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving*, – participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving*. | Digital literacy (Spain and other countries)<br>FEAD projects (Netherlands)   |
| (ii)  | modernising labour market institutions and services to assess and anticipate skills needs and ensure timely and tailor-made assistance and support to labour market matching, transitions and mobility;   | (1b) Other common output indicators: – participants with disabilities**, – third country nationals*, – participants with a foreign background*, – minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)**, – homeless or affected by housing exclusion*,<br>(2) Common output indicators for entities are: – number of supported public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level, – number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, social enterprises). |   |   |
| (iii) | promoting equal access to and completion of, quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, and to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all; |  |   | Many education, training and lifelong learning projects all over Europe (also to be matched with Erasmus+)<br>Digital Skills for SME (Bulgaria) |
| (iv)  | promoting lifelong learning, notably flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility;   |  |   |   |

<sup>40</sup> Article 4 of the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) Brussels, 30.5.2018 COM(2018) 382 final 2018/0206 (COD), <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2018/EN/COM-2018-382-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>

<sup>41</sup> Annexes to the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9573-2018-ADD-2/en/pdf>.

Specific objective (v) to (xi) concern social inclusion and integration as well as equal access to services.

**ESIF Objective 4: Synoptic Table ESF+-SDG (v-xi)**

|        | Specific objective  | Outputs  | Results   | Library projects   |
|--------|---|--|---|--|
| (v)    | fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability;  | * Personal data (Art 4(1) Regulation (EU) 2016/679)<br>** special category of data (Art 9 Regulation(EU) 2016/679).  | (3) The common immediate result indicators for participants are:<br>– participants engaged in job searching upon leaving*, – participants in education or training upon leaving*, – participants gaining a qualification upon leaving*, – participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving*. | Gender Equality (Spain)<br>Ecrivain public in French public libraries<br>FEAD projects (Netherlands)       |
| (vi)   | promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals and of marginalised communities such as the Roma;   | (1a) Common output indicators for participants<br>– unemployed, including long-term unemployed*, – long-term unemployed*, – inactive*, – employed, including self-employed*, – below 30 years of age *, – above 54 years of age*, – with lower secondary education or less (ISCED 0-2)*, – with upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary education (ISCED 4)*, – with tertiary education (ISCED 5 to 8)*.   |   | Media Literacy for All and E-skills for E-inclusion (Bulgaria)<br>Digital literacy (Spain)                 |
| (vii)  | enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection; improving accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services;   | (1b) Other common output indicators: – participants with disabilities**, – third country nationals*, – participants with a foreign background*, – minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)**, – homeless or affected by housing exclusion*,<br>(2) Common output indicators for entities are: – number of supported public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level, – number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, social enterprises). | (4) Common longer-term result indicators for participants: – participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving*, – participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving*.   | Book start (Belgium, Netherlands)  |
| (viii) | promoting social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including the most deprived and children;  |  |   | FEAD projects (Netherlands)<br>Ecrivain public (France)  |
| (ix)   | promoting equal access to and completion of, quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, and to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all; |  |   | Many education, training and lifelong learning projects all over Europe (also to be matched with Erasmus+) |
| (x)    | promoting social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including the most deprived and children;  |  |   | Ecrivain public  |
| (xi)   | addressing material deprivation through food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived.   |  |   |  |



## 5.5 ESIF Objective 5 - ERDF: a Europe closer to citizens

There are two specific objectives linked with the implementation of ESIF Objective 5: the first is related to urban development and the second to rural and coastal areas in their integrated social, economic and environmental aspects. Only one indicator, however, is applied: the population covered by strategies for integrated urban development.

**ESIF Objective 5: Synoptic Table ERDF-SDG**

| Specific objective   | Outputs  | Results | Library projects   |
|--|--|---------|--|
| (i) Fostering the integrated social, economic and environmental development, cultural heritage and security in urban areas | CCO 21 - Population covered by strategies for integrated urban development |         | Agrolib – Ja (Republic of Serbia);<br>Biblionet (Romania)<br>Cultural heritage library projects in many countries (Bulgaria-Romania, Bulgaria-Turkey, States bordering the Adriatic Sea)<br>Library campaigns promoting biodiversity on land and water<br>Libraries promoting democratic participation |

### Culture and the European Structural and Investment Funds (2007-2013)<sup>42</sup>

Culture was mentioned several times in the ERDF regulation, the focus being essentially on cultural heritage and tourism. Differences exist whether investments in culture were made in regions which are part of the Convergence, Competitiveness and Territorial Cooperation Objectives.

In Convergence regions, investment in culture included the protection, promotion and preservation of cultural heritage; the development of cultural infrastructure in support of socioeconomic development, sustainable tourism and improved regional attractiveness; and aid to improve the supply of cultural services through new higher added-value services.

Investments in culture in Competitiveness regions included the protection and enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage in support of socioeconomic development and the promotion of natural and cultural assets as potential for the development of sustainable tourism.

In territorial cooperation regions emphasis was put on culture encouraging entrepreneurship, in particular the development of SMEs, tourism, culture, and cross-border trade; encourages and improves the joint protection and management of natural and cultural resources; develops collaboration, capacity and joint use of infrastructures, in particular in sectors such as health, culture, tourism and education.

Strongly emphasised in ERDF, the direct relationship between tourism and culture has represented the bulk of investments in cultural projects for the years 2007-2013. Culture, however, cannot be seen only as touristic attraction; ERDF texts recommend to go beyond preservation of heritage and the “cultural tourism approach” by improving “the supply of cultural services through new higher added-value services” and encouraging entrepreneurship within the cultural field – the delivery of cultural and creative contents through innovative high-value services.

When we come to ESF, no ESF regulation makes specific reference to culture, as we have seen in the previous paragraphs. Within ESF, emphasis at national level goes to integration and re-entry into employment. Little attention is paid to unemployment in the cultural sector or how artists can contribute to building self-confidence and creative skills for new and better jobs. However, in projects where the link between culture and unemployment was clear, culture-based interventions were supported within ESF.

The EU Cohesion Policy (CP) is a shared competence of the Union and its Member States. Member States enforce CP through the so-called National Strategic Frameworks, which outline the country’s main strengths and needs and include a list of Operational Programmes (OPs) containing investment priorities, actions and eligibility criteria to access funds, in line with Cohesion Policy’s overall principles and objectives. In 2007-2013, 455 OPs were adopted and none of them entirely dedicated to culture. In national and regional Operational Programmes, ERDF and ESF budgets were allocated to culture through 3 main category codes which stem from the regulations’ investment priorities and actions:

- a) Protection and preservation of cultural heritage
- b) Development of cultural infrastructure
- c) Other assistance to improve cultural services

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<sup>42</sup> Information for this paragraph is extracted from: Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy. Ex post evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes 2007- 2013, focusing on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF). Authors: María Iglesias, Philippe Kern, Valentina Montalto. Brussels: European Union, 2012.

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/expost2013/wp9\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/expost2013/wp9_final_report.pdf)

Although on a much smaller scale, most Structural Funds were allocated to the protection and preservation of cultural heritage (€ 3 billion), followed by the development of cultural infrastructure (€ 2.2 billion) and support of cultural services (€ 775 million). National and regional stakeholders were able to get funding under priorities other than tourism development, by showing how cultural investments impact on jobs creation or attractiveness, on entrepreneurship, skills development or social innovation. Culture was seen as:

- A “soft location” factor, having an attractiveness potential for regions and cities towards business, highly-skilled staff as well as potential local inhabitants, especially through the re-generation and development of cultural assets and the supply of cultural services;
- A tool to create more and better jobs, although the link between this priority and the investment in cultural infrastructure remains little explored in the text;
- A motor for tourism-led economic development (including in rural areas), especially through the preservation and development of cultural assets and the setting up of integrated development strategies including cultural heritage.

#### *The economic dimension and a few examples*

For the 2007-2013 programme period, a total of €347.4 billion was earmarked for EU cohesion policy over the seven-year period. Out of these funds, 82% was to be focused on the ‘Convergence’ regions’ (which house 35% of the EU’s population). In the remaining regions, some €55 billion was allocated under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective. Another €8.7 billion was made available for cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation under the European Territorial Cooperation objective. In terms of overall absorption rates for 2007-2013, these ranged between 65.64% (Croatia, ESF) and 100% for several countries (ERDF – LX, DK, EL, NL; ESF – EL, PL, MT, DK, LX, LV, IE, PT; CF – PL, CZ, EL and PT). Greece, and Denmark appear to have been the two MS that absorbed 100% of all funds for which they were eligible.

In global terms, the culture and creative sectors represent almost 3% of the EU GDP and 6 million jobs in Europe. Between 1993 and 2002, the sector grew much faster than the manufacturing industry and its total turnover is higher than that of the automobile industry. The European cultural policy implemented by the European Commission benefited from a budget of about € 1.18 billion (Culture and MEDIA Programmes). This was small sum in relation to investments realized within the framework of innovation and cohesion policies. Cultural projects were assigned some €6 billion over the period 2007-2013 - out of €347 billion distributed to EU Member States and regions to achieve Cohesion Policy’s goals.

This figure is certainly underestimating the overall funding provided to culture under headings such as innovation or support to entrepreneurship. Culture, like environment, can be carefully “mined” to attain policy objectives such as :

- improve social cohesion;
- increase knowledge;
- protect and promote heritage;
- develop the local economy.

With regards to culture, a very good initial overview can be derived from the ex-post evaluations of the 2007-2013 programme period as this included a work package (WP9) dedicated to culture and tourism. The total amount of 2007-2013 ERDF funding allocated to culture and tourism is some EUR 14.4 billion.

**2007-2013 Culture, heritage and tourism spending per Member State  
European Union (EU)**

| <b>Country</b> | <b>National/regional OPs –<br/>value in M. €</b> | <b>% of National<br/>ERDF/CF</b> | <b>Allocated to selected<br/>projects - (in M. €)</b> |
|----------------|--|----------------------------------|---|
| PL             | 1,996.0  | 2.97%                            | 1,948.6   |
| IT             | 1,372.1  | 4.91%                            | 1,195.6   |
| CZ             | 1,181.0  | 4.52%                            | 961.8   |
| Cross-Border   | 937.0  | 11.74%                           | 1,105.4   |
| HU             | 717.7  | 2.88%                            | 1,110.7   |
| RO             | 594.8  | 3.12%                            | 580.5   |
| GR             | 582.4  | 2.88%                            | 938.7   |
| ES             | 553.6  | 1.60%                            | 619.2   |
| DE             | 515.9  | 2.02%                            | 531.7   |
| PT             | 421.9  | 1.97%                            | 414.7   |
| SK             | 377.2  | 3.28%                            | 308.9   |
| FR             | 289.5  | 2.14%                            | 309.8   |
| LT             | 184.9  | 2.73%                            | 185.2   |
| EE             | 149.1  | 4.38%                            | 149.2   |
| BG             | 118.0  | 1.77%                            | 167.2   |
| SI             | 113.8  | 2.78%                            | 233.0   |
| MT             | 100.1  | 11.92%                           | 101.4   |
| LV             | 84.7   | 1.87%                            | 50.8  |
| UK             | 69.4   | 0.70%                            | 104.0   |
| FI             | 66.6   | 4.17%                            | 95.4  |
| NL             | 41.2   | 2.48%                            | 72.9  |
| BE             | 38.6   | 1.87%                            | 83.0  |
| SE             | 31.0   | 1.91%                            | 59.3  |
| HR             | 30.2   | 3.51%                            | 45.7  |
| AT             | 23.0   | 1.93%                            | 16.4  |
| DK             | 12.3   | 2.40%                            | 8.9   |
| CY             | 11.9   | 1.94%                            | 11.9  |
| IE             | 0.5  | 0.07%                            | 0.8   |

**Source:** DG REGIO (2016), Ex post evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes 2007- 2013, focusing on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF) Work Package 9: Culture and Tourism Final Report, Contract: 2014CE16BAT034.

The authors of the study came to the conclusion that it is “likely to be an underestimate of the total ERDF amount allocated to culture and tourism, because SMEs operating in these sectors may have been supported indirectly under other ERDF categories too.”<sup>43</sup>

Projects for libraries and cultural centres may also have been funded in a “hidden” way under other ERDF priorities. It is very likely that cultural and social projects linked with urban and rural regeneration, the development of special services for employment, training and support in connection with restructuring of sectors, active ageing, women participation, and lifelong learning have been included into ERDF priorities, such as “IT services and infrastructure”, “Environment”, “Urban and territorial dimension”, “Labour market”, “Social inclusion” and “Human capital”.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, p. 51.

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/expost2013/wp9\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/expost2013/wp9_final_report.pdf)

### *Which projects were financed?*

As a matter of exemplification, here are some of the cultural projects that were funded under ESI Funds.

In France, the Quartier de la Création in Nantes was revitalised by regenerating a former industrial area of 15 ha entirely renovated thanks to culture. Nantes Métropole spent 18% of its ERDF budget (around €54 million) on projects related to urban regeneration and attractiveness (2007-2013). Out of this, about €9.2 million were linked to culture investment in the city, mainly to build new cultural infrastructure on the Nantes island. Quartier de la Création has the following objectives:

- To promote culture on the island
- To build a centre for arts education (the architecture school opened in 2009 and the art school, graphic art school will move into the area to reinvest in the industry of the 21st century)
- To set up an ecosystem for creative and cultural businesses.

On a smaller scale, the Cinémathèque de Bretagne in France (Brittany, a Convergence region) invested about € 351.000 (€ 175.000 of which coming from the ERDF) to create a new database for managing films and documents and providing services such as dissemination of cultural information on films and pictures sale, and to launch a website providing online access to digitised films.

In Berlin, Germany, the Kreativ Coaching Centre (KCC) was founded in 2009 to advise the young creative companies on business plans and bank loans, or to help companies which have grown rapidly with their marketing campaigns. Zukunft Berlin (which also includes the BIST I and II library programmes, see p. 22) was supported through the ERDF. The project also benefited from the INTERREG IVC project Creative Metropolises, focused on the exchange of experience on policies and successful instruments to support creative industries. With a view to addressing financing problems for Culture and Creative Industries, Berlin implemented a venture capital model specifically aimed at the culture and creative industry sector.

Creative "Spillovers" for Innovation aims to create a Thematic Network across Europe which addresses the challenges of how best to connect cultural and creative industries, including sectors such as audiovisual, design, advertising, architecture and video games, with other sectors, to stimulate the effects of "spill over". Involved cities are: Birmingham (UK), Óbidos (Portugal), Bologna (Italy), Košice (Slovakia), Essen (Germany), Tallinn (Estonia), Mons (Belgium), Rotterdam (Netherlands), Kortrijk (Belgium).

When EU Structural Funds 2014-2020 took over, it was recommended to depart from the assumption that culture is no thematic priority. It was also emphasised that the protection and promotion of cultural heritage is encompassed by ERDF and that the ESF regulation only refers to the contribution of cultural competences and skills to inclusive growth and social innovation.

## Culture and the European Structural and Investment Funds (2014-2020)<sup>44</sup>

### *Culture and educational programmes in some Member States*

The recommendation to insert a chapter explicitly addressing culture as a Structural Funds theme was taken into account by the successor ESIF 2014-2020, with a main focus on ERDF and ESF. What follows is only a partial list of cultural projects funded within the ESI Funds in several Member States.

ESIF 2014-2020 assignment was distributed as follows:

- Convergence (81% of the funds) for the least developed regions with GDP per capita at below 75% of EU average;
- Regional competitiveness and employment (15.95%) for the regions not covered by the Convergence Objective and those that benefit from the transitional support for regions affected by the enlargement statistical effect;
- Territorial co-operation (2.52%) for regions situated along internal land borders, certain external land borders and certain regions situated along maritime borders separated by a maximum of 150 km.

In the same period, 2014-2020, ERDF (European Regional Development Fund), ESF (European Social Fund) and CF (Cohesion Fund) supported 11 investment priorities, also known as thematic objectives (TO):

1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation;
2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT);
3. Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs);
4. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors;
5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management;
6. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency;
7. Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures;
8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility;
9. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination;
10. Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning;
11. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration.

Culture cuts across many policy fields, from education to research, from social cohesion to external relations. Significant EU funding is available for culture in other programmes. In the 2014-2020 period, the overall funding available for culture from the European Structural and Investment Funds can be estimated at over EUR 9 billion, far beyond the financial capacities of the Creative Europe programme.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> European Parliament. Research for CULT Committee - ESIF and culture, education, youth & sport – the use of European Structural and Investment Funds in policy areas of the Committee on Culture & Education. Author: The Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services LLP (CSES), Mike Coyne, Malin Carlberg, Caroline Chandler, Eugenie Lale-Demoz. Bruxelles, 2018,

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL\\_STU\(2018\)617475](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU(2018)617475)

<sup>45</sup> Answers to the European Parliament Questionnaire to the Commissioner – designate Mariya Gabriel Commissioner-designate for Innovation and Youth,

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/sites/comm-cwt2019/files/commissioner\\_ep\\_hearings/answers-ep-questionnaire-gabriel.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/sites/comm-cwt2019/files/commissioner_ep_hearings/answers-ep-questionnaire-gabriel.pdf).

*Czech Republic.* The Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP) is improving public administration and public services in the Czech Republic, particularly in the areas of education, health care, social services, social inclusion, regional transport, urban development, and culture. Among the funding priorities, IROP addresses a better connectivity of the regions and improvement in the use of ICT tools for public administration, also upgrading the most important national cultural heritage sites. Among the expected impact there is a 4% increase of number of visitors to national cultural heritage sites and 50 % increase of e-government activities.

*Denmark.* A large majority of ERDF support (€193 million) involves the development of skills and competences within ESF expenditure as an aspect of human resource development. Denmark has a legacy of support for culture and the creative sector but a clearer picture for ESIF supporting culture is not possible. South Denmark, in particular, has promoted the cultural sector for many years. In the current period, a project on 'Creativity and Entrepreneurship', with a budget of €4,773,839 and an EU contribution of € 2,148, 227 is being supported and is contributing currently to the regional smart specialisation strategy.

*France.* France was allocated €26.9 billion from the ESIF for the period 2014-2020, out of a total European budget of €454 billion. France's national contribution for this period totals €8.8 billion. Direct funding for sport and culture was explicitly ruled out by the national Partnership Agreement, since sports and culture policy are highly centralised in France and it may have been difficult to incorporate these themes into the decentralised ESIFs. ESI Funds for culture can mainly be seen in the form of support for the construction of infrastructure such as libraries and media libraries - or *médiathèques*.

*Germany.* Germany was allocated €27.9 billion from the ESIF for the period 2014-2020, out of a total European budget of €454 billion. In addition, Germany's national contribution for this period totals € 16.8 billion.

Cultural policy is largely a regional competence in Germany. Cultural projects are typically linked to SME support or tourism infrastructure. In rural regions, specific support is provided under the ERDF to improve the Internet presence of local cultural offerings. In urban areas, the focus lies on restoration of culturally important structures and funding of the creative sector is seen as supporting urban regeneration. Funding allocated to projects in culture and the creative sector is marginal, however.

*Ireland.* In Ireland, €3.4 billion was allocated from the ESIF for the period 2014-2020, out of a total European budget of €454 billion and Ireland's national contribution for this period totals €2.8 billion.

Operational programmes which are funding cultural interventions and tourism are among the most effective; in terms of culture and tourism, the key objectives of the activities have been to create jobs in the wider tourism industry and upskilling and job creation also appear to be the main impacts from the education and training projects found.

*Italy.* Italy was allocated €44.7 billion from the ESIF for the period 2014-2020, out of a total European budget of €454 billion. In addition, Italy's national contribution for this period totals €31.5 billion. A National Operational Programme on Culture has the objective to increase the attractiveness of cultural heritage in less developed regions of Italy (Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria and Sicilia) and shape a more consistent touristic demand and adequate cultural activity as well as to sustain and promote the reinforcement of creative and cultural enterprises. The Culture and Development Operational Programme has a budget of € 368,200,000 for the period 2014-2020.

The programme aims concretely at preserving major cultural sites in the southern regions of Italy (the renovation of the Archaeological Museum of Naples, the archaeological sites of Pompei and Ercolano, the Carthusian monastery of Padula, Manduria's excavations, the monastery of Saint Mary of the Justice in Taranto, the National Museum of Reggio Calabria, and the Sibari area) and promoting an efficient use of their cultural resources as well as reinforcing the productive sector linked to the exploitation of the cultural heritage by promoting entrepreneurship, by supporting cultural and creative SMEs and by reinforcing enterprises in the non-profit sector. Italy has an OP dedicated to culture in the current period – the Culture and Development Operational Programme, which has a budget of € 368,200,000 for the period 2014-2020.

| Axes   | Financial Allocation |                       |                    |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
|  | ERDF                 | National Contribution | Total              |
| Strengthening cultural heritage (TO 6)                                     | 270,170,418          | 90,056,806            | 360,227,224        |
| Activation of territorial development potential, related to culture (TO 3) | 85,510,782           | 28,503,594            | 114,014,376        |
| Technical assistance   | 12,518,800           | 4,172,934             | 16,691,734         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>368,200,000</b>   | <b>122,733,334</b>    | <b>490,933,334</b> |

The impact of the ESIF-funded initiatives concerning art and, in particular, the effect of the Operational Programme “Culture and Development” has been very positive. As a result of the restorations financed by the ESIF, 560,000 more tourists are expected to visit Italian heritage sites in the 2014-2020 period, bringing the average total number of yearly visitors to over 4 million. Restoration works have covered a surface of over 277,000 square meters.

Regarding the beneficiaries of ESIF- support, in Sicily over €8 million has been allocated to the historical town of Caltagirone, to open the National Ceramics Museum in March 2021. Furthermore €5 million was destined for the revitalisation of the historic tobacco factory in Catania, which is projected to become a cultural hub of the city. These examples show the impact that ESIF-funded cultural initiatives have on the revitalisation of both urban (Catania) and rural (Caltagirone) areas in Sicily, one of the least developed regions in the country.

The OP “Culture and Development” and the initiatives “Culture Creates” appeared to have had a positive impact on Italian SMEs operating in the cultural sectors. The latter programme supports entrepreneurial initiatives in the cultural sector of the six least developed Italian regions: Sicily, Calabria, Campania, Apulia and Basilicata. It provides support in the form of interest-free loans for start-ups in the cultural sector. 118 SMEs received financial support worth over €18 million; this increased employment in the sector, as 283 new workers were hired. As a result of the programme, private investment in the cultural sector is projected to increase from 6.9% to 7.1% of the regional GDP in these regions.

A special programme has also been enforced in the Puglia region the preservation and the protection of the environment and the promotion of resource efficiency, the improvement of the urban environment and regeneration and decontamination of brownfield sites, and the conservation, protection and the promotion of natural and cultural heritage > € 571 million (20.48% ERDF).

*The Netherlands.* The operational programme promotes business investment in Research and Investment (R&I); develops links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres, knowledge institutions and the higher education sector; and encourage innovation through smart specialisation strategies. The share of innovative SMEs which cooperate with other enterprises and knowledge institutions should increase from 31% to 35%.

*Poland.* The Operational Programme on Infrastructure and Environment envisages a set of measures to support the further shift of Poland towards a more competitive and low-carbon economy. Among the various objectives health and culture is one of the envisaged priorities. The partnership agreement between Poland and the European Commission, signed in 2014 and amended in 2017, put a strong emphasis on culture and education and, to a more limited extent, tourism. Support for culture is mainly for cultural infrastructure and the renovation of national monuments such as churches or castles and is also linked with the strengthening of Poland’s potential as a tourism destination. A further objective is support for increasing the participation of Polish citizens in culture, in co-ordination with the “Creative Europe” actions. A budget of €1,198 million has been allocated to cultural projects.

*Romania.* The Competitiveness Operational Programme addresses the challenges stemming from the low support for research, development and innovation (RDI) and the under-developed information and



communication technologies (ICT) services and infrastructure. The main direction of investment in RDI is to build a more compact and modern R&D environment. In the area of ICT, one of the areas covered is the use of ICT in education, health, social inclusion and culture.

*Slovakia.* Slovakia has been allocated €15.3 billion from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for the period 2014-2020, out of a total European budget of €454 billion. In addition, Slovakia's national contribution for this period totals €4.3 billion. Cultural intervention and activities oriented at cultural workers (and not only) is the target of the Operational Programme of Human Resources, financed by the ESF, ERDF and YEI which has a EU financial allocation of €2.21 billion. Another Fund - the Integrated Regional Programme ERDF - receives a financial allocation of €1.73 billion. It is worth noting that TO 10: investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning by developing education and training infrastructure with a series of interventions, focused on the provision of facilities in kindergartens, libraries, sport areas for children, vocational schools, etc.

The ESF supports five different Investment priorities for TO 8 (promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility) and 10 with several interventions such as support programmes for employment for people at risk of social exclusion; promotion of innovative and alternative forms of education and teaching methods; programmes for prevention of school failure; counselling for students with special needs.

*Spain.* Spain has been allocated €39.8 billion of the ESIF support for the period 2014-2020, out of a total European budget of €454 billion. In addition, Spain's national contribution for this period totals €16.3 billion. Spain has one national Operational Programmes for Youth Employment and another for Social Inclusion and the Social Economy. In the areas of sport, culture and the creative sector, there are 17 Regional Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation. About 13 regions include the four areas of interest among the priorities of their strategies.

#### *The economic dimension of culture (ESIF, 2014-2020)*

In terms of employment, the culture sector in Europe is accounting for 6.5 million jobs (nearly 3% of all people employed) in 2015, with a recorded 7% increase in employment numbers over the period 2011 to 2015. By December 2017, the number of jobs in the cultural and creative industries sector in Europe had increased further – to 8.4 million people (3.7% of total employment). The patterns of employment are also of interest. The culture sector is marked by high-levels of self-employment (15% of all those employed), higher than average levels of young people and a higher proportion of employees with tertiary education (approximately double the EU average).

The cultural and creative sectors generate an estimated 4.2% of EU GDP and are believed to be the fastest growing sector of the economy. They make up nearly 4.5% of the European economy and include nearly 1.4 million small and medium-sized businesses. Furthermore, the cultural and creative sectors have shown great resilience during the crisis, continuing to grow as the economy overall struggled, and stimulating creativity and innovation spillovers in other sectors. However, cultural and creative industries are faced with specific obstacles, including limited recognition of the sector's dynamic contribution to the European economy and a resulting difficulty in gaining access to traditional sources of finance.

Culture has been indicated as a significant source of growth and dynamism in the European economy with fast growth (especially in many of Europe's major cities) and the potential to generate creativity, innovation and enterprise across a wide range of activities. It has already been pointed out that between 2007 and 2013, EU expenditure on culture under Cohesion policy was planned to be more than €6 billion, representing 1.7% of the total Structural Fund budget. Additional programmes and projects directed to other objectives, but with cultural elements, may suggest that this figure represented only about half of the total amount that culture-related projects were receiving in that period. Allocations to culture represent considerably less than the share of the cultural and creative industries in national economies, through which

culture makes a substantial direct contribution, in terms of income generated and people employed, as well as a major contribution to social wellbeing and to the development and maintenance of social capital.

At a European level a number of these organisations are brought together in the European Creative Business Network, while Culture Action Europe brings together a wider group of individuals and organisations promoting culture as a dynamic force in Europe. These are precisely the type of organisation or network that can formulate convincing proposals for the use of the ESIF for culture-based activities.

It is not yet possible to have definitive, unambiguous figures setting out ESIF expenditure on culture. A high potential for cultural projects is to be found in the following Thematic Objectives:

TO 1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation;  
TO 9. Promoting social inclusion, and combating poverty and all forms of discrimination;

and to a lesser extent:

TO 2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies;  
TO 8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility;  
TO 10. Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning.

#### *Lessons to be drawn from ESIF 2014-2020*

ESIFs and other public funds can be used to foster the potential of culture for local, regional and national development. In general, culture is often associated with tourism and its impact on the social and economic development. After all, Europe is the world's number one tourist destination.

In a few countries and regions, investments on culture and the creative sector have been made with a view to identifying regional smart specialisation strategies. Experiences of this kind have taken place in Catalonia (Spain), where groups of enterprises and stakeholders come together in research and innovation communities and, in the 2015-17 period, one such community funded by the ERDF operated in the 'cultural and experience-based industries'. In Scotland (United Kingdom), creative industries are an important element in local ESIF programmes. In Bulgaria the theme of new technologies also targets the creative and re-creative industries. Other experiences took place in South Denmark and in North Jutland (Denmark), in North Rhine Westphalia, Berlin, Brandenburg, Hamburg and Bremen (Germany) with a focus on media and the creative industries, networking platforms, games and edutainment, creative society. In Slovakia, culture as a prospective area of specialisation aims to implement new technologies allowing the transmission, processing and storage of data; and the use of smart technologies for the intelligent management of smart products consumption.

Other examples where successful strategies took place, in Austria, Finland, the Polish region Silesia, Spain and Sweden, where culture and creative industries were integrated into EU policy agendas by linking them with the digital economy agenda, together with training and continuous professional development.

Synergy between culture and education in the use of ESI Funds would benefit important cultural sectors, such as libraries. The promotion of equal access to education and lifelong learning, the implementation of socially inclusive programmes facilitating education and training for labour mobility and employability, the diffusion of ICTs and facilitating access to research are typically occurring in the realm of libraries. Culture has a high profile in Italy and Poland, it has a contributory factor in urban and rural development and the role for culture in making cities and even smaller towns more attractive places to live and work is recognized. It contributes to a more successful tourism policy (Italy) or in design and in marketing (Denmark).

Overall, though, it does not appear that the cultural and creative industries are noticeably increasing their presence in actions supported by the ESIF. The current levels of involvement are not commensurate with the sector's current importance in the economy of the EU. This may be partly due to the processes of concentration in the design of national strategies and operational programmes. People on the ground are perhaps better able to see how the cultural and creative sector is able to contribute to the development of regional and local economies in ways that are more apparent than at more strategic levels.

In spite of this assessment, the potential contributions of culture can still be seen to be wide-ranging and multi-faceted. It is useful to distinguish between the contributions to economic development and those that have more social effects. Within each of these areas, distinctions can be made between the direct effects of cultural and creative activity on the economy and on skills, more indirect or spin-off effects and finally the more strategic role that culture can play. The European Parliament *Research for CULT Committee ESIF and Culture, Education, Youth & Sport. The use of European Structural and Investment Funds in policy areas of the Committee* formulates the following advocacy arguments for the formulation of cultural projects in ESI Funds:

1. Direct support to cultural organisations can enhance the economic activity of cultural organisations, grants and other support to enterprises and organisation providing cultural experiences.
2. Direct effects also concern the development/preservation of cultural facilities (galleries, theatres and other cultural infrastructure) and of cultural heritage (sites, monuments etc.).
3. Direct support contributes to urban development & regeneration through the attractiveness of urban environments, property development and the increase of land value, urban regeneration and the building up of social capital & public value.
4. Environmental impact increases the energy efficiency of cultural businesses and facilities;
5. Culture acts as a focal point for business and attracting inward investment;
6. Creates direct employment in cultural and creative activity (media coverage, advertisement);
7. Indirectly, it has multiplier effects in industries such as construction and those from attracting mobile skilled and professional labour;
8. And develops a series of related activities that re-inforce each other, as part of a regional strategy in which culture and related activities have a central place: for example, cultural activities, supported by training and facilities development.
9. Improving cultural and creative skills & competences includes the training of performers and administrators and investment in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning.

There are a number of common elements across the culture, education, youth and sports, as the following trends demonstrate:

- not only through formal educational and training processes, but also through less formal processes that help to deliver other objectives, such as innovation.
- Education and training are a delivery mechanism which are the basis of a modern economy and society, and develop key human values, especially in younger people.
- Culture is particularly powerful as vehicle for engaging with disaffected individuals and communities.
- The infrastructure of education, culture and sport helps to define the character and feel of many cities. It makes them attractive places in which to work and live.
- Education, culture and sport, each are labour-intensive and generate high quality jobs that will become increasingly important as technology replaces humans in other activities.

Common trends can also be found with other EU programmes, such as Creative Europe, "European Capitals of Culture" and the "European Heritage Label". "Creative Europe" was launched in 2014, following the successful implementation of the Culture and MEDIA programmes, and now represents a consolidated framework programme supporting Europe's cultural and creative sectors. Nonetheless the

main components of the programme support respectively the cultural sector and the audio-visual sector, though these in turn are supported by a cross-sectoral strand that includes a Guarantee Facility and transnational policy cooperation. Other initiatives, such as the “European Capitals of Culture” and the “European Heritage Label” are known to have useful links with actions supported by the ESIF. Interaction between ESIF and the European Capitals of Culture programmes can be very productive, as we will see below.

**Potential interaction between ESIF and the other funds EU programme**

| EC Programme                        | Main aims   | Culture, Sport, Youth, Ed. & Training                          | ESIF similarities  | ESIF differences  | Complementarity assessment   | Co-funding?                         |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Erasmus+</b>                     | Implemented at national level; Generally different priorities: creative industries focus. | E&T (high)<br>Sport - High<br>Youth -high<br>Cult- medium      | Implemented at MS level with similar aims and focus                |   | High complementarity in terms of policy area (culture)   | Little evidence                     |
| <b>Creative Europe</b>              | Direct funding to cultural, creative and audio-visual sectors                             | Culture - high<br>E&T - medium<br>Youth - medium<br>Sport -low | Focus on culture for social benefits                               | Implemented nationally with different priorities and focus on creative industries | Low complementarity since instruments differ; bilateral projects and cultural cooperation  | Little evidence of co-funding       |
| <b>European Capital of Cultures</b> | Richness and diversity of EU cultures - cities are at the heart of culture.               | Culture - high<br>Youth - medium<br>E&T -low<br>Sport –low     | Focus on cultural events for economic and social benefits          | National level; a different city each year.                                       | Medium / high, projects apply to other EU funding, such as ESF training and investments in cultural heritage and infrastructure through ESF. | Medium/ High evidence of co-funding |
| <b>European Heritage Label</b>      | Symbolic value to EU heritage   | Culture (High)<br>E&T (low)<br>Sport (low)<br>Youth (low)      | Focus on common culture to boost tourism and for economic benefits | Implemented at national level with no EU funding                                  | Medium, no funding from EHL; MS can use ESF funds to restore sites   | High evidence of co-funding         |

Source: European Parliament Think Tank. Research for CULT Committee - ESIF and culture, education, youth & sport – the use of European Structural and Investment Funds in policy areas of the Committee on Culture & Education (15-05-2018) p. 110.