## Fund synopsis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>One of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>European (2014 – 2020)</td>
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</table>
| Fund amount               | • Total **EU Cohesion Fund** 2014 - 2020 budget €352 billion (£260 billion)
                          | • UK EU Cohesion Fund allocation 2014 - 2020 €11.8 billion (£8.8 billion);
                          | €5 billion (£3.7 billion) from the ESF and €7 billion (£5.1 billion) from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) |

## Fund purpose

**Overview**

The **European Social Fund** (ESF) is the central tool for the implementation of the EUs social and labour market policy. It invests in the EUs human capital and works by funding local, regional and national projects targeting poverty, good working conditions and inclusion across all EU Member States. In the new funding period 2014 – 2020, the ESF will focus on four central goals: creating decent work, promoting social inclusion, supporting better training and education and improving the quality of public administration.

The EU is committed to creating more, and better, jobs and a socially inclusive society. These goals are at the core of the **Europe 2020** strategy for generating smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the EU. The current economic crisis is making this an even more demanding challenge. The ESF is playing an important role in meeting Europe's goals, and in mitigating the consequences of the current economic climate, especially the rise in unemployment and poverty levels.

The ESF is delivered through an Operational Programme. Each Member State agrees on one or more Operational Programmes for ESF funding for the seven-year programming period. Operational Programmes describe the priorities for ESF activities and their objectives and are drawn up at national level in partnership with the EU Commission. The **English Operational Programme** is still in draft form following a consultation in April 2014. The Scotland, Wales and NI Operational Programmes have been **adopted** by the European Commission.

The ESF is delivered in partnership through projects that are run by a range of organisations known as beneficiaries. These projects benefit their participants, usually individuals, but also companies and organisations.

The fund is delivered through a principle of co-finance, whereby ESF funds are always accompanied by private or other public finance.
## Aims and objectives

The ESF will focus on four central goals:

- Creating decent work
- Promoting social inclusion
- Supporting better training
- Improving the quality of public administration

## Priorities

The European Commission and EU countries in partnership set the ESF’s priorities and how it spends its resources. The main priorities for this fund are:

- Boosting the [Adaptability of workers](#)
- Improving [Access to employment](#)
- [Vocational training](#) and lifelong learning opportunities
- [Opportunities for disadvantaged people](#)

## Proposed supportable activities

The ESF is funding tens of thousands of projects across Europe that make a real difference to the lives of millions of individuals. Here you can find some examples.

This website gives examples of these projects for your information.

The ESF drive to boost employment aims at all sectors and groups of people who can benefit. However, there is a focus on groups who are suffering most or who can benefit significantly from ESF activities in these areas:

- [Opening pathways to work](#)
- [Creating chances for youth](#)
- [Boosting business](#)
- [Caring for careers](#)

## How it works

Funds are available through each Member State and regions (i.e. the UK governments). You need to contact your [Managing Authority](#) to register your interest and to find out more. You can participate as either an organisation or as an individual. To find out more, visit the EU Commission website about the ESF and their [Frequently Asked Questions](#) section.

## Grant (the full UK grant will be confirmed in 2015)

### Size of grant

The size of the funds are dependent on the project being proposed – but there is a total fund of €5 billion available in the UK, with €106 million (£78 million) of this coming from private funds.

### Restrictions

All EU Member States are considered in terms of their levels of development, and each region of the EU qualifies for different levels of support. The UK is mainly deemed to be a More Developed Region, but there are also pockets deemed to be Transition Regions and Less Developed Regions.

### Match funding

50-85% dependent on total project costs and the wealth of the region where the project is being delivered.

## Guide to eligibility

### Overview

- Workers and employers organisations
- Training and support for workers
- NGOs and charities
- Public administrations
- Companies and associations

### Exceptions and restrictions

Details on any restrictions can be obtained from the appropriate contacts below.
### Industry involvement

The aquaculture industry may find interesting opportunities to train, support and develop its workforce through this funding stream. The majority of projects are likely to be run through the social sector but there are possibilities for employers to become involved by supporting entrepreneurs and other business development strategies – it’s all about supporting better employment.

### Stakeholder involvement

Get involved in your Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) and other social networks.

### Contact details for applicants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managing Authority</th>
<th>Department for Work and Pensions; Welsh European Funding Office; Northern Ireland ESF Programme; Lowlands and Uplands Programmes; Highlands and Islands Programme.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact details</td>
<td>There are many contact points for this fund in the UK. We recommend you visit the central contacts information in the UK.</td>
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### Useful websites and where to go for other information

- **European Commission**
  - ESF Central information website
  - ESF in the UK
  - Beginners Guide to EU Funding

- **Department of Work and Pensions**
  - DWP webpages and consultations

- **UK regional websites of interest**
  - Department of Work and Pensions
  - Wales
  - NI
  - Lowlands and Uplands
  - Highland and Islands