



ESF Synthesis Report of Annual Implementation Reports submitted in 2018 and 2019 and Thematic reports (VC/2018/0478)

Thematic report on the ESF and YEI support to climate change actions

Lead contractor



Partners



Subcontractor



July 2020

Written by G. Lindeboom (Ockham IPS) with the collaboration of Andrea Giannetto (Fondazione G. Brodolini)

Task manager: Costanza Pagnini (Fondazione G. Brodolini)

Social
Europe

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Unit F1 — ESF and FEAD: policy and legislation

Contact: Maëva Roulette

E-mail: maeva.roulette@ec.europa.eu

European Commission
B-1049 Brussels

**ESF Synthesis Report of Annual
Implementation Reports submitted in 2018
and 2019 and Thematic reports
(VC/2018/0478)**

**Thematic report
on the ESF and YEI support to climate change
actions**

This service is carried out by the consortium led by Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini with Metis, Applica and Ockham IPS within the Multiple framework contract for the provision of services related to the implementation of Better Regulation Guidelines.

The information and views set out in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Commission. The Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this study. Neither the Commission nor any person acting on the Commission's behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.

LEGAL NOTICE

The information and views set out in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Neither the European Union institutions and bodies nor any person acting on their behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein. More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (<http://www.europa.eu>).

PDF

ISBN 978-92-76-26341-8

doi:10.2767/64381

KE-04-20-666-EN-N

Manuscript completed in July 2020

The European Commission is not liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse of this publication.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020

© European Union, 2020



The reuse policy of European Commission documents is implemented by the Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39). Except otherwise noted, the reuse of this document is authorised under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY 4.0) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). This means that reuse is allowed provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated.

For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the European Union, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective rightholders.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	5
LIST OF TABLES.....	6
LIST OF FIGURES.....	6
LIST OF ACRONYMS	7
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	8
ZUSAMMENFASSUNG.....	11
RÉSUMÉ ANALYTIQUE.....	15
1 INTRODUCTION	19
1.1 Aim of the study	19
1.2 Background and policy context.....	20
2 MAINSTREAMING CLIMATE ACTION IN THE ESF	26
2.1 The role of EU support towards climate action.....	26
2.2 Climate action in ESF programmes	27
2.3 Scope of climate action in ESF implementation.....	30
2.4 Characterising ESF climate actions	40
3 CONCLUSIONS.....	46
ANNEX I – APPROACH TO ESTIMATING ATTENTION CLIMATE ACTION	48
ANNEX II - SURVEY AMONG MANAGING AUTHORITIES	51

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Allocation of budget to climate objectives ESF – by Member States	27
Table 2.2 Reported and estimated scope of climate actions	35

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Regional exposure to sectors that will decline (left) and transform (right) ...	23
Figure 1.2 Contribution to climate objectives of ESI Funds.....	25
Figure 2.1 Expected focus on climate objectives within ESF programming in absence of EU regulations and guidelines	26
Figure 2.2 Extent to which the OP correctly presents the planned attention to climate action	28
Figure 2.3 Awareness and use of EC Factsheets on mainstreaming climate action into the ESF	30
Figure 2.4 Overview of reported climate action mainstreaming – by Member State.....	32
Figure 2.5 Comparison of allocation and expenditures to climate action by MS.....	34
Figure 2.6 Method used for classifying expenditures	39
Figure 2.7 Extent to which the AIR correctly presents the planned attention to climate action	40
Figure 2.8 Types of activities identified by Managing Authorities	41
Figure 2.9 Average reference to target group in climate action.....	43
Figure 2.10 Sectors addressed with ESF climate actions	45

List of acronyms

AIR	Annual Implementation Report
ALMP	Active Labour Market Policies
CIE	Counterfactual impact evaluation
CIR	Commission Implementing Regulation
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation
CSR	Country Specific Recommendations
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
IB	Intermediary Body
IP	Investment Priority
MA	Managing Authority
NRP	National Reform Programme
OP	Operational Programme
PAX	Priority Axis
PES	Public Employment Service
SME	Small- and Medium Enterprises
SO	Specific Objective
SFC	System for Fund Management in the European Union
TA	Technical assistance
TO	Thematic Objective
YEI	Youth Employment Initiative

Executive summary

Introduction

The implementation of the European Structural Investment Funds 2014-2020 takes place in the framework of the EU2020 Strategy sustainable and inclusive growth with the 2030 Climate and Energy Policy Framework as its successor. The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) represent 42% of the 2014-2020 budget, which makes it a key contributor to achieving the target of 20% of EU spending on climate action objectives¹. Concretely, ESI Funds can contribute to climate action by supporting investments that promote energy efficiency, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions, use of renewable energy and resilience to climate change, or indirectly, for example by considering climate-relevant aspects of research investments, skills upgrading and nature protection. Overall, the ESIF 2014-2020 allocates 25.2% of the total available support to climate action.

This thematic report provides an overview of the contribution of the ESF/YEI to this overall allocation. It assessed the financial allocations to climate action and investigated the scope of specific interventions as well as horizontal mainstreaming of climate action across ESF/YEI. This paper was drafted on the basis of an analysis of the annual implementation reports of all 187 ESF/YEI programmes and is further complemented by insights collected through a short survey among all managing authorities and semi-structured interviews with European Commission officials and Managing Authorities.

Characterising climate action in ESF/YEI

Within the broader framework of European climate strategies, the contribution of the ESF/YEI is relatively small; climate is defined as a secondary objective, as ESF/YEI primarily focuses on employment, social inclusion, education and institution capacity. This makes a systematic assessment of attention to climate action across programmes difficult, mainly because Managing Authorities do not follow a uniform way of reporting. The scope of climate action in the ESF and attention for it in annual reporting varies substantially across OP and countries. Whereas some Member States actively report on operations with a climate action component, others hardly mention such efforts in relation to the ESF, even if these in fact take place. A third category of programmes do not have any operations or allocations to report on from the perspective of climate action. One common feature across these programmes is that the annual implementation reports provide limited information about the scope and type of climate action operations. This requires descending into the level of individual projects, while taking into account national and regional specificities of individual programmes.

When discussing the scope of climate actions within the ESF/YEI, one could distinguish between two broad types of operations:

- horizontal attention for climate objectives in 'standard' operations (indirect climate actions);
- specific ESF operations with some sort of climate action component (direct climate actions).

The first category of indirect climate actions are the most common and are mentioned in most programmes as the way to meet the Regulatory requirement of sustainable

¹ There are 5 ESIF: European regional development fund (ERDF), European social fund (ESF), Cohesion fund (CF) European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD), European maritime and fisheries fund (EMFF).

development. As a minimum, article 8 of the CPR mandates that environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity, disaster resilience, and risk prevention and management are promoted in the preparation and implementation of Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes. While it is possible that these horizontal measures have some measurable impact on a Member State's capability to mitigate climate change or transform its workforce to better deal with the consequences of it, its impacts are mostly indirect. Its main effects are more likely to be visible in the procedures of the Managing Authorities than in the actual outcomes for beneficiaries. Such actions can consist of smaller administrative actions, such as paper-saving and energy-saving measures but can also include broader initiatives that focus on green public procurement or support measures for smart work and attention for sustainable transportation.

In addition to broader mainstreaming of climate action, ESF programmes are also supporting more specific climate actions, which also have a more direct observable effect on beneficiaries. These projects tend to focus on information provision, education and training provisions or employment measures toward sustainable development, often targeting employment in and training for green jobs. Expenses for operations in this category tend to be classified separately and can therefore be meaningfully tracked in the monitoring data. Managing Authorities themselves for instance report a total of 6.2% of all aggregated expenditures as climate action expenditure. However, there are large differences in approaches to classifying these expenditures, sometimes even within Member States. These differences complicate the comparison of budgetary data. For this reason, this report analysed the budgetary data in combination with the qualitative inputs provided by Member States, and calculated revised estimates where necessary. Based on this analysis, it is estimated that a total share of 1.1% of total eligible expenditures can actually be related to concrete climate activities, which is estimated to correspond to a total of 540 000 participations in specific activities with a direct impact on climate objectives. Participations related to climate action activities are most visible in IT, ES, and DE, and are linked to overall higher numbers of participations in these Member States.

To characterise different types of climate action, previous studies often distinguish between mitigation measures (reducing global warming) and adaptation strategies (transforming to the reality of climate change). While this distinction can work for some specific interventions, it cannot be systematically applied to characterise climate actions in ESF, as the (re)training programmes supported by ESF often explicitly include both aspects. Social measures that focus on re-skilling the workforce as preparation for future transformations cannot avoid also contributing to this transformation at the same time. ESF support to climate action often takes the shape of training programmes, for instance to retrain workers into green sectors such as sustainable energy or energy efficiency in construction. ESF/YEI programmes also support traineeships or internships with a green skills component, or for instance certain outreach and advocacy programmes towards climate and green skills.

Towards the next programming period

This study highlights the variety of climate actions' attention to target groups and economic sectors across different MS; no common or dominant focus was found. What can be observed, however, is that the sectors, regions and target groups that would most benefit from additional guidance, training and reskilling towards green skills are not always reached by current ESF operations. There is considerable scope to further broaden the

ESF's attention for climate action, both in terms of specific and horizontal activities. In preparation for the next programming period, additional guidance could be put in place about the expected level of attention, as well as about the type of climate actions that can be programmed under the ESF.

Such substantive lessons can be applied directly in the remaining years of the 2014-2020 period but are even more relevant for the next programming period. An analysis of the initial Operational Programmes defined at the start of the 2014-2020 programming period shows relatively limited attention to climate action. Due to the large variety of issues relevant for negotiations and preparation of OP and Partnership Agreements and OPs, there are often not sufficient opportunities to specifically discuss approaches in ESF to climate objectives. Most discussions on climate objectives took place under the heading of ERDF, which has specific Thematic Objectives in the area of climate action. Factsheets were developed by the European Commission with concrete ideas and suggestions for climate actions to help inform programming of the ESF, but were published only after the main programming of ESF programmes was done. This experience contains valuable lessons and shows how more targeted and concrete measures can help to draw attention to climate action at an early stage.

The broader framework of the European Green Deal, as well as the recently launched "Just Transition Mechanism", already offers the concrete tools for doing this. With a focus on ensuring that no region and nobody is left behind, the role of climate action measures is likely to become more prominent. Building on such additional momentum, it is also timely to draw practical lessons from the 2014-2020 period, such as how attention to climate action is monitored by the different Managing Authorities. Towards the next programming period, it will become necessary to obtain more reliable monitoring information on climate action at the EU level. Doing so would help inform strategic programming for ESF/YEI and achieve progress towards the objectives of the European Green Deal and contribute to a higher visibility of European efforts towards continuous reskilling of the workforce in line with future needs.

Zusammenfassung

Einleitung

Die Umsetzung der Europäischen Strukturfonds 2014-2020 erfolgt im Rahmen der EU-2020-Strategie für nachhaltiges und integratives Wachstum mit dem Klima- und Energiepolitischen Rahmen 2030 als deren Nachfolgerin. Die Europäischen Struktur- und Investitionsfonds (ESIF) machen 42 % des Haushalts 2014-2020 aus, womit sie einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Erreichung des Ziels von 20 % der EU-Ausgaben für Klimaschutzziele leisten.² Konkret können die ESI-Fonds zum Klimaschutz beitragen, indem sie Investitionen unterstützen, die Energieeffizienz, die Reduzierung von Treibhausgasemissionen, die Nutzung erneuerbarer Energien und die Widerstandsfähigkeit gegen den Klimawandel fördern oder z. B. klimarelevante Aspekte von Forschungsinvestitionen, Qualifizierung und Naturschutz berücksichtigen. Insgesamt stellen die ESI-Fonds 2014-2020 25,2 % der insgesamt verfügbaren Förderungen für Klimaschutzmaßnahmen bereit.

Dieser thematische Bericht gibt einen Überblick über den Beitrag des ESF/YEI von den gesamten Strukturfondsmitteln. Es wird die Zuweisung der Mittel für Klimaschutzmaßnahmen bewertet und der Umfang spezifischer Maßnahmen sowie das horizontale Mainstreaming des Klimaschutzes in ESF/YEI untersucht. Dieses Papier wurde auf der Grundlage einer Analyse der jährlichen Durchführungsberichte aller 187 ESF/YEI-Programme erstellt und wird durch Ergebnisse einer kurzen Befragung aller Verwaltungsbehörden und halbstrukturierte Interviews mit Bediensteten der Europäischen Kommission und Verwaltungsbehörden ergänzt.

Klimaschutzmaßnahmen im ESF/YEI

Innerhalb des Rahmens der europäischen Klimastrategien ist der Beitrag des ESF/YEI relativ gering; Klima wird als sekundäres Ziel definiert, da der ESF/YEI in erster Linie auf Beschäftigung, soziale Inklusion, Bildung und Stärkung der Institutionen ausgerichtet ist. Dies erschwert eine systematische Bewertung der programmübergreifenden Berücksichtigung von Klimaschutzmaßnahmen, vor allem deshalb, weil die Verwaltungsbehörden keine einheitliche Art der Berichterstattung verfolgen. Der Umfang der Klimaschutzmaßnahmen im ESF und seine Aufmerksamkeit bei der jährlichen Berichterstattung sind in den OPs und den Ländern sehr unterschiedlich. Während einige Mitgliedstaaten aktiv über Maßnahmen mit Elementen zur Berücksichtigung des Klimaschutzes berichten, erwähnen andere kaum solche Anstrengungen im Zusammenhang mit dem ESF, selbst wenn solche tatsächlich durchgeführt werden. Eine dritte Gruppe von Programmen kann über keinerlei Maßnahmen berichten, welche einen Zusammenhang mit Klimaschutz aufweisen. Gemeinsam ist diesen Programmen, dass die jährlichen Durchführungsberichte nur begrenzte Informationen über den Umfang und die Art der Klimaschutzmaßnahmen liefern. Dies erfordert eine Analyse auf Ebene einzelner Projekte, unter Bedachtnahme auf nationale und regionale Besonderheiten der einzelnen Programme.

²Es gibt 5 ESIF: Europäischer Fonds für regionale Entwicklung (EFRE), Europäischer Sozialfonds (ESF), Kohäsionsfonds (CF), Europäischer Landwirtschaftsfonds für die Entwicklung des ländlichen Raums (ELER), Europäischer Meeres- und Fischereifonds (EMFF).

Bei der Erörterung des Anwendungsbereichs von Klimaschutzmaßnahmen im Rahmen des ESF/YEI kann man – grob gesprochen - zwei Gruppen von Maßnahmen unterscheiden:

- Horizontale Berücksichtigung von Klimazielen bei „Standard“-Maßnahmen (indirekte Klimaschutzmaßnahmen)
- Spezielle ESF-Maßnahmen mit einer Art Klimaschutzkomponente (direkte Klimaschutzmaßnahmen)

Die erste Kategorie indirekter Klimaschutzmaßnahmen ist die am häufigsten verwendete und wird in den meisten Programmen eingesetzt, um die regulatorischen Erfordernissen einer nachhaltigen Entwicklung zu erfüllen. In Artikel 8 der Verordnung mit den gemeinsamen Bestimmungen ist vorgesehen, dass bei der Vorbereitung und Umsetzung von Partnerschaftsabkommen und operationellen Programmen zumindest Belange des Umweltschutzes, Ressourceneffizienz, Klimaschutz und -anpassung, Biodiversität, Katastrophenschutz und Risikoprävention gefördert werden. Zwar ist es möglich, dass diese horizontalen Maßnahmen messbare Auswirkungen auf die Fähigkeit der Mitgliedstaaten zur Eindämmung des Klimawandels oder zur Anpassungen der Arbeitskräfte auf eine bessere Bewältigung der Folgen des Klimawandels haben, dennoch sind ihre Auswirkungen größtenteils indirekt. Die wesentlichen Effekte liegen eher in den Verfahren der Verwaltungsbehörden als in den tatsächlichen Auswirkungen auf die Begünstigten. Solche Maßnahmen können aus kleineren administrativen Maßnahmen wie Papier- und Energieeinsparungen bestehen, aber auch umfassendere Initiativen umfassen, die sich auf grünes öffentliches Beschaffungswesen konzentrieren oder Maßnahmen für eine intelligente Arbeitswelt und Aufmerksamkeit für ein nachhaltiges Verkehrssystem unterstützen.

Zusätzlich zu dem eher breit definierten Mainstreaming von Klimaschutzmaßnahmen unterstützen die ESF-Programme auch spezifischere Klimaschutzmaßnahmen, die sich auch direkt auf die Begünstigten auswirken. Diese Projekte konzentrieren sich in der Regel auf die Bereitstellung von Informationen, Bildungs- und Ausbildungsmaßnahmen oder Beschäftigungsmaßnahmen für eine nachhaltige Entwicklung, die häufig auf Beschäftigung in und Ausbildung für grüne Arbeitsplätze ausgerichtet sind. Die Ausgaben für Maßnahmen in dieser Kategorie werden in der Regel getrennt klassifiziert und können daher in den Monitoringdaten nachverfolgt werden. So melden die Verwaltungsbehörden selbst insgesamt 6,2% aller aggregierten Ausgaben als Ausgaben für Klimaschutz. Allerdings bestehen große Unterschiede bei den Ansätzen zur Klassifizierung dieser Ausgaben, manchmal sogar innerhalb der Mitgliedstaaten. Diese Unterschiede erschweren den Vergleich der Finanzdaten. Aus diesem Grund hat dieser Bericht die Finanzdaten in Kombination mit den qualitativen Inputs der Mitgliedstaaten analysiert und eigene Schätzungen erstellt. Auf der Grundlage dieser Analyse wird geschätzt, dass ein Anteil von 1,1% an den förderfähigen Gesamtausgaben tatsächlich mit konkreten Klimaaktivitäten zusammenhängt, was schätzungsweise ungefähr 540.000 Beteiligungen an spezifischen Projekten mit direkten Auswirkungen auf die Klimaziele entspricht. Beteiligungen im Zusammenhang mit Klimaschutzaktivitäten sind in den Ländern IT, ES und DE deutlicher als in anderen Mitgliedstaaten sichtbar.

Zur Charakterisierung von Klimaschutzmaßnahmen haben frühere Studien oft zwischen Maßnahmen zur Abschwächung des Klimawandels (Verringerung der globalen Erwärmung) und Anpassungsstrategien (Umgestaltung in die Realität des Klimawandels) unterschieden. Dies ist für einige spezifische Maßnahmen geeignet, kann aber nicht systematisch zur Charakterisierung der Klimaschutzmaßnahmen im ESF herangezogen werden, da die vom ESF unterstützten (Um- und)Ausbildungsprogramme häufig beide

Aspekte explizit einbeziehen. Soziale Maßnahmen, die sich auf die Qualifizierung der Arbeitskräfte als Vorbereitung auf künftige Transformationen konzentrieren, leisten in der Regel gleichzeitig auch einen Beitrag zum Klimaschutz. Die Unterstützung des ESF für Klimaschutzmaßnahmen hat oft die Form von Ausbildungsprogrammen, z. B. zur Umschulung von Arbeitnehmern für grüne Sektoren, wie nachhaltige Energie oder Energieeffizienz im Bauwesen. ESF/YEI-Programme unterstützen auch Praktika mit einer Komponente „Green Skills“ oder Aktivitäten zur Information über Klima- und Green Skills.

Auf dem Weg zur nächsten Programmplanungsperiode

Diese Studie zeigt auf, wie unterschiedlich Klimaschutzmaßnahmen in den Mitgliedstaaten auf Zielgruppen und Wirtschaftssektoren ausgerichtet werden. Dabei lässt sich kein gemeinsamer Schwerpunkt feststellen. Herausgestellt hat sich, dass jene Sektoren, Regionen und Zielgruppen, die am meisten von zusätzlichen Orientierungs-, Schulungs- und Umschulungsmaßnahmen auf grüne Kompetenzen profitieren würden, nicht immer auch durch die laufenden ESF-Maßnahmen erreicht werden. Es bleiben noch beträchtliche Möglichkeiten, um ESF Mittel künftig stärker für spezifische und horizontale Klimaschutzmaßnahmen einzusetzen. Zur Vorbereitung auf die nächste Programmplanungsperiode könnte zusätzlich ein Leitfaden erstellt werden, um die Aufmerksamkeit auf Klimaschutz zu richten und mögliche Maßnahmen für den Klimaschutz, die in ESF-Programme aufgenommen werden können, aufzuzeigen.

Diese Ergebnisse können noch in der gegenwärtigen Programmplanungsperiode berücksichtigt werden, sind aber für die nächste Periode umso relevanter. Eine Analyse der eingereichten operationellen Programme der Programmplanungsperiode 2014-2020 zeigt, dass Klimaschutzmaßnahmen wenig berücksichtigt wurden. Aufgrund der Vielzahl von Themen, die für die Verhandlungen und die Vorbereitung der Partnerschaftsabkommen und Operationellen Programme relevant sind, gibt es oft nicht genügend Möglichkeiten, spezifische Ansätze im ESF zu den Klimazielen zu diskutieren. Die meisten Diskussionen über Klimaziele fanden im Rahmen des EFRE statt, der spezifische thematische Ziele im Bereich des Klimaschutzes zu erfüllen hat. Factsheets wurden von der Europäischen Kommission mit konkreten Ideen und Vorschlägen für Klimaschutzmaßnahmen zur Information über die ESF-Programmierung entwickelt, wurden aber erst nachdem ein Großteil der Programme erstellt wurden, veröffentlicht. Diese Erfahrung enthält wertvolle Erkenntnisse und zeigt, wie gezieltere und konkretere Maßnahmen dazu beitragen können, frühzeitig auf Klimamaßnahmen aufmerksam zu machen.

Der breitere Rahmen des europäischen grünen Deals sowie der kürzlich gestartete „Mechanismus für einen gerechten Übergang“ zeigen bereits die konkreten Instrumente dafür auf. Mit dem Fokus darauf, dass keine Region und keine Person zurückgelassen werden darf, wird die Rolle von Klimaschutzmaßnahmen wahrscheinlich an Bedeutung gewinnen. Auf dieser zusätzlichen Dynamik aufbauend, ist es auch an der Zeit, praktische Lehren aus dem Zeitraum 2014-2020 zu ziehen, wie beispielsweise die Berücksichtigung des Klimaschutzes durch die verschiedenen Verwaltungsbehörden überwacht wird.

Für die nächste Programmplanungsperiode besteht die Notwendigkeit, zuverlässigere Monitoringdaten zu Klimaschutzmaßnahmen auf EU-Ebene zu erhalten. Dies würde wichtige Grundlagen für die strategische Programmierung von ESF/YEI liefern. Damit können Fortschritte bei der Verwirklichung der Ziele des Europäischen Green Deals erzielt werden und ein Beitrag zu einer stärkeren Sichtbarkeit der europäischen Bemühungen um

eine kontinuierliche Umschulung der Arbeitskräfte entsprechend den künftigen Erfordernissen geleistet werden.

Résumé analytique

Introduction

La mise en œuvre des Fonds structurels d'investissement européens pour la période 2014-2020 s'inscrit dans le cadre de la stratégie UE2020 pour une croissance durable et inclusive, le cadre d'action en matière de climat et d'énergie à l'horizon 2030 lui succédant. Les Fonds structurels d'investissement européens (Fonds ESI) représentent 42% du budget 2014-2020, jouant dès lors un rôle essentiel dans la réalisation de la cible de 20% de dépenses de l'UE consacrées aux objectifs d'action pour le climat³. Concrètement, les Fonds ESI peuvent contribuer à l'action en faveur du climat en soutenant des investissements qui favorisent l'efficacité énergétique, la réduction des émissions de gaz à effet de serre (GES), l'utilisation d'énergies renouvelables et la résilience au changement climatique, ou indirectement, par exemple en prenant en compte les aspects liés au climat des investissements de recherche, de l'amélioration des compétences et la protection de la nature. Dans l'ensemble, les Fonds ESI 2014-2020 consacrent 25,2% de l'aide totale disponible à l'action pour le climat.

Le présent rapport thématique fournit une vue d'ensemble de la contribution du FSE/IEJ à cette dotation globale. Il évalue les dotations financières allouées à l'action pour le climat et examine la portée des interventions spécifiques ainsi que l'intégration horizontale de l'action pour le climat dans le FSE/IEJ. Ce document a été rédigé à partir de l'analyse des rapports annuels de mise en œuvre des 187 programmes FSE/IEJ ainsi que d'informations recueillies à la suite d'une brève enquête auprès de toutes les autorités de gestion et d'entretiens semi-structurés avec des fonctionnaires de la Commission européenne et des autorités de gestion.

Caractérisation de l'action en faveur du climat dans le cadre du FSE/IEJ

Dans le cadre plus large des stratégies européennes en matière de climat, la contribution du FSE/IEJ est relativement faible; le climat y étant défini comme un objectif secondaire, car le FSE/IEJ se concentre principalement sur l'emploi, l'inclusion sociale, l'éducation et les capacités institutionnelles. Cela rend difficile l'évaluation systématique de l'attention accordée à l'action en faveur du climat dans l'ensemble des programmes, principalement parce que les autorités de gestion ne suivent pas une méthode uniforme dans la présentation de leurs rapports. La portée de l'action en faveur du climat dans le FSE et son attention dans les rapports annuels varient considérablement d'un programme à l'autre et d'un pays à l'autre. Alors que certains États membres rendent compte activement d'opérations comportant un volet d'action pour le climat, d'autres les mentionnent à peine même si des actions en la matière ont effectivement lieu. Enfin, une dernière catégorie de programmes n'a pas aucune opération ou allocation à communiquer du point de vue de l'action pour le climat. L'une des caractéristiques communes de ces programmes est que les rapports annuels de mise en œuvre fournissent peu d'informations sur la portée et le type des opérations relatives à l'action climatique. Cela nécessite une analyse au niveau des projets individuels, tout en tenant compte des spécificités nationales et régionales des différents programmes.

³ Il y a 5 Fonds ESI: le Fonds européen de développement régional (FEDER), le Fonds social européen (FSE), le Fonds de cohésion (FC), le Fonds agricole européen pour le développement rural (FEADER), et le Fonds européen pour les affaires maritimes et la pêche (FEAMP).

Lors de l'examen de la portée des actions en faveur du climat au sein du FSE/IEJ, deux grands types d'actions se distinguent :

- Une attention horizontale pour les objectifs climatiques dans les opérations «standards» (actions indirectes pour le climat)
- Des actions spécifiques du FSE comportant un volet d'action pour le climat (actions directes pour le climat).

La première catégorie d'actions indirectes pour le climat est la plus courante et est mentionnée dans la plupart des programmes comme étant le moyen de satisfaire à l'exigence réglementaire liée au développement durable. L'article 8 du Règlement portant sur les dispositions communes stipule que les exigences en matière de protection environnementale, l'utilisation rationnelle des ressources, l'atténuation des changements climatiques et l'adaptation à ceux-ci, la biodiversité, la résilience face aux catastrophes ainsi que la prévention et la gestion des risques doivent être encouragées lors de l'élaboration et la mise en œuvre des accords de partenariat et des programmes opérationnels. S'il est possible que ces mesures horizontales aient un impact mesurable sur la capacité d'un État membre à atténuer le changement climatique ou à transformer sa main-d'œuvre pour mieux y faire face, leurs effets sont pour la plupart indirects. Les principaux effets sont plus susceptibles d'être visibles dans les procédures des autorités de gestion que dans les résultats concrets pour les bénéficiaires. Ces actions peuvent consister en des actions administratives de moindre envergure, telles que des mesures d'économie de papier et d'énergie, mais elles peuvent aussi comprendre des initiatives plus larges axées sur les marchés publics écologiques ou des mesures de soutien au travail intelligent et à l'attention accordée aux transports durables.

Outre l'intégration plus large de l'action pour le climat, les programmes du FSE soutiennent également des actions plus spécifiques dans le domaine du climat, qui ont un effet observable plus direct sur les bénéficiaires. Ces projets ont tendance à mettre l'accent sur la fourniture d'informations, l'éducation et la formation ou les mesures d'emploi en faveur du développement durable, en ciblant souvent l'emploi et la formation à des emplois verts. Les dépenses liées aux opérations de cette catégorie ont tendance à être classées séparément et peuvent être analysées grâce aux données de suivi. Les autorités de gestion elles-mêmes déclarent, par exemple, que les dépenses liées à l'action climatique représentent un total de 6,2% de l'ensemble des dépenses agrégées. Toutefois, il existe de grandes différences dans les méthodes de classification de ces dépenses, parfois même au sein des États membres, ce qui complique la comparaison des données budgétaires. Pour cette raison, le présent rapport analyse les données budgétaires en combinaison avec les informations qualitatives fournies par les États membres et propose des estimations révisées, le cas échéant. Sur la base de cette analyse, on estime que 1,1% du total des dépenses éligibles peut effectivement être lié à des activités climatiques concrètes, ce qui correspond à un total d'environ 540 000 participations à des activités spécifiques ayant un impact direct sur les objectifs climatiques. Les participations liées aux actions pour le climat sont les plus visibles en Italie, en Espagne, et en Allemagne, cela étant associé au nombre plus élevé de participations dans ces États membres.

Pour caractériser les différents types d'action climatique, les études précédentes font souvent la distinction entre les mesures d'atténuation (réduction du réchauffement climatique) et les stratégies d'adaptation (transformation à la réalité des changements climatiques). Si cette distinction peut s'appliquer pour certaines interventions spécifiques, elle ne peut être systématiquement appliquée pour caractériser les actions en faveur du

climat au sein du FSE, car les programmes de formation soutenus par le FSE englobent souvent explicitement les deux aspects. Les mesures sociales mettant l'accent sur la requalification de la main-d'œuvre en vue de futures transformations ne peuvent éviter de contribuer à cette transformation en même temps. Le soutien du FSE à l'action en faveur du climat prend souvent la forme de programmes de formation, par exemple le recyclage de travailleurs dans des secteurs verts tels que l'énergie durable ou l'efficacité énergétique dans le domaine de la construction. Les programmes FSE/IEJ soutiennent également des stages comportant un volet «compétences vertes» ou, par exemple, certains programmes de sensibilisation en faveur du climat et des compétences vertes.

En route vers la prochaine période de programmation

Cette étude met en lumière la diversité des actions pour le climat en termes de groupes cibles et de secteurs économiques dans les différents États membres; aucune caractéristique commune ou dominante n'a été identifiée. Ce qui peut toutefois être observé, c'est que les interventions actuelles du FSE ne permettent pas toujours d'atteindre les secteurs, les régions et les groupes cibles qui bénéficieraient le plus d'une orientation, d'une formation et d'une requalification supplémentaires vers des compétences vertes. Il existe une marge considérable pour élargir davantage l'attention du FSE portée à l'action pour le climat, tant en termes d'activités spécifiques qu'horizontales. Dans le cadre de la préparation de la prochaine période de programmation, des orientations supplémentaires pourraient être mises en place sur ce qui est attendu en termes d'attention portée au climat, ainsi que sur le type d'actions pour le climat pouvant être programmées dans le cadre du FSE.

Ces enseignements de fond peuvent être appliqués directement au cours des années restantes de la période 2014-2020, mais ils sont encore plus pertinents pour la prochaine période de programmation. Une analyse des programmes opérationnels initiaux définis au début de la période de programmation 2014-2020 montre que relativement peu d'attention est accordée à l'action en faveur du climat. En raison de la grande diversité des questions pertinentes lors des négociations et de la préparation des accords de partenariat et des programmes, il n'y a souvent pas suffisamment d'occasions de discuter spécifiquement des approches du FSE concernant les objectifs climatiques. La plupart des discussions sur ces objectifs ont eu lieu dans le cadre du FEDER, qui comporte des objectifs thématiques spécifiques dans le domaine de l'action pour le climat. Des fiches d'information ont été élaborées par la Commission européenne avec des idées et des suggestions concrètes pour des actions en faveur du climat afin d'éclairer la programmation du FSE, mais n'ont été publiées qu'après la programmation des programmes du FSE. Cette expérience constitue un enseignement précieux et montre comment des mesures plus ciblées et concrètes peuvent aider à attirer l'attention sur l'action climatique à un stade précoce.

Le cadre plus large du pacte vert pour l'Europe, ainsi que le « mécanisme pour une transition juste» récemment lancé, offrent déjà des outils concrets pour y parvenir. L'accent étant mis sur le fait qu'aucune personne ni aucune région n'est laissée pour compte, le rôle des mesures d'action pour le climat sera probablement plus important. Profitant de cette nouvelle impulsion, il est également opportun de tirer des enseignements pratiques de la période 2014-2020, tels que la manière dont les différentes autorités de gestion suivent l'attention accordée à l'action climatique. Dans la perspective de la prochaine période de programmation, il s'avérera nécessaire d'obtenir des données de suivi plus fiables sur l'action pour le climat au niveau de l'UE. Cela contribuerait à éclairer

la programmation stratégique du FSE/IEJ, à réaliser des progrès dans la réalisation des objectifs du pacte vert européen, et à une plus grande visibilité des efforts européens en faveur d'une requalification continue de la main-d'œuvre en accord avec les besoins futurs.

1 Introduction

1.1 Aim of the study

1.1.1 Aim

The objective of this thematic report is to assess the support of the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) in the 2014-2020 programming period to climate change actions, by firstly looking at which forms of support have been carried out in the ESF/YEI Operational Programmes (OPs), and secondly looking at both implementation and performance data. Ultimately, this report aims to improve the understanding of how ESF/YEI support climate action, through what types of activities, which target groups are addressed and which economic sectors are supported.

The geographical scope of the report is the EU-28, with more specific attention to Member States that provide more detailed information in their AIR. This report mainly covers activities programmed and implemented up to the end of 2018, but some future developments are mentioned where relevant and available.

1.1.2 Methodology

This report was drafted on the basis of an analysis of 187 AIRs submitted via SFC2014 (System for Fund Management in the European Union), by September 6, 2019. While the monitoring data serves as the empirical backbone for this thematic report, the scope of this report required additional data collection. The primary means of data collection are listed below.

- All 187 AIR were screened for references to climate actions. Particular attention was paid to AIR section 11.3 / 11.4, in which Member States report on the contribution of their ESF/YEI OP to sustainable development and how the programme supports climate change objectives.
- In addition, this report makes use of the analysis of monitoring data, conducted in the scope of the ESF synthesis report of Annual Implementation Reports. This analysis uses in particular the reported budget allocation to climate objectives in OP, and the reported shares of eligible expenditures that are related to climate objectives in the AIR.
- A short survey consisting of 16 questions was distributed among all 187 Managing Authorities to complement the formal data in SFC2014. It sought to collect more data on the views of Managing Authorities on the process of programming and implementation of climate action, and sought to gain a fuller understanding of the scope of its activities. A total of 26 Managing Authorities (13.9% of all OP, representing roughly 21.5% of the total ESF/YEI budget) responded to the survey.
- Finally, phone interviews with policy officers were conducted in the European Commission and with a number of policy officers in a select number of Member States. A total of 9 phone interviews were conducted to obtain additional qualitative insights, consisting of 6 policy officers in the European Commission and another 4 representatives of Managing Authorities.

1.2 Background and policy context

1.2.1 Climate action in the Structural Funds

The implementation of the European Structural Investment Funds 2014-2020 takes place in the framework of the EU2020 Strategy sustainable and inclusive growth⁴. This is a broad economic strategy that covers various objectives in the area of social and economic development, including a shift to a low-carbon, resource-efficient and climate-resilient economy. As one of the key environmental targets at the time, the EU2020 strategy sought to reduce global warming by reducing 20% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by the year 2020, through increasing the share of renewable energy sources in final energy consumption by 20% and improving energy efficiency by 20%. With a view on 2030, these targets have been further refined in the 2030 Climate and Energy Policy Framework⁵ to at least a 40% cut in greenhouse gas emissions, while the latest targets for use of renewable energy and energy efficiency were further revised to a 32% share and 32.5% improvement in efficiency by 2030 (all compared to 1990)⁶. At the same time, the European Union recognises that, despite such measures to reduce global warming, climate change will increase in the coming decades due to the delayed impacts of past and current greenhouse gas emissions. This calls for additional measures to deal with climate impacts that can no longer be averted, as well as their economic, environmental and social costs. To this effect, the European Commission adopted the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change April 2013, which sets out a framework for improving the EU's preparedness for current and future climate impacts.

The two strategies combine mitigation measures (reducing global warming) and adaptation strategies (transforming to the reality of higher global temperatures) and seek to embed these across all policy areas. This is underlined in the 2014-2020 multi-annual financial framework, for which the European Council defined that at least 20% of all EU spending in the 2014-2020 period should be targeted towards climate action objectives⁷. No specific targets are defined for adaptation or mitigation objectives separately. For both types of climate actions combined, this would represent around €217 billion in case the 2014-2020 budget is fully implemented⁸.

The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) represent 42% of the 2014-2020 budget, which makes it a key contributor to achieving the 20% of EU spending on climate action objectives⁹. Among the eleven Thematic Objectives (TOs) defined in the Common

⁴ European Commission, 3 March 2010

⁵ As agreed in the Conclusions adopted by the European Council on 24 October 2014 (EUCO 169/14)

⁶ DIRECTIVE 2018/2001 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2018 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (recast); DIRECTIVE 2018/2002 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2018 amending Directive 2012/27/EU on energy efficiency.

⁷ European Council, 7/8 February Conclusions, EUCO 37/13. Note that this 20% target is considered a political target, but is not included in the final text of the MFF 2014-2020; as such it is not considered a budgetary target.

⁸ European Parliament Research Service (2019), Mainstreaming of climate action in the EU budget; Impact of a political objective, page 7.

⁹ There are 5 ESIF: European regional development fund (ERDF), European social fund (ESF), Cohesion fund (CF)

European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD), European maritime and fisheries fund (EMFF).

Provision Regulation (CPR)¹⁰, the following three are directly related to these broader objectives:

- Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors;
- Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management;
- Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency.

However, climate action is not limited to these TOs: the relevance of climate action must be considered across all the TOs when looking at a particular Programme. Article 8 of the CPR also explicitly mentions climate action and requires that Member States and the Commission ensure that climate change mitigation and adaptation measures are promoted in the preparation and implementation of Partnership Agreements and programmes¹¹. Finally, the preamble requires that “Member States [...] provide information on the support for climate change objectives, in line with the ambition to devote at least 20% of the budget of the Union to those objectives, using a methodology based on the categories of intervention, focus areas or measures”. This methodology was further refined by a Commission Implementing Regulation linking all investments to the 123 specific categories of intervention specified by the Regulation¹². Each category of intervention has been classified based on its contribution to climate action, and assigned as 0%, 40% or 100% (so-called climate markers)¹³. This common methodology to all programmes allows a comparison of the share of budget allocations to climate action across OP and Member States. Concretely, ESI Funds can contribute to climate action by supporting investments that promote energy efficiency, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions, use of renewable energy and resilience to climate change, or indirectly, for example by considering climate-relevant aspects of research investments, skills upgrading and nature protection. Overall, the ESIF allocated 25.2% of the total available support to climate action. By the end of 2018, over €169 billion has been allocated to support decarbonisation, climate resilience and risk prevention, energy efficiency or sustainable transport¹⁴. Estimates of the contributions made towards climate change mitigation and climate change adaption objectives separately shows that 42% of the support for climate action is marked towards mitigation and 15% is for adaptation. The remaining support (33%) could not be assigned exclusively to any of these two categories¹⁵.

1.2.2 Responding to the social consequences of transition to carbon neutrality

In preparation for a European strategic long-term vision for a climate neutral economy, the European Commission published a substantive analysis and macro-economic modelling of the possible consequences of the economic transition towards the ambitious EU targets

¹⁰ Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

¹¹ All Member States prepare a Partnership Agreement, which sets out the overall strategy for disbursement of ESI Funds.

¹² As laid down in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 215/2014 (amended through Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1232/2014).

¹³ As the ESF is limited to investment priorities that are all assigned with 0% climate markers, it applies a different methodology, based on a ‘secondary objective’, as explained in more detail in section 1.2.3.

¹⁴ European Commission (2019), Strategic report 2019 on the implementation of the European Structural and Investment Funds. Report From The Commission To The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic And Social Committee And The Committee Of The Regions. COM 2019 (627).

¹⁵ COWI, 2016 Report on Mainstreaming of climate action into ESI Funds

for a carbon neutral economy¹⁶. A recent assessment of labour market trends under the various scenarios of climate change shows an overall positive assessment, possibly ranging between 1 and 2 million additional jobs by 2050, depending on the scope of international cooperation and extent of economic transformation to reduce climate change¹⁷. However, labour market imperfections and involuntary employment risk to negatively affect these outcomes and contribute to skill mismatches on the labour market. Moreover, because these models concentrate on the macro-level, these underestimate the substantial shifts in employment across economic sectors and sub-sectors. Job increases are expected particularly in sectors involved in renewable energy and energy efficiency. Because the EU is a net energy importer, a model in which the share of local renewable energy increases results in positive employment effects, mainly involving the areas of installation, management and maintenance¹⁸. Expected job gains in the field of energy efficiency tend to concentrate in the construction sector¹⁹. The most visible declines in employment are expected in the mining and extraction sector, as well as in power generation. The overall positive employment outlook is based on the fact that the labour intensity in the growing sectors is expected to outstrip that of the declining sectors. As a result, the employment model at the aggregate level shows a positive net result²⁰.

In addition to the net effects to employment in sectors as described above, the low-carbon transition is also expected to transform other sectors. Also in sectors without expected net employment effects at the aggregate level, sectoral transformation can be profound, with many new occupations appearing at the cost of other disappearing occupations. Such transformations can radically change the skills and competences required of workers in the affected sectors, such as in the automobile and (petro-) chemical industry²¹. This transition can pose significant economic and social challenges for specific regions, particularly those that currently rely heavily on sectors and occupations that are expected to decline or transform. Without additional support, some regions run the risk that the transition can lead to lower levels of technology, limited skills in the workforce combined with outflows of talented people, ageing populations and declining of economic activity. Figure 1.1 below was drawn up by the European Commission and maps out the regions most at risk; to the left regions that rely on sectors that are expected to decline, and to the right regions that depend on sectors that are expected to undergo substantial transformation.

¹⁶ European Commission (2018): A clean planet for all: a European long-term strategic vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive, and climate-neutral economy. Commission Communication (2018) 773.

¹⁷ European Commission (2018): A clean planet for all: a European long-term strategic vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive, and climate-neutral economy. In-depth analysis in support of the Commission Communication (2018) 773.

¹⁸ Fragos (2017), Job creation related to Renewables.

http://www.asset-ec.eu/downloads/ASSET_1_RES_Job_Creation.pdf

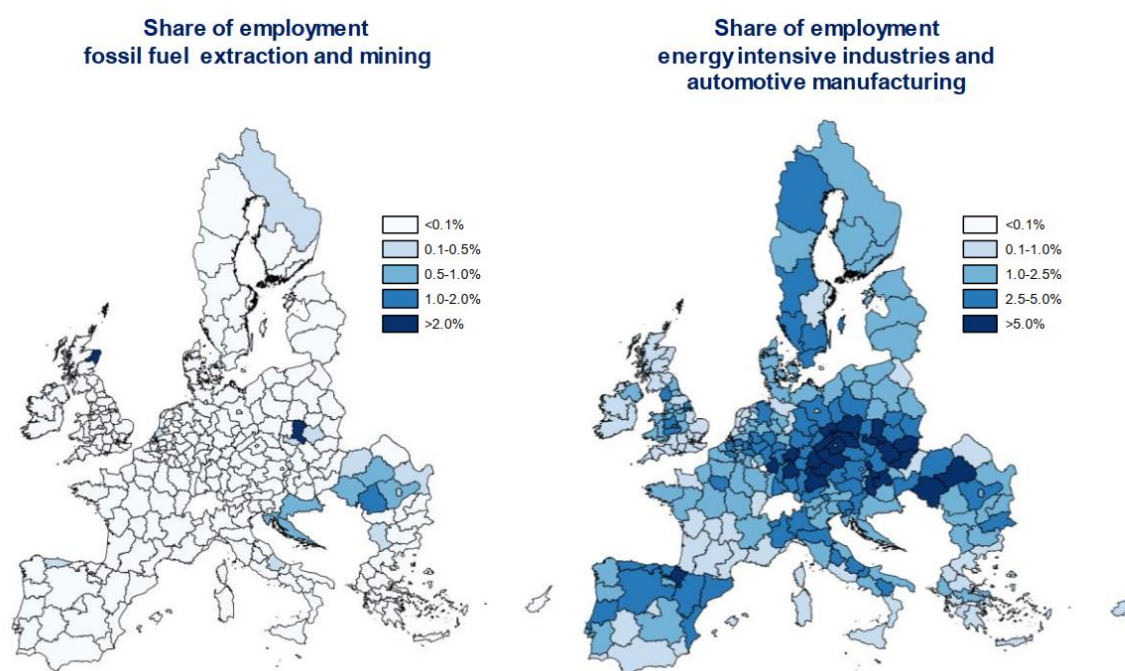
¹⁹ RAP (2016) Costs and benefits of EE: <http://www.raponline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/raprosenow-bayer-costs-benefits-energy-efficiency-obligation-schemes-2016.pdf>

²⁰ UNIDO (2015) Global green growth:

http://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/sites/default/files/downloads/resource/Clean_energy_industrial_investment_vol1_GGGI_UNIDO.pdf

²¹ European Commission (2018): A clean planet for all: a European long-term strategic vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive, and climate-neutral economy. In-depth analysis in support of the Commission Communication (2018) 773.

Figure 1.1 Regional exposure to sectors that will decline (left) and transform (right)



Source: European Commission (2018): *A clean planet for all: a European long-term strategic vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive, and climate-neutral economy. In-depth analysis in support of the Commission Communication (2018) 773*²².

The figure clearly illustrates the regional dimension of the low-carbon transition. Regions particularly affected by prospects of declining employment can be found in Scotland, due to a high share in the oil and gas industry, as well as Romania (South-West Oltenia), Croatia, and Poland (concentrated in Silesia), with a substantial involvement of mining activities. A considerably higher number of regions are affected when considering the economic sectors that are expected to transform. These regions are mostly concentrated in central Europe and the most dominant clusters are found in Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania.

The economic modelling published by the European Commission shows that the expected transformation is accompanied by a substantial shift from low- and medium-skilled work to more high-skilled work. This is aligned to a broader and more structural trend of automation in European labour markets, which affects similar regions and further creates pressure on local labour markets²³. These structural changes already pose a substantial skills challenge to European economies, and while the contribution of climate actions to

²² The figure to the left includes regions with a high share of economic activity in sectors of coal mining and lignite (B05), Extraction of crude petroleum and natural gas (B06), Mining support service activities (B09). The sectors selected for transformation include Manufacture of chemicals and chemical products (C20), Manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products (C23), Manufacture of basic metals (C24), Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers (C29).

²³ See for instance Cedefop, (2018), *Skills Panorama, Skills opportunities and challenges in occupations*: <https://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu>

employment is only moderate in comparison to these broader economic trends, their concentration in a number of regions warrants particular attention.

Within the framework of the European Green Deal and based on this modelling work, the European Commission launched the Just Transition Mechanism in January 2020. This Mechanism aims to combine various investment sources into a total budget of €100 billion, including a dedicated Just Transition Fund of roughly €7.5 billion funded by the EU in the coming programming period²⁴. This was established to help ensure that the regions and sectors affected by the social consequences described in this section are better able to cope and prepare for the future carbon-neutral economy. It seeks to provide tailored financial and practical support to help workers and generate the necessary investments in regions most affected by the transition. Because the Just Transition Fund is still in the design phase, it does not directly affect activities reviewed by this study. However, lessons learned from the implementation of climate action activities in the ESF 2014-2020 can be applied directly towards the implementation of the Just Transition Fund and the ESF+ in 2021-2027.

1.2.3 The European Social Fund and climate action

The ESF Regulation limits its scope to four out of the eleven thematic objectives defined for the ESI Funds;

- promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility;
- promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination;
- investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning;
- enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration.

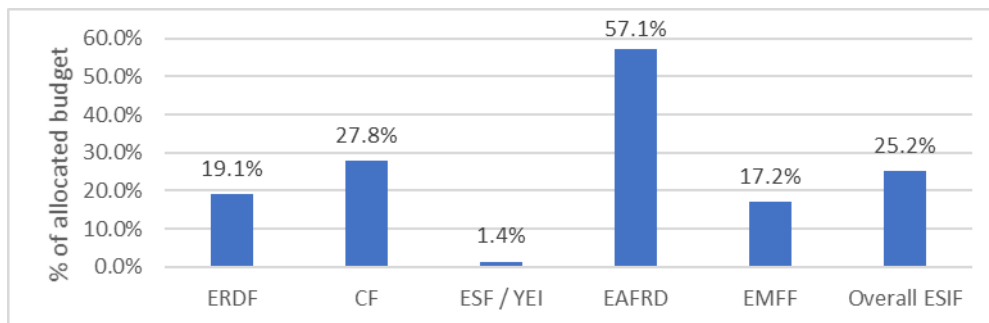
While these objectives do not explicitly mention mitigation of climate change or adaptation to the consequences of climate change, the ESF has an important role to play in supporting the transition to a carbon neutral economy. This is also confirmed in the ESF Regulation, where article 3 (2) of the ESF Regulation defines that the “ESF shall also contribute to the other thematic objectives [...], primarily by: (a) Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient, resource-efficient and environmentally sustainable economy through the improvement of education and training systems necessary for the adaptation of skills and qualifications, the up-skilling of the labour force, and the creation of new jobs in sectors related to the environment and energy”. This makes the ESF a relevant mechanism through which European economies can better prepare for the medium- and long term and further develop the skills and competences needed in a carbon-neutral economy. It also creates the mandate for the ESF to support investments that contribute to coping with the short-term economic and social disruptions created by the transition to a carbon-neutral economy, particularly where these consequences affect the Union economic and social cohesion. As foreseen in the ESF Regulation, it can do so for instance through improving education, upskilling the workforce and supporting the creation of jobs.

The fields of intervention used to track ESF investments are classified by their contribution to primary objectives, such as job creation, social inclusion, improvement in education or

²⁴ In response to the recent economic crisis that follows the spread of COVID-19, the European Commission put forward a proposal for a major recovery plan in May 2020, in which the anticipated size of the Just Transition Fund is increased to €150 billion. In this proposal, it plans to increase EU funding with €2.5 billion, to a total of €10 billion financed from the EU budget.

enhanced capacities. Additionally, budgets and expenditures are classified separately by secondary themes, based on which the contribution of the ESF to climate objectives can be estimated. This estimate shows that the ESF's contribution to climate action is low compared to other ESI Funds. As shown in figure 1.2 below, 57.1% of the EAFRD budget is allocated directly towards climate objectives, followed by 27.8% of the budget of the Cohesion fund and 19.1% of the ERDF. In comparison, a total of 1.4% of the ESF/YEI allocated budget addresses climate action explicitly. To better understand this considerable difference with other ESI Funds, the next chapter will further explore the scope of climate action in ESF programmes. This allows a more in-depth assessment of the actual shares of expenditures that can be related to climate action in the ESF, and develop a more detailed understanding of the types of interventions it includes. This provides the necessary inputs to verify how the ESF programming is transformed into actual implementation.

Figure 1.2 Contribution to climate objectives of ESI Funds



Source: European Commission (2016), Mainstreaming of climate action into ESI Funds. Updated data for the ESF/YEI by authors based on approved Operational Programmes by September 6, 2019.

2 Mainstreaming climate action in the ESF

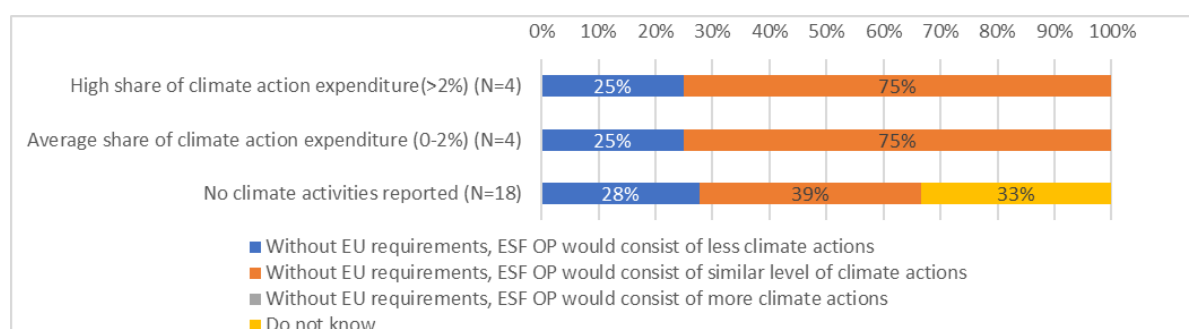
This chapter presents the main outcomes of the analysis of climate action programming and activities in the ESF. Section 2.1 first explores how Managing Authorities see the role and added value of involvement of the European Commission in raising attention to climate activities in the ESF. Subsequently, the main body of the chapter explores in more detail how Managing Authorities have integrated climate action in the programming (section 2.2) and in actual implementation (section 2.3) phases. Together, these two sections provide a clear overview of the extent to which 2014-2020 ESF programmes focus on climate objectives. Finally, section 2.4 explores these operations in more detail. It presents the results of a preliminary mapping of types of activities, target groups and economic sectors addressed by climate actions supported by the ESF, and as such seeks to provide concrete illustrations of how ESF programmes have incorporated climate objectives in practice. It is suggested that these illustrations and lessons learned might also serve as inspiration for future programming, particularly in Member States that did not appear too active in the area of ESF climate action in this report.

2.1 The role of EU support towards climate action

The ESF is implemented under shared management between the EU and Member States. The EU defines the overall objectives and programming rules at the EU level, while the subsequent formulation of national strategies, selection of projects and implementation of the Fund is managed by national and/or regional authorities. The ESF Regulation and Common Provision Regulation for ESI Funds set the scope for addressing climate objectives in ESF programming. On this basis, Member States have themselves the possibility to determine the exact shape and focus of such support.

A first notable finding in connection to the shared management approach is that most Managing Authorities consider that similar investments on climate action would have been secured across Operational Programmes even in the absence of dedicated requirements and guidelines at the EU level. Yet, about a quarter of the responding Managing Authorities indicate that OPs would feature climate objectives less prominently if this had not been an explicit (secondary) priority area. There are no major differences between the answers of Managing Authorities with a high share of expenditure in the area of climate action and those with an average or no share allocated to climate activities.

Figure 2.1 Expected focus on climate objectives within ESF programming in absence of EU regulations and guidelines



Source: Survey among Managing Authorities, February 2020

From this perspective, the role of national and local partners in programming and implementation needs to be underlined. Implementation of the Fund is generally done by specific implementation partners, such as the PES, social partners or other civil society organisations. This implementation modality ensures that the supported operations meet immediate needs in the labour market, education or social sector. During an economic downturn, the ESF can be flexibly reprogrammed towards employment support, while in more prosperous times more attention can be paid to education and longer-term training needs²⁵. However, this flexibility can also result in too much attention on immediate and short-term needs, while paying less attention to longer-term innovation investments, such as those that help prepare the workforce for the consequences of climate change²⁶. To do so, implementing partners themselves need to be convinced of the importance of such investments; they are the ones that have to come up with the concrete project proposals. The EU guidelines on climate action for the ESF can serve as the catalyst to help start a debate about the need for sustainable approaches to the labour market, education and social sector in Member States. This report shows that so far, such debates are already ongoing in some, but not necessarily all Member States.

2.2 Climate action in ESF programmes

The most objective way to get an overall sense of the scope of climate action in ESF programmes is to assess the budgets allocated to such activities. In the programming phase, OPs specified an estimated share of the budget that could be related to climate action in the programme. This should be seen as a rough estimate, or in some OPs rather as a broad target than a concrete commitment. As shown by table 2.1 below, for around half of the Member States no ESF budgets were linked to climate action, while the overall average allocation is also fairly low, representing 1.4% of the ESF/YEI budget altogether. This should – again – be understood from the perspective of a secondary objective; first and foremost, OPs focus on the main objectives of the programme and often do not define secondary objectives. In IT, FI, LU, PT, and SI the OP proposes budget shares above the EU share. Particularly in LU and FI Managing Authorities allocated comparably high shares of their ESF budgets to climate actions, at 10% and 12% respectively.

Table 2.1 Allocation of budget to climate objectives ESF – by Member States

No allocation in OP	Around average (0-2%)	More than average (>2%)
CY, CZ, DK, EE, GR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LV, MT, NL, PL,	AT, BE, BG, DE, ES, FR, RO, SE, SK, UK	IT, FI, LU, PT, SI

Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on September 6, 2019

This classification of Member States into three groups, based on the anticipated spending of their ESF OP on climate action activities, needs to be interpreted with caution. The result of this classification depends on self-reporting without pre-defined criteria; different interpretations exist across different countries and regions. Some Managing Authorities refer to their national government's sustainability policies as proof for their estimated allocation to climate action, even without planning concrete action. Other Managing Authorities referred to such policies, but did not link concrete budgets to climate action in

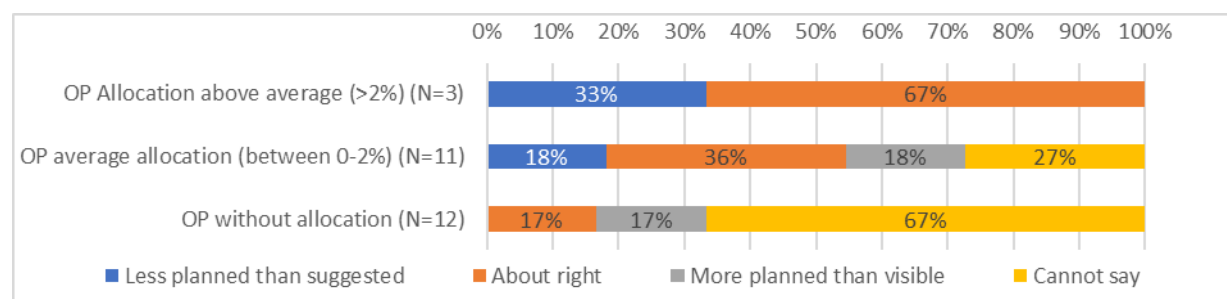
²⁵ See for instance the mid-term evaluation of employment and mobility support (TO8) in the ESF 2014-2020.

²⁶ See for instance European Commission (2018), Study supporting the impact assessment of human capital investments (VC/2017/0661).

the ESF, while a third set of Managing Authorities did not report anything, even if national sustainability strategies are in place.

To verify the extent to which these values can be used as a reliable indicator, the survey asked Managing Authorities to indicate to what extent the contents of the OP provide sufficient information about the planned level of climate actions in the ESF programmes. Overall, it can be concluded that these classifications seem relatively reliable. Where outliers do appear, these may indicate over- or under-reporting and should therefore be analysed with more caution. One-third of the Managing Authorities with above average budget allocation warn that there may be less climate action planned than what the OP actually suggests, while 18% of the Managing Authorities with average budget allocation (and 17% of those in which no allocations are planned to climate action), indicate that more activities are planned than what the OP seems to suggest. As could be expected, Managing Authorities with OP in which no climate actions are planned at all had more difficulties in answering this question.

Figure 2.2 Extent to which the OP correctly presents the planned attention to climate action



Source: Survey among Managing Authorities, February 2020

The fact that two-thirds (67%) of Managing Authorities of OP without allocations to climate objectives could not indicate whether their OP plans for any climate actions suggests that these Managing Authorities have not taken active steps to plan for such activities. This is confirmed in interviews conducted with various participants in the preparatory and negotiations phase of OP, which indicate that attention for the mainstreaming of climate actions was not an issue that received (much) attention. Interviews with the European Commission as well as Managing Authorities showed that in such contexts no explicit attention was paid to the programming of climate action. The negotiation of the Partnership Agreements took place in a multi-stakeholder setting, involving representatives from the various relevant policy areas in the European Commission and the Member State. For the European Commission, DG CLIMA also participated in these talks and focused particularly on how Member States were incorporating climate action into the programming of ESI Funds. However, the attention of negotiating partners concentrated on the approaches and budget shares linked to the three thematic objectives related to climate action, mainly targeted by the ERDF. No specific attention was given to whether and how Member States included attention in the ESF to climate action.

This view was confirmed by a Managing Authority in Poland, which indicated in the survey how the integration of climate objectives and actions into the ESF – or, more specifically, the lack thereof – had not been brought up in discussions with the European Commission during negotiations or approval phases of the OP. Also, when reprogramming the OP in

2017-2018, no attention was called to the fact that the programme did not estimate any allocation to secondary climate objectives.

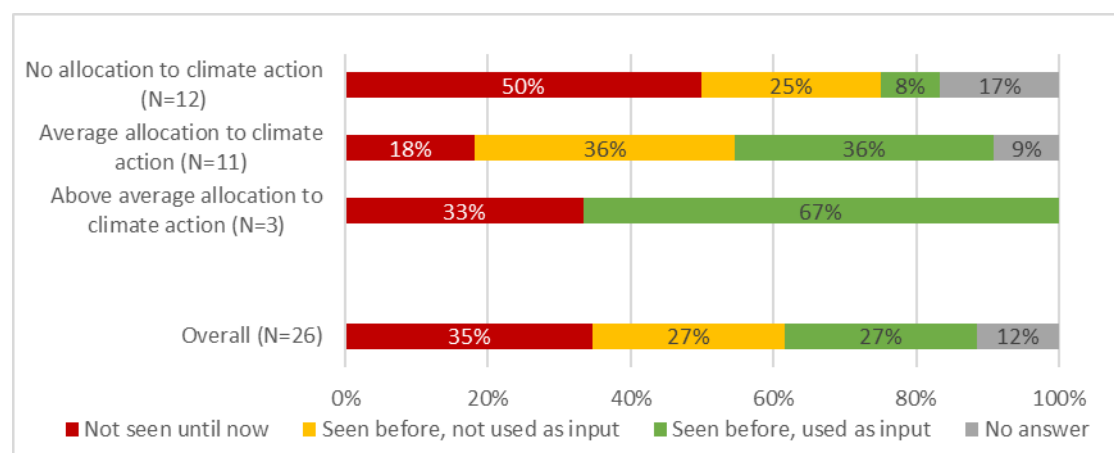
It is worth recalling at this juncture that the negotiations involving the establishment of the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes are complex and multi-dimensional discussions that cover multiple governmental departments and representatives. Even when considering the negotiations for ESF programmes, it should be stressed that these entail not only the allocation of resources across different priorities, but also broader discussions. For instance, in this phase the status of ex-ante conditionalities and specific activities related to these are also discussed. Such discussions have a direct bearing on the implementation of planned OP operations and are therefore considered of a higher order by all stakeholders, including the European Commission. No matter how much value one holds to ensuring the inclusion of secondary climate objectives in ESF programmes, it is difficult to imagine that it would receive more attention than aspects directly affecting the implementation of these programmes.

To help Managing Authorities integrate climate objectives in the programming of ESI Funds, detailed fact sheets were published by DG CLIMA on the potential for mainstreaming of climate action and the assessment thereof²⁷. The idea of these factsheets was not only to help draw more attention to climate action in the ESI Funds, but also to show in practical terms what was meant by 'mainstreaming'. The factsheets provide a brief introduction of how each of the ESI Funds relates to climate change, and provide concrete examples of climate actions in the ESF by referring to actual projects implemented in the 2007-2013 programming period. The main message of the factsheets is that climate action can be mainstreamed under any thematic objective, including those of the ESF/YEI, which at first sight seem to have a different focus. For the ESF specifically, it identifies the following two broad strands:

- Supporting the labour force by enhancing knowledge and skills and matching skills to develop, produce, use and apply new, efficient and low-carbon technologies in a broad range of sectors.
- Offering support to the labour force in order to alleviate any negative impacts on employment as a result of shifting to a low-carbon economy, i.e. jobs cuts in energy-intensive industries.

In addition, the factsheets seek to provide detailed guidance on which parts of the programme can best be addressed to exploit climate action potential, and provide indications of how the mainstreaming of climate actions in each fund can be assessed. While these factsheets contain relevant information, and indeed very concrete suggestions and ideas for mainstreaming of climate action in the ESF/YEI, limited attention was paid in regard to their dissemination to Managing Authorities responsible for the ESF. Figure 2.3 below shows the results of the survey, which asked about the extent to which Managing Authorities had been aware of the factsheets and to what extent they had used them.

²⁷ European Commission (2015), Climate action in ESF: Introduction to the series of Fact Sheets on the potential for mainstreaming of climate action and the assessment hereof.

Figure 2.3 Awareness and use of EC Factsheets on mainstreaming climate action into the ESF

Source: Survey among Managing Authorities, February 2020

The figure clearly suggests a relation between the allocation of budgets to secondary climate objectives in OP and the awareness and use of the factsheets. Half of the Managing Authorities that did not programme climate actions had not seen the guidance factsheets until the moment of the survey (February 2020), and only 8% reported having used them as input for programming. Among the OP with an average allocation to climate action, 18% had never seen the factsheets, and over one-third actually used the factsheets for programming. Two-thirds of the respondents with above average allocations to climate action indicate that these factsheets were used as input for programming and implementation, one-third was not aware of it.

Over one-third of respondents in Managing Authorities that were not aware of the EC factsheets on mainstreaming climate action is a relatively high share. Possibly, this is related to the timing of the publications, which took place in 2015, well after most OP were already approved and already started implementation. Even though the development and approval of Operational Programmes for the ESF 2014-2020 were delayed in many regions for various reasons, negotiations and approval processes of OP were already concluded, and project beneficiaries were already working to develop projects within the broader framework set by the Operational Programmes. By that time, for many OP it was already too late to start incorporating new ideas and re-structuring the overall programme to encourage more projects in the field of climate action. This does not exclude the possibility that individual projects are developed on an ad-hoc basis as the means to mainstream climate action within the broader objectives defined for an OP, possibly inspired by the factsheets.

2.3 Scope of climate action in ESF implementation

This section further explores the scope of climate action in ESF implementation. As the implementation of ESF/YEI programmes has already progressed substantially, it is reasonable to expect that concrete climate actions can already be observed.

When discussing the implementation of climate actions, one could distinguish between two broad types of operations:

- Horizontal attention for climate objectives in 'standard' operations (indirect climate actions);

- Specific ESF operations with some sort of climate action component (direct climate actions).

The first category of indirect climate actions is the most common across programmes, and is mentioned in most programmes as the way to meet the Regulatory requirement of sustainable development. As a minimum, article 8 of the CPR mandates that environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity, disaster resilience, and risk prevention and management are promoted in the preparation and implementation of Partnership Agreements and programmes. While it is possible that these horizontal measures have some measurable impact on a Member State's capability to mitigate climate change or transform its workforce to better deal with the consequences of climate change, its impacts are mostly indirect. Its main effects are more likely to be visible in the procedures of the Managing Authorities than in the actual outcomes for beneficiaries.

The second category is considerably more specific and consists of operations that have a direct observable effect on beneficiaries. These projects tend to focus on information provision, education and training provisions or employment measures toward sustainable development, in the ESF most often targeting employment in and training for green jobs. Expenses for this category tend to be reported as specific climate actions and can therefore be meaningfully tracked by looking at the monitoring data. Both types of action are discussed in more detail in the section below.

2.3.1 Mainstreaming climate action horizontally

All ESF programmes are required to integrate attention to climate change mitigation and adaption in their approach to preparation and implementation, as laid down by Article 8 of the CPR. In order to better understand how this requirement is implemented across the 187 ESF OP, Managing Authorities are required to report in 2017 and 2019 about how the OP respects this horizontal requirement. Generally, no expenditures can be linked to such horizontal activities. As a result, no EU-wide estimate can be made on the overall scope of such activities. This seems sensible and in line with the purpose of measuring expenditures; by only assigning expenditures of actual climate actions to climate objectives, a more reliable estimate can be made of the overall share of EU budgets reserved directly to climate action²⁸. This also means however, that such estimates by definition exclude measures of horizontal mainstreaming of climate attention, which arguably can also make relevant contributions to further climate objectives.

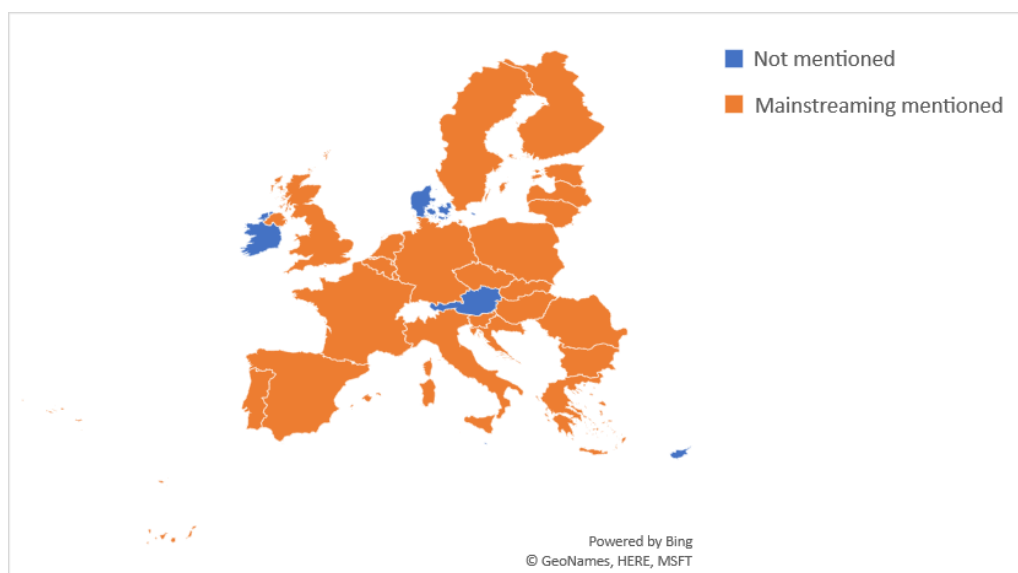
Most commonly, horizontal attention to climate action is applied through the implementation of specific criteria related to environmentally-friendly practices, such as promoting electronic administration, progressive abandonment of the use of paper in teaching, and administrative management, for instance policies to increase energy efficiency of lighting, equipment and other supplies. Another approach is to put in place requirements for projects to define internal guidelines for using environmentally friendly materials or save on transportation to the workplace for both the entity's technical staff and the beneficiaries, for instance through encouraging the use of public transport, and/or

²⁸ As discussed elsewhere in this report, the accounting practice in various regional OP in Spain, and in Romania is considerably different; in these contexts entire priority axes are classified as climate action expenditures, mainly based on the logic that horizontal mainstreaming is applied to these priority axes. This report has re-classified such expenditures to ensure comparability with other MS and provide a more reliable input for EU-estimates. For more info on the methodology applied, see annex I.

use of videoconferencing. A select number of Managing Authorities mention such measures in relation to their own organisation. However, most Managing Authorities apply these criteria to specific projects. In projects, this may be enforced by project promoters directly, without further guidance. In other projects, this is done on the basis of positive encouragement by Managing Authorities in the more detailed documentation accompanying calls for proposals. In some contexts, such criteria are in fact included as factors for the selection of projects as well, either as mandatory selection criteria, but more commonly as optional selection criteria that allow projects to increase their overall score and thus chances of being awarded²⁹. This logic of approving projects with attention for environmental concerns is also sometimes reversed. In Poland for instance, no support is possible for beneficiaries with outstanding environmental fines, nor can projects receive ESF support if these lead to a negative environmental effect.

To track approaches and mainstreaming activities, Managing Authorities have the liberty to report whatever initiative, policy or set of criteria that they consider relevant periodically in an open text field. This provides the space to report on non-standard activities, but the downside of this way of reporting is that the 187 annual descriptions of climate action contributions are not always comparable. Therefore these do not necessarily provide the full picture of how climate objectives are mainstreamed into ESF implementation. Some Managing Authorities do not report attention to horizontal mainstreaming in their AIRs, even though they may have national legislation in place that ensures that any project supported by the ESF strictly adheres to environmental criteria. On the other hand, other Member States may present various strategies and policies related to environmental issues that may not always affect the implementation of the ESF. Figure 2.4 below summarises for each Member State whether at least some type of activity is mentioned in relation to the mainstreaming of climate objectives across ESF programmes, and shows that all Member States, except AT, CY, DK, and IE, make a reference to at least one activity related to the mainstreaming of climate objectives across other ESF activities.

Figure 2.4 Overview of reported climate action mainstreaming – by Member State



Source: Authors, based on qualitative assessment of AIR 2018 and progress reports 2019.

²⁹ Based on the results of the survey, results not presented here.

Figure 2.4 reports the results for Member States with multiple (regional) OP as a single instance; it is classified as mainstreaming if there is at least one OP in a Member State in which mainstreaming activities are mentioned. A more in-depth analysis shows that many regional OP in fact do not report such horizontal activities; contrary to what is suggested by the figure above, the mainstreaming of climate action in the implementation of the ESF is often under-reported. The most common reasons for this under-reporting are mentioned here.

First of all, Managing Authorities take a minimalist approach to reporting on this issue, with limited or no attention to the approach to mainstreaming climate objectives. Often justified by the fact that ESF projects by themselves do not produce negative environmental consequences (unlike for instance infrastructure development supported by ERDF), it is argued that no additional safeguards or principles need to be specified. While some Managing Authorities use the reporting space to argue why no further information is provided, other Managing Authorities leave the reporting field for describing the horizontal principles or specific climate actions blank. It seems that leaving reporting on climate issues blank is no reason for the European Commission to reject the report or require additional clarifications.

Example of Annual Implementation Reports with no mention of ESF activities towards climate objectives

- **Cyprus:** "Due to the nature of the European Social Fund and the "intangible" interventions to be promoted, it is not foreseen to include specific criteria for the compatibility of the acts with climate objectives."
- **Denmark:** "This horizontal principle is not considered to be relevant to the program, as ESF cannot be used to fund activities supporting the reduction of reducing environmental impacts."

Source: AIR 2018 for Cyprus and Denmark

The analysis of AIR shows particularly limited information about the horizontal approach to climate objectives in the ESF in multi-fund OPs. OPs with combined ESF and ERDF investments tend to discuss their approach to climate objectives quite extensively, but only do so for the ERDF part of the programme. This is understandable, given that ERDF programmes have more direct environmental consequences, either negatively through infrastructure or economic development investments, or positively by focusing directly on the dedicated climate thematic objectives. For the ESF, where none of these direct relations are seen, Managing Authorities report considerably less often on the climate actions taken. As a result, it seems at the EU level that OPs include less horizontal attention to secondary objectives in ESF implementation than what may actually be case.

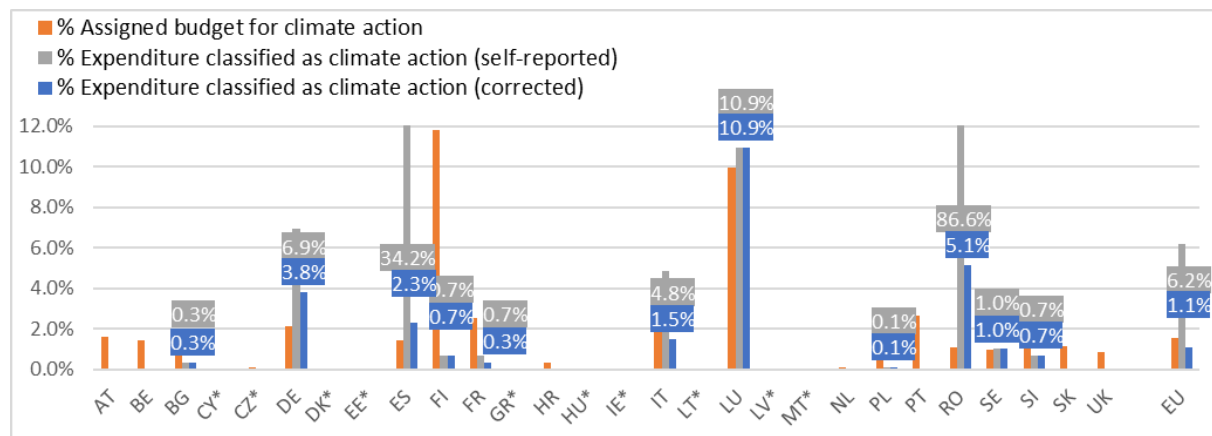
Thirdly, Managing Authorities can report on the progress of operations with a specific focus on climate actions in the annual implementation reports. These actions themselves are discussed in more detail in the next section, but here it is relevant because these OPs also pay less attention to describing in the AIR how horizontal principles are integrated. With all the attention in the AIR focused towards describing concrete activities, it seems that the Managing Authorities prioritised the description of concrete activities over the more general and abstract application of horizontal mainstreaming in their programmes.

2.3.2 Support for specific climate action operations

In addition to general mainstreaming, ESF programmes also contain more targeted ESF operations that explicitly focus on mitigation or adaptation. These specific operations can be linked directly to specific budgets. Therefore, a good starting point for mapping specific climate actions is the reported financial scope of these activities across the EU.

Just as Member States are required to report on the estimated *share of allocated budget* to climate actions (see section 2.2), they also report in their Annual Implementation Reports the *share of the eligible expenditures* that can be linked to secondary climate objectives. No further guidelines exist at the EU level about what types of expenditure qualify as 'climate action'. Interviews with Managing Authorities show that widely different approaches are used when classifying expenditures as 'climate action'. This leads to stark differences *across* the EU, but even *within* Member States, where multiple (regional) Managing Authorities follow their own methods of classifying expenditures. In order to allow some basic comparative conclusions about the scope of ESF contributions towards climate objectives, the estimates provided by Managing Authorities were revised (see Annex I for a more detailed description of the approach). The figure below compares the programmed share of budget classified as climate action in the OP with the share of eligible expenditures classified as climate action³⁰. The grey figures show the share of expenditures classified as climate action by Managing Authorities themselves, while the blue bars represented the corrected values for comparison (see annex I for a detailed description of the methodology).

Figure 2.5 Comparison of allocation and expenditures to climate action – by Member State



Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on September 6, 2019, revised by authors (see Annex I). Asterisk (*) means Member States without allocated budget to climate action

At the EU level, the corrected expenditures show a total of 1.1% of expenditures that can be linked to climate action, which represents a total of €0.4 billion³¹. Managing Authorities themselves classified 6.2% (or €2.0 billion) of all their reported expenditures as climate

³⁰ We only present the eligible expenditures in this section and do not report on the project selection rates. First of all, the shares of project selection rate classified as climate action are almost identical to the eligible expenditure. Secondly, the eligible expenditures are a more stable figure than project selection rates and a better measure of implementation, as these are generally only recorded in AIR after concluding interventions.

³¹ Recall that the allocated *budgets* to climate actions correspond to 1.4% of the total budgets. The 1.1% mentioned here refers to the *eligible expenditures* reported, and therefore apply to actual implementation.

action. Figure 2.5 clearly shows that the difference is mainly caused by comparatively high shares of expenditures that are classified as climate action in RO (86.6%) and ES (32.2%). Follow-up interviews with Managing Authorities in these MS show that these outlier values are related to vastly different methodologies of classification, and not because of meaningful differences in the types of interventions in place, nor of more attention to climate action in these Member States per se.

With an overall share of expenditures estimated between 1.1% (our corrected estimate developed for comparative purposes) and 6.2% (the self-reported share of expenditure to climate action), it can be concluded that the expenditure towards climate action is close to or already above the overall target allocation for climate action in the OP. All expenditures for climate action are reserved in the ESF; no YEI expenditures were reported to be implemented with secondary climate objectives. The overall shares of expenditures in individual Member States were used to estimate the share of participants in these climate actions (see annex I). It is estimated that a total of **539 051 participations** can be linked to climate action (2.1% of all participation reported for ESF so far)³². Table 2.3 below summarises where these participations are most likely to be found, and confirms the prevalence of climate action among larger Member States; almost all participations in the area of climate action can be found in IT, ES and DE. One third of all participations linked to climate action are reported in IT (179 426), followed by ES (178 157), and DE (148 566).

Table 2.2 Reported and estimated scope of climate actions

MS	Eligible costs classified as climate action		Eligible expenditures classified as climate action		Corrected estimated of climate action		Estimated number of participations ³³	
	Self-reported by MA (in AIR2018)				Corrected estimates			
	x€1 000	% of total	x€1 000	% of total	x€1 000	% of total	Absolute number	% of total
AT	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
BE	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
BG	1 624	0.2%	1 460	0.3%	1 460	0.3%	5 584	0.6%
CY	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
CZ	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
DE	774 892	7.7%	342 128	6.9%	186 782	3.8%	148 566	7.9%
DK	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
EE	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
ES	2 188 404	30.1%	712 804	34.2%	47 653	2.3%	178 157	4.3%
FI	5 757	0.8%	2 681	0.7%	2 681	0.7%	1 622	0.8%
FR	58 735	0.8%	25 683	0.7%	11 205	0.3%	9 984	0.3%
GR	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
HR	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
HU	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
IE	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
IT	530 993	5.6%	170 644	4.8%	52 352	1.5%	179 426	3.7%
LT	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
LU	3 950	9.8%	1 928	10.9%	1 928	10.9%	1 375	10.4%
LV	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
MT	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
NL	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
PL	8 895	0.1%	2 523	0.1%	2 523	0.1%	3 203	0.1%
PT	56	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%

³² We emphasise that there is no systematic data available to verify the reliability of this estimate. The estimate is fully based on the share of expenditures reported, at the PAX level, and is subsequently linked to the number of participants reported for that individual priority axis.

³³ The share of participants is calculated based on the estimated corrected share of eligible expenditures, at the level of individual priority axes. See for more details annex I.

RO	3 015 920	88.0%	760 247	86.6%	45 000	5.1%	6 270	5.4%
SE	6 752	0.7%	3 881	1.0%	3 881	1.0%	3 497	2.3%
SI	2 877	0.3%	1 589	0.7%	1 589	0.7%	1 368	1.1%
SK	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
UK	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
EU	6 598 855	7.9%	2 025 567	6.2%	357 054	1.1%	539 051	2.1%

Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on September 6, 2019, revised by authors for comparative purposes (see Annex I).

Figure 2.5 confirms how OP that did not allocate budgets to climate actions in the programming phase also do not report expenditures in this area. This is an intuitive finding, as these Member States are also the least likely to put in place monitoring systems that keep track of the share of ESF expenditures towards climate action. While it is possible that in coming years some progress may be reported, the qualitative contributions of Managing Authorities in their OP and AIR so far suggest that this is not likely. These Member States often do not report and/or monitor the plans and activities in the area of climate action, or – at most – report that their ESF programme meets the objectives by avoiding or compensating any environmental harm that could be related to any of the operations. A number of Member States (BE, HR, SK, PT, UK) allocated budgets to specific climate actions, but so far do not yet report any implementation³⁴. There seems little reason for concern in these areas, often this follows the general plan for implementation, which depends on the implementation in the final few years of implementation in a large number of OP; recall that the implementation rate for all ESF operations reported in AIR currently stands at 27%³⁵.

Croatia: “Investments in climate-related interventions are planned in accordance with the indicative list of projects used during programming. It was envisaged to invest in retraining for green jobs and green skills. During the implementation period, until the end of 2018, there were no operations for green jobs and skills and no investments were made related to the secondary theme mentioned above. During the implementation, investment prioritisation has changed in line with current needs in the labour market and education sector, and activities related to climate change have been left for implementation at the end of the programming period. Given the importance of climate change on the daily life of the population and the impact on the economy, a particular focus on mitigation is foreseen in the next programming period 2021-2027”.

Source: AIR 2018 for Croatia – Operational Programme Effective Human Resources (Operativni program Učinkoviti ljudski potencijali 2014.-2020)

The levels of expenditures linked to climate action in Member States that report concrete activities vary from less than 1% (in BG, FR, FI, PL, SI) to over 10% of all expenditures in LU. This variation in expenditures classified as climate action is considerably higher than what would be expected on the basis of the qualitative descriptions provided in the AIR. It is therefore important that these classifications, provided by Managing Authorities themselves, are not taken at face-value but always analysed together with the more

³⁴ AT had initially also assigned budgets to climate action, but in OP revisions since mid 2019 re-assigned these. In the most recent version of the OP (3.0, approved by the EC in February 2020), no more budgets are allocated to climate action.

³⁵ Based on AIR 2018 (data extracted from SFC2014 on September 6, 2019), as reported in Final ESF Synthesis Report of AIRs 2018 submitted in 2019.

qualitative information. Moreover, these estimates become more insightful when also combined with the estimated participation figures.

In LU for instance, the high share of expenditures related to climate action is matched by its ambitious targets for climate contribution of the ESF, and high profile of relevant projects in the ongoing ESF programme. The Managing Authorities maintains close institutional and informal ties with the relevant project beneficiaries, which proved particularly effective to incentivise partners to develop projects in this area.

Romania also stands out in the high level of its reported expenditures related to climate action. The Managing Authority classified no less than 86.6% of the total eligible expenditure as climate action. After correction for comparative purposes, this remains relatively high, with an estimated share of over 5% of eligible expenditure that contributes to the objective of 'supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy'. All applicants for any ESF project in RO must highlight the contribution to climate objectives, and the technical evaluation grids associated with the documentation of the calls include various specific criteria on this subject. These strict guidelines and criteria have created incentives for project beneficiaries to concentrate various projects specifically on the area of climate action, such as apprenticeships in "green jobs", or for instance support for renewing the contents of qualifications to include new competences related to the green economy. Despite the high share of climate action expenditures, RO reports a limited number of participations in its AIR so far, which appears to be behind schedule.

Thirdly, with 3.8% of all eligible expenditure currently classified as climate action, DE is another example with a substantial level of activity in the area of climate action. Almost all regional OP in DE make reference to some implemented activity under the heading of climate action, and regional Managing Authorities also seem to be tracking these activities at a considerable level of detail, including in some cases participants and results. Despite the level of detail already available in its OP, the Hamburg Managing Authority specifically suggests that more could be done by the ESF to encourage climate action projects, for instance by including more explicit incentives (for project promoters, as well as for MA) in the next programming period and more specific measurement through performance indicators on environmental sustainability of projects and qualifications offered by the ESF.

The lower share of expenditures reported in other Member States does not necessarily mean that the specific climate activities in these programmes are marginal. The Finnish Managing Authorities for instance reports that currently 20 projects are ongoing in the area of climate action, and it expects to increase the share of expenditure closer to the target in the coming years. However, it also notes that the contribution to climate objectives depends primarily on how Managing Authorities draw the boundary between what does and does not contribute to climate objectives. The ESF contribution – even if relevant – is bound to remain modest, as its focus on climate objectives is only secondary. As a result, it is possible that operations with a minor component focused on climate action are not classified as such. There are also signs that other OPs may be accidentally under-reporting attention to climate action, as described in the box below for the Lazio region in Italy.

Case study Lazio - Italy

The above analysis of participation figures and expenditures reported for climate action already suggests a considerable level of climate activity in IT. An in-depth analysis of the Italian Regional OP for Lazio shows more concrete examples of how these figures

still significantly underestimate the OP's attention to climate action. The AIR reports only limited information about actions any climate actions undertaken. It only mentions a single project, "Scuola per le energie", a network that provides trainings to develop skills for green jobs, the budget of which is the only one linked to climate objectives (roughly €0.4 million). However, an in-depth review of other activities shows that the OP's contribution to climate change objectives actually goes well beyond that. In its list of operations that were supported so far, already shows that in both axes 1 and 3 the total cost of selected operations of projects linked to energy efficiency, awareness raising on climate change objectives, green skills and so forth around at least 5 million euro in the other two priority axes.

The classification of budgets to climate actions is conducted by a central team working on reporting activities. These teams apply central criteria for labelling an action as a climate action, but these decisions might not fully involve actors responsible for the implementation of such activities. This detachment between reporting and implementation is conducive to under-reporting of relevant actions.

Source: AIR 2018 of POR Lazio FSE³⁶ and Interview conducted with MA.

The description above already shows how the expenditures reported for climate actions need to be interpreted together with the more detailed descriptions of different types of activities in the AIR and, in principle, lists of operations supported. The expenditures are a good tool to distinguish between Member States with and without specific climate action, but need to be treated with more caution when comparing attention for climate action between OP that have ongoing climate actions. The main reason for this additional caution is the lack of a common approach to how the shares of expenditure are associated to climate activities by different MA³⁷. Each Managing Authorities defines its own procedures and requirements towards what classifies as a contribution to climate actions. The only example of coordination that can be found in this respect is done by national authorities in Member States with regional OP, such as in DE, ES, PT and IT. It can therefore not be excluded that variations between different OP are related more to differences in measurement and definition rather than in actual attention. At the moment, no guidance exists that lays down the methodology or necessary conditions for operations to assign expenditure to the area of climate action.

Understanding the allocation of expenditures to climate action in Romania

A review of ESF programmes in Romania shows that various projects are running and planned that are fully relevant from the perspective of climate action, such as programmes that seek to retrain workers in the mining sector for work with renewable energy. However, the estimated figures by the Managing Authorities for the shares of expenditures and shares of participation that can be linked to climate action are remarkably high and a consistent outlier among other (87% of all expenditure). A more detailed review shows that this is at least partly the result of a different approach to the classification of expenditures as climate action than other Member States. Each project is required to follow a strict set of guidelines, which also includes attentions to climate

³⁶ 2014IT05SFOP005

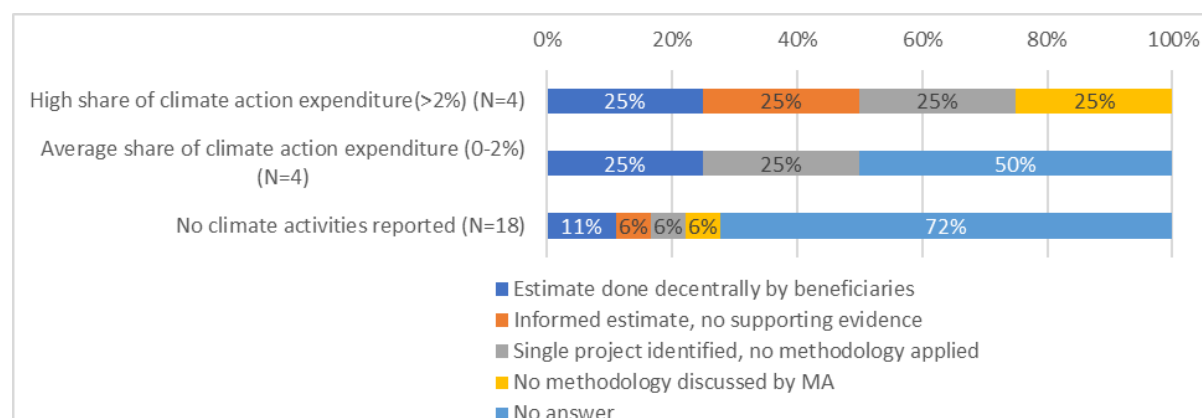
³⁷ As indicated in Annex I, the most substantial variations – observed particularly in ES and RO – were manually revised to allow a basic comparison for the purpose of this report.

issues. Every project manager needs to prove that their project meets certain sustainability criteria that were mandatorily defined before the start of the project. Once this is proven, a project is classified as climate action. Because these guidelines apply to all almost approved projects, almost the entire implementation budget for RO is classified as relevant for climate action, regardless of whether that activity explicitly addresses climate objectives.

Source: AIR 2018 Romania ("Operational Programme Human Capital": "Program Operational Capital Uman"³⁸) and interview with DG EMPL geo-desk officer

The survey confirms that Managing Authorities chose different approaches to report these values, and also confirms the need for additional guidance. A total of 72% of Managing Authorities for OP without climate activities did not respond as to how they were tracking the share of climate action in their OP. As we have seen earlier, most of these OPs also do not report activities in qualitative sections of the AIR, so it is understandable that these do not report how to track such activities; they may not need to. At the same time, half of the MA with average shares of expenditure to climate action also did not answer how to track this. Moreover, 25% of Managing Authorities reporting above-average expenditures indicated that no common methodology had been put in place by the MA. The survey also shows the common practice of defining the share of climate action expenditures in a decentralised manner. This means that it is not the Managing Authorities that classify the share of expenditure as climate action for certain projects, but that this is done by project beneficiaries or Intermediary Bodies directly. This helps to explain why DG EMPL geo-desk officers, and in many cases the Managing Authorities themselves, do not know what underpins the choices for classifying a certain (part of) an operation as a contribution to secondary climate objectives. Only in a minority of cases are the values defined by Managing Authorities themselves, either because they are linked to a single project, or based on an informed estimate.

Figure 2.6 Method used for classifying expenditures



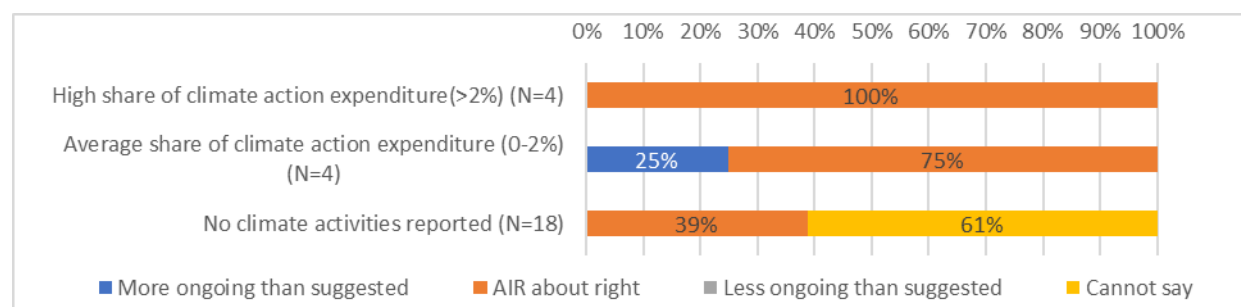
Source: Survey among Managing Authorities, February 2020

The variety in approaches to assigning expenditures raises the question whether these expenditures serve as a good indication for the actual scope of activities. The survey conducted among Managing Authorities provides some indication that this is roughly the

³⁸ CCI: 2014RO05M9OP001

case. No Managing Authority reported that fewer activities were ongoing than reported in the AIR (regardless of how much expenditure was already reported). The Managing Authority for mainland Finland indicated that more was ongoing than suggested by the low figure for implementation (0.7% of the expenditure reported so far), which is indeed confirmed by the considerable level of activity indicated in the qualitative section of its AIR. It further explained the difficulties in a follow-up interview, and pointed to the difficulties of consistently classifying whether and to what extent an operation contributes to climate objectives, particularly if this is not a primary objective. Often, the participants and budgets of operations cannot be split by the type of training course supported; take for example a training course that targets the construction sector. If one module of the course addresses energy efficiency, does that turn the entire operation (100%) into a climate supporting activity? A substantial majority of Managing Authorities without activities (61%) could not say whether activities had been taken place. This suggests that these Managing Authorities do not have the means to track whether their OP has supported activities with a secondary climate objective, which also confirms earlier findings.

Figure 2.7 Extent to which the AIR correctly presents the planned attention to climate action



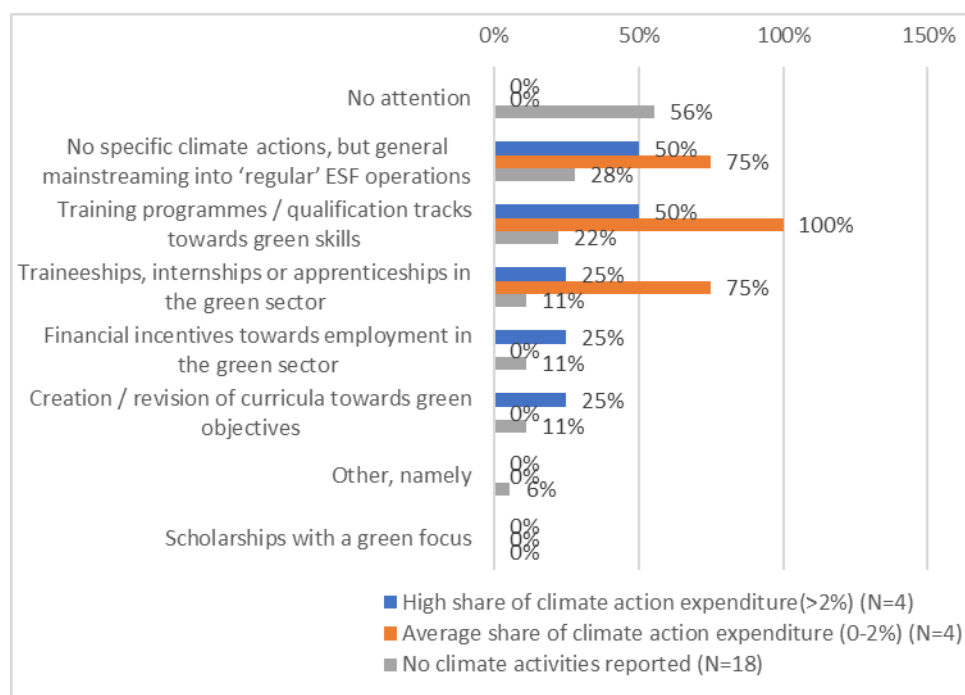
Source: Survey among Managing Authorities, February 2020

2.4 Characterising ESF climate actions

2.4.1 Types of activities

This section presents in more detail the type of activities that are classified as climate actions. This helps to increase the understanding of the type of activities that Managing Authorities are taking, the target groups these address, and the economic sectors selected by such operations.

First of all, over half of the OPs that do not report expenditures for climate actions (56%) also indicate that no activities can be identified. Only 28% of Managing Authorities without expenditures for climate actions indicate that some level of general mainstreaming is taking place. This is considerably higher in OPs that also report expenditures for climate actions.

Figure 2.8 Types of activities identified by Managing Authorities

Source: Survey among Managing Authorities, February 2020

When asked to select what specific types of activities are classified as climate actions, Managing Authorities most often mention training programmes and traineeships. This confirms the findings from the previous sections, which already identified the importance of trainings and courses in the qualitative descriptions provided by MA. Also when looking at 'regular ESF activities' in which climate actions are mainstreamed, interviewees also most often point to training programmes that help retrain workers into green sectors, such as sustainable energy, energy efficiency in construction, etc. In GR, for instance, "Environmental Education Centres" were set up, providing education, awareness and information to pupils and teachers (primary and secondary education), on the development of cognitive and value backgrounds on the environment and sustainable development. Similarly, in BG, support is provided for environmental clubs and green schools, in which attention is given to combating change climate, resource efficiency, nature and environment protection, waste management and more.

While the ESF is used to support a broad variety of training measures, it is reported less often as the means to support the creation or revision of entire curricula. Financial incentives are also not often mentioned by respondents in the survey. A small number of Member States report in their AIR in more detail about financial support measures to boost employment in the green sector. Such incentives may focus on (large) employers, to reduce costs of hiring, or consist of measures that provide (financial) support to start-ups in this sector. Rather than separate measures, such measures may often be offered as a general financial incentive for hiring that targets any sector, but for instance offer an additional hiring bonus if the employment is in the green sector. In some of the regional OP in ES for instance, hiring subsidies are increased for contracts in sectors that fit the requirements of the new model of productive economy, such as those focused on resource efficiency and climate change mitigation.

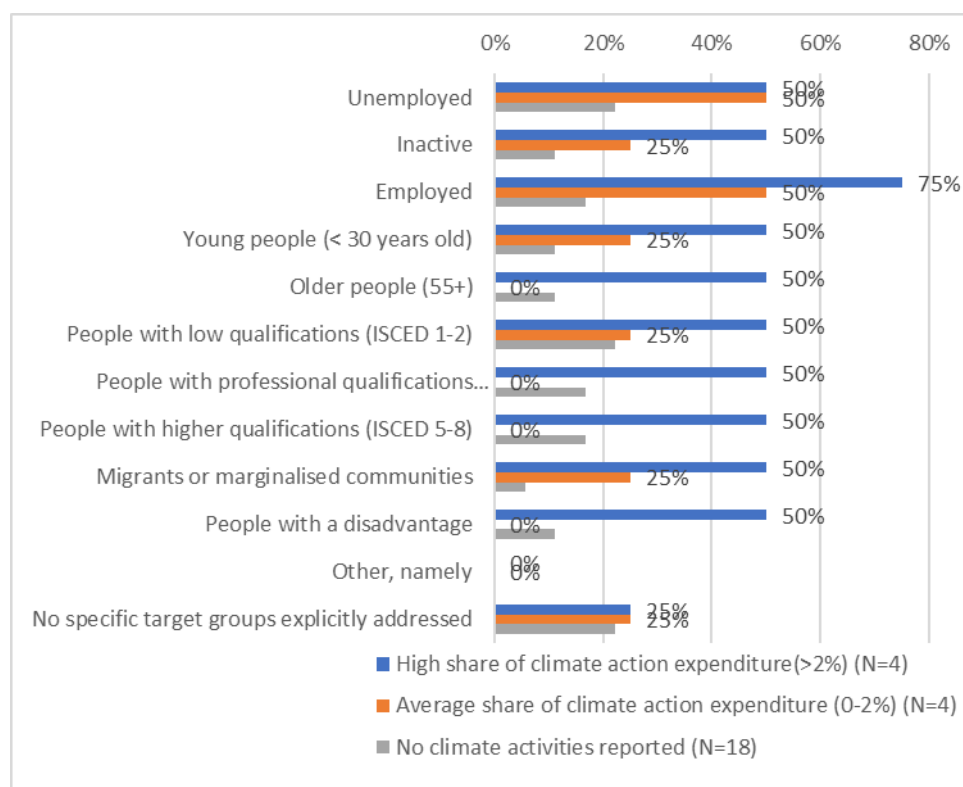
The categories presented in this section are by no means exhaustive, and are only the most common types of operations that the study found. Other approaches can also be found, for instance in Italy's National Governance OP, which focuses on the mainstreaming of climate action in the Public Administration. This OP consists of two large projects, one funded by the ESF (Creiamo PA), and another by ERDF (RIGA), both of which aim to overcome the critical issues in the governance of environmental policies and accompany the authorities in facing the changes introduced by the ongoing reforms. In doing so, it combines the principles of protection and safeguard with those of development and competitiveness. The aim is to achieve greater efficiency in the PAX in the environmental field by jointly and complementarily addressing the issue of strengthening administrative capacity. It is expected that the increased administrative capacity will translate into better climate action across the board. Another interesting approach is mentioned by the Italian region of Tuscany, which ran an information campaign on air quality, to also involve individual citizens in the fight against air pollution. The information campaign 'Aria di Toscana' under the slogan 'Air is friendly if it is clean' was financed thanks to the contribution of the ESF and carried out between November and December 2018 on the Tuscan media and on the web, with the implementation of informative material such as brochures, posters, advertisements in newspapers, audio and video spots for online media that can also be used for educational purposes.

This variety of activities further builds on the distinction between mitigation measures (reducing global warming) and adaptation strategies (transforming to the reality of climate change). In view of the separate objectives defined for these, it is desirable to be able to distinguish between projects that support either one of these objectives, or both. A 2016 study on the mainstreaming of climate action concludes that the ESF focuses only on mitigation measures, mainly based on the wording of the secondary objective ("Supporting the shift to a low-carbon, resource-efficient economy")³⁹. Though this conclusion is strictly in line with the wording of the secondary objective, it seems not fully justified. Many of the supported climate action projects specifically set out to prepare the workforce for a transition in skills and help ensure that the workforce is ready for the economic transformation. However, this section also shows that an exact distinction between adaptability and mitigation soon becomes blurry. Any social measures that focus on re-skilling the workforce as preparation for future transformations cannot avoid to also contribute to this transformation at the same time. Respondents in interviews and the survey struggled to indicate which of the two objectives had been more prevalent in ESF support; both are inherently linked in the social nature of the ESF operations supported. It is therefore suggested to avoid applying these terms in the context of the ESF.

2.4.2 Target groups

AIR do not contain systematic information about the target groups reached with ESF Climate actions. Some Managing Authorities used the qualitative descriptions to refer to relevant target groups, but this is not done consistently and therefore does not provide a full image of the scope of such actions. For this purpose, the survey asked Managing Authorities to specify this, the results of which are presented in the figure below.

³⁹ COWI, 2016 Report on Mainstreaming of climate action into ESI Funds.

Figure 2.9 Average reference to target group in climate action

Source: Survey among Managing Authorities, February 2020

The figure suggests that there is not one clear target group that is more often reached than others. Employed people are mentioned by 75% of all Managing Authorities with OPs in which high shares of expenditure are reported, but other target groups, such as unemployed, inactive and young people are also mentioned frequently. Young people seem more often targeted than older people. While this is partly because various education measures tend to focus on schools, a number of additional measures can be identified to target young people also outside schools. In a number of German OP, ESF climate actions focus on the promotion of the Voluntary Ecological Year within the framework of the promotion of youth voluntary services. In Galicia, a Mentor Programme was funded with the ESF, providing information and guidance to young people on sustainable development, incorporating sustainability measures in their domestic affairs. The programme consisted of an awareness-raising training with attention for domestic sustainable development measures, such as supporting recycling by separation of solid waste, avoiding to leave taps or lights on, or dressing appropriately so as to lower the use of heating or air conditioning.

The figure also suggests that programmes focus more often on people with low qualifications (ISCED1-2) than on people with higher qualifications. In the German state of Hessen for instance, the ESF supports a project that focuses on 'Working and learning in the environmental workshop'. It focuses on disadvantaged young people who are introduced to the requirements of the training and labour market for work in the professional fields of gardening and landscaping, environmental and nature conservation, gastronomy and wood technology, with the purpose of employing them sustainably. It consists of socio-pedagogically accompanied and supervised measures that allow to learn practical and theoretical skills. As a result, the range of occupational choices and

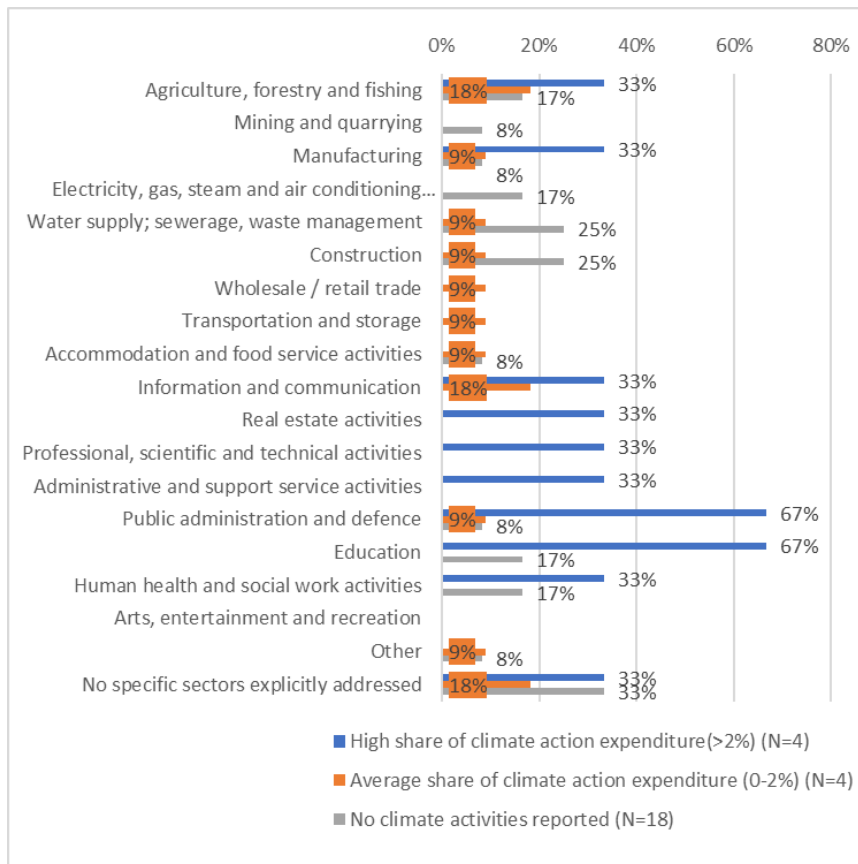
professional qualifications of the participants are expanded and specified to also include occupations in the green sector. Another German project in Rhineland Palatinate aimed at unemployed or inactive young people under the age of 25 who are neither in school nor in training. The "Youth actively into the future" project offers targeted support, the acquisition of new skills in practical and theoretical fields and an improvement in social behaviour are to be achieved, and help in life and career planning and in active work on problems is to be provided.

Figure 2.9 does not provide an exhaustive list of possible target groups, and for instance does not include small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are also a relevant beneficiary of climate action projects in the ESF. In the Spanish National OP for instance, a project called "Coworking Space of Circular Economy" concentrates on entrepreneurs that promote sustainable development. It offers a common workspace for innovative entrepreneurs, but combines physical workspace with target business support, in the development of business plans, including climate conscious considerations. The project specifically reaches out to entrepreneurs in the green sector. A project in the German state of Baden-Württemberg provides professional adaptation training to SMEs in the area of electromobility, with a focus on revising processes and energy sources to achieve a significant CO₂ reduction.

2.4.3 Sectors addressed

The introduction highlighted the potential of ESIF support in sectors that face declining employment or will go through disruptive transformation on the medium-term. For target groups, no systematic monitoring data is available on the types of sectors addressed with climate action supported by the ESF. Based on the findings from the survey among MA, this section seeks to provide some preliminary answers in this direction.

Figure 2.10 below presents which sectors are addressed by the different OP, classified by their share of expenditure that focuses on climate action. Most remarkably, the figure shows that the sectors at the highest risk of declining employment and transformation are hardly mentioned by respondents. Mining and quarrying and the electricity sector are not mentioned by OPs with specific climate actions, and by only 8% and 17% of the responding Managing Authorities without dedicated climate expenditures. It is important to recall that the survey received only a limited number of OPs, and it is therefore possible that OPs in regions with employment in these sectors are under-represented. However, these distributions across sectors are roughly confirmed by the lack of references to mining and the energy generation sector in the qualitative sections in AIR as well. All references to electricity refer to projects that seek to improve energy efficiency, which is also a relevant approach, but does not address workers in the energy generation sector.

Figure 2.10 Sectors addressed with ESF climate actions

Instead, the figure suggests considerable attention for public administration, education, agriculture and ICT. Through attention to schools, ESF projects often aim to increase awareness of environmental issues in general, or more specifically prepare students for future employment in green jobs, such as in sustainable energy generation, sustainable construction and agriculture. These are very relevant areas of attention as well, though risk overlooking the more immediate concerns of workers in these more specifically at risk sectors.

The publication of the European Green Deal in December 2019⁴⁰, was followed by the creation of the Just Transition Mechanism specifically aims to provide targeted support to regions and sectors that are most affected by the transition towards the green economy. While the details still need to be worked out, it seeks to mobilise at least €100 billion, part of which consists of investment schemes, loans, and a dedicated European investment facility under the newly established Just Transition Fund and matching support from the ESF/ERDF. The purpose of this mechanism is to fill exactly the gap identified for ESF support in this section. In preparation for the formal launch of this fund, and its integration into the ESF+ in the 2021-2027 programming period, it is suggested to already review how the current ESF can be used to more specifically support these objectives. Moreover, more attention will be needed to identify the reasons why the ESF in 2014-2020 has only allocated limited support to workers in the economic sectors that will face the largest transition due to climate change.

⁴⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

3 Conclusions

This thematic report provides an overview of the scope of the ESF/YEI in programming and implementation of climate objectives. A variety of European strategies defined concrete climate objectives for 2020, and more recently the Commission published even more ambitious proposals towards a carbon-neutral economy in 2050. To achieve these objectives, the European Council defined that at least 20% of all EU spending in the 2014-2020 should be focused towards climate action. The ESI Funds, which represent 42% of the 2014-2020 budget, are a central implementation mechanism towards the European climate objectives. This report shows that the contribution of the ESF/YEI is relatively marginal within this framework; climate is defined as a secondary objective, as it primarily focuses on employment, social inclusion, education and institution capacity. Still, the common Regulation calls for the need to horizontally integrate climate action in all funds, and a total of 1.4% of the total ESF/YEI budget can be linked explicitly to climate objectives.

This report shows that the scope of climate action in the ESF, and attention for it in annual reporting varies substantially across OPs and countries. Whereas some Member States actively report on climate action approaches and activities, others hardly mention such efforts in relation to the ESF, even if these in fact take place. A third category of programmes do not have any operations or allocations to report on from the perspective of climate action. One common feature across these programmes is that the annual implementation reports provide limited information about the scope and type of climate action operations. This requires descending into the level of individual projects, while taking into account national and regional specificities of individual programmes.

Some monitoring information on climate action is available. Managing Authorities themselves for instance report a total of 6.2% of all aggregated expenditures as climate action expenditure. However, there are large differences in approaches to classifying these expenditures, sometimes even within Member States. These differences complicate the comparison of budgetary data. For this reason, this report analysed the budgetary data in combination with the qualitative inputs provided by Member States, and calculated revised estimates where necessary. Based on this analysis, it is estimated that a total share of 1.1% of total eligible expenditures can actually be related to concrete climate activities, which is estimated to correspond to a participation figure of 539 051 in specific activities with a direct impact on climate objectives. Participations related to climate action activities are most visible in IT, ES, and DE, and are linked to smaller number of participations in other Member States.

In addition to specific climate action activities, most Member States also report on horizontal mainstreaming of climate actions. Such actions can consist of smaller administrative actions, such as paper-saving and energy-saving measures, but can also include broader initiatives that focus on green public procurement or support measures for smart work and attention for sustainable transportation. Such horizontal measures cannot be directly linked to the overall estimates of budget expenditures that are related to climate action, but are also relevant approaches in how the ESF addresses climate action. In view of the ambitious climate objectives formulated in the recently launched European Green Deal, there remains considerable scope to further broaden the ESF's attention for climate action, both in terms of specific and horizontal activities. In preparation for the next programming period, additional guidance may be put in place

about the expected level of attention, as well as about the type of climate actions that can be programmed under the ESF.

A dedicated section in this report listed a broad variety of activities, target groups and economic sectors currently targeted by existing ESF/YEI operations. While this may serve as inspiration or illustration of what is possible, a broader scope is conceivable. The sectors that would most benefit from additional guidance, training and reskilling are hardly reached by current ESF operations; sectors such as mining or energy generation are expected to face the most substantial effects of economic transformation. The ESF could be used more directly to support the reskilling of workers in these sectors.

Such substantive lessons can be applied directly in the remaining years of the 2014-2020 period, but are even more relevant for the next programming period. An analysis of the initial Operational Programmes defined at the start of the 2014-2020 programming period shows that more guidance towards climate action is possible. Due to the large variety of issues relevant for negotiations and preparation of OP and Partnership Agreements, no dedicated attention to ESF approaches to climate objectives was included. Most discussions on climate objectives took place under the heading of ERDF, which has specific Thematic Objectives in the area of climate action. Factsheets were developed by the European Commission with concrete ideas and suggestions for climate actions to help inform programming of the ESF, but were published only after the main programming of ESF programmes was done. This experience contains valuable lessons and shows how more targeted and concrete measures can help drawing attention to climate action at an early stage.

The broader framework of the European Green Deal, as well as the recently launched “Just Transition Mechanism” already offer the concrete tools for doing this. With a focus on ensuring that no region and nobody is left behind, the role of climate action measures – both with mitigation and adaptation objectives – is likely to become more prominent. Building on such additional momentum, it is also timely to draw practical lessons from the 2014-2020 period, such as how attention to climate action is monitored by the different Managing Authorities. Towards the next programming period, it will prove necessary to better balance monitoring requirements on climate action against the need for reliable monitoring information at the EU level. Doing so would help inform strategic programming for ESF/YEI and achieving progress towards the objectives of the European Green Deal and contribute to a higher visibility of European efforts towards continuous reskilling of the workforce in line with future needs.

Annex I – Approach to estimating attention climate action

The different approaches adopted by MS to classify expenditures for climate action make a comparison across MS difficult. In order to allow some basic conclusions about the scope of ESF contributions towards climate objectives, the research team adjusted some of the core data provided in AIR2018. This section outlines in more detail what steps were taken to do so.

The qualitative descriptions of climate action in the AIR were carefully screened and compared against the actual values reported. The table shows where inconsistencies were reported between the descriptions of qualitative sections and expenditures reported.

MS	OP	CCI	Inconsistency found
DE	Operational Programme ESF Saarland 2014-2020	2014DE05SFOP011	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action
DE	Operational Programme ESF Bremen 2014-2020	2014DE05SFOP016	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action
DE	OP Niedersachsen ERDF/ESF 2014-2020	2014DE16M2OP001	More accurate estimate provided in qualitative section
ES	OP ESF 2014 C.A. LA RIOJA	2014ES05SFOP001	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action
ES	OP ESF 2014 EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND EDUCATION	2014ES05SFOP002	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action
ES	OP ESF 2014 PRINCIPADO DE ASTURIAS	2014ES05SFOP004	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action
ES	OP ESF 2014 C.A. GALICIA	2014ES05SFOP009	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action
ES	OP ESF 2014 C. FORAL DE NAVARRA	2014ES05SFOP010	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action
ES	OP ESF 2014 C.A. PAIS VASCO	2014ES05SFOP011	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action
ES	OP ESF 2014 C.A. CASTILLA-LA MANCHA	2014ES05SFOP015	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action
ES	OP ESF 2014 C.A. EXTREMADURA	2014ES05SFOP016	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action
ES	OP ESF 2014 C.A. ARAGON	2014ES05SFOP018	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action
ES	OP ESF 2014 C.A. CANTABRIA	2014ES05SFOP019	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action
FR	Regional programme Martinique Conseil Régional 2014-2020	2014FR16M0OP011	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action
IT	POR Emilia Romagna ESF	2014IT05SFOP003	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action
IT	POR Umbria ESF	2014IT05SFOP010	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action
RO	Operational Programme Human Capital	2014RO05M9OP001	100% of at least one PAX marked as climate action

The table shows that the reason for almost all discrepancies in classifications of climate action expenditures is that some OP classified entire priority axes as climate action. In theory this is possible, but a review of the qualitative sections shows that this cannot possibly be justified. It is not questioned that the concerned priority axes in question all indeed have some attention to climate objectives. It is however unlikely that meeting a sustainability criteria by itself turns an entire Priority axes, with multiple investment

priorities, specific objectives, and operations are all similarly focused to secondary climate objectives. In most cases where this was found the cases, the financial data provided in Table 7 of the AIR was reported in an aggregated way, including a single line per category of intervention. When reporting only at this aggregated level, it becomes impossible to separate operations with attention for climate action from other operations.

- ➔ Whenever at least one Priority Axes was found to be fully allocated to climate action, this allocation was manually adjusted downward by the research team. If possible, we follow indications of budget share in the qualitative section. Where these are not provided, we allocated the average value of all OP without inconsistencies in which climate action is reported (4.5%).

In two OP, explicit inconsistencies were found between the qualitative description and the quantitative values, possibly also because the financial reporting in table 7 was not sufficiently disaggregated. In Romania for instance, the qualitative section indicates that 46% of the total number of project contribute directly to the theme "Supporting the transition to a low carbon dioxide economy and efficiency, with an allocated budget of approximately € 45 million. However, the quantitative table reported almost €0.8 billion as climate contribution. In the German region of Niedersachsen, the qualitative section described that 65% of the targeted value for climate objective was already reported as eligible expenditure. However, the financial tables report expenditures related to climate action of €36 million, which is three times the amount allocated to climate action.

- ➔ In both cases, the values were revised based on the actual suggestion from the Managing Authorities in the qualitative sections.

Estimate of participants

In order to obtain a better picture of the number of participations and results that can be classified as climate action, the survey to Managing Authorities included a question to provide additional data. However, answering this question proved difficult for MA; only five responses were received, with wildly varying estimates that had little bearing on the existing monitoring data. Because of the large variations and small sample of the data received, these estimates were not used, and instead the monitoring data itself was used as input to estimate the share of participations.

The method described for estimating budgets helps to revise the overall share of expenditure to climate actions across the different OP. This also served as input to estimate the total number of participation that can be linked to climate action. At the PAX level, the (revised) share of eligible expenditures that can be linked to climate action was used as the share of participants reported for that particular PAX. This calculation assumes that the costs of operations related to climate action do not have particularly different costs or participation figures than other types of operations. This assumption is mainly based on the finding of the types of operations, as described in more detail in section 2.3; here it shows that the operations related climate action are often similar types of training measures with specific components related to climate action.

This calculation takes into account the revised classification of climate action expenditure as discussed in the previous section, and based on these figures estimates a total of 539 051 participations with a link to climate action expenditure. Note that this total figure is an estimate, only based on the share of expenditures assigned to climate action at the PAX level. It cannot be verified whether how many of the reported participations are really

involved in climate action; only a small number of MS seem to be collecting this type of data.

Unfortunately, the data does not allow to make estimates about the possible number of results. Because of the variety of (common) results that are tracked, any informed estimate would have to be built on questionable assumptions that cannot be verified by the study.

Annex II - Survey among Managing authorities

ESF support to climate action

Introduction

The European Commission - DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) - has commissioned FGB to undertake a study to assess and provide an overview of the European Social Fund (ESF) contribution to climate action. This study should help providing a better picture of the present landscape of ESF-supported climate action activities, as well as provide insights into how future mainstreaming of climate actions in ESF can be (better) supported.

For the purpose of this study, FGB launched a survey among Managing Authorities (MA) to collect your views and experiences regarding the practical implications on programming and implementation of ESF support for climate action. As such, this survey deliberately seeks to go beyond the insights already reported in AIR and the OP in SFC2014. The survey is structured around the following themes:

1. Guidance provided to MA in mainstreaming climate action into ESF
2. Attention of ESF programmes to climate action
3. Mapping existing climate action operations supported by ESF

The survey includes 17 questions and should not take longer than 15 minutes to complete. The input from you / your organisation is very important in order to complete this mapping of existing ESF support for climate action.

We kindly ask you to complete the questionnaire by 19 February, 2019.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Background

1) Please select your country*

2) Please select for which OP you are completing this survey*

Support in mainstreaming climate actions

3) At the start of the programming period, the European Commission published guidance material regarding the mainstreaming of climate action in ESF. See for

instance a guidance document for programming, and in assessment of climate action operations in ESF.

How familiar are you with the contents of these documents?

Please select one answer

☐ I had not seen these factsheets until now

☐ I have seen these factsheets before, but we did not use these for programming / implementation of ESF

☐ I have seen these factsheets before, these were used for programming / implementation of ESF

Please explain your answer:

4) Please indicate the adequacy of the following tools in mainstreaming climate action into ESF

Please select one answer

	Adequate	Not adequate	No opinion / do not know
Guidance documents provided by European Commission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Targeted guidance provided by DG EMPL desk officer responsible for your country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional support by other European Commission officials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SFC2014 to report on climate actions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5) As part of the financial reporting, MA indicate an ESF Secondary Theme for each financial entry. ESF Secondary Theme "01" refers to "Supporting the shift to a low carbon, resource-efficient economy" and can be allocated to any ESF operation with this (secondary) scope.

What methodology and/or criteria is used by your organisation to allocate the ESF secondary theme of “supporting the shift to a low carbon, resource-efficient economy” to financial entries?

Please describe in detail, providing illustrations where possible (e.g. describing the methodology for using ex-ante estimates, using an ex-post screening of operations for certain criteria, information provided by beneficiaries, no standard methodology etc.)

Attention to climate action

6) How do you qualify the attention to climate action in the actual programming of your ESF programme in relation to the description of the Operational Programme (OP) in SFC2014?

Please estimate for each of the following items the share these represent among all ESF calls for proposals launched so far

- () Much more operations with attention to climate action are planned than what is mentioned/visible in the Operational Programme
- () The planned attention for climate actions in ESF is well captured by the Operational Programme
- () The description of the ESF Operational Programme suggests more activity on climate action than what is actually planned
- () Cannot say - please explain why not:

7) How do you qualify the level of attention to climate action in the implementation in relation to what is reported in the Annual Implementation Reports (AIR) in SFC2014?

Please select one answer

- () Much more operations included attention to climate action than what has been reported in the Annual Implementation Report so far
- () The attention given to climate actions in the ESF programme on the ground is well captured by the Annual Implementation Report
- () The reporting in the Annual Implementation Report for ESF suggests more activity on climate action than what has taken place on the ground so far

() Cannot say - please explain why not:

8) How prominently do you estimate that climate action would have featured in the ESF OP without action at the EU level?

Please select one answer

() Without EU attention to climate action, the OP would have had more attention to climate action than in current ESF programme

() Without EU attention to climate action, the OP would have had roughly the same level of attention to climate action

() Without EU attention to climate action, the OP would have had less attention to climate action than the current ESF programme

() Do not know

Please explain your answer:

9) To what extent are the climate actions in the ESF OP linked to (climate actions in) other ESI funds (ERDF, CF, EFRD, EMFF)?

Please select one answer

() Clear links that support synergies between Funds

() Thematic links exist, but no clear synergies are supported

() No links between climate actions in ESF and other funds

() Do not know

10) Please give an example of a project with such links with other Funds. If possible please describe the types of synergies that were possible

Attention for climate action in your Operational Programme

11) To what extent have requirements on climate action been used as selection criteria for project calls? Please estimate based on all ESF calls concluded since the programme start.

Please indicate for each of the items their share (as %) of the total ESF calls for proposals

_____ Dedicated calls for climate action projects funded by ESF:

_____ Calls for ESF proposals with at least one mandatory requirement on climate action:

_____ Calls for ESF proposals with optional selection criteria on climate action :

_____ Calls for ESF proposals with no explicit attention for climate action:

12) What type of actions are associated with climate action operations in the OP you manage?

Multiple answers allowed

☐ No attention for climate action in ESF operations

☐ Financial incentives towards employment in the green sector

☐ Traineeships, internships or apprenticeships in the green sector

☐ Training programmes / qualification tracks towards green skills

☐ Scholarships with a green focus

☐ Creation / revision of curricula towards green objectives

☐ No specific climate actions, but more general mainstreaming of climate action into 'regular' ESF operations

☐ Other, namely: _____

☐ Do not know

Characterising climate action support in ESF OP

13) How would you estimate the distribution of different types of climate action operations?

Please estimate the share each item represents among all climate actions operations

_____ % of operations mostly focused towards adaptation (anticipating the effects of climate change and taking appropriate action)

_____ % of operations mostly focused towards mitigation (concrete action to reduce global warming)

_____ % of operations with no dominant focus

14) What target groups are addressed by operations in your OP with a focus on climate action?

Multiple answers allowed

☐ Unemployed

☐ Inactive

- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Young people (< 30 years old)
- ☐ Older people (55+)
- ☐ People with low qualifications (ISCED 1-2)
- ☐ People with professional qualifications (ISCED 3-4)
- ☐ People with higher qualifications (ISCED 5-8)
- ☐ Migrants or marginalised communities
- ☐ People with a disadvantage
- ☐ Other, namely: _____
- ☐ No specific target groups explicitly addressed
- ☐ Do not know

15) What sectors are addressed by operations in your OP with a focus on climate action?

Multiple answers allowed

- ☐ Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- ☐ Mining and quarrying
- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply
- ☐ Water supply; sewerage, waste management
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Wholesale / retail trade
- ☐ Transportation and storage
- ☐ Accommodation and food service activities
- ☐ Information and communication
- ☐ Real estate activities
- ☐ Professional, scientific and technical activities
- ☐ Administrative and support service activities
- ☐ Public administration and defence
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Human health and social work activities
- ☐ Arts, entertainment and recreation
- ☐ Other, please specify: _____
- ☐ No specific sectors explicitly addressed
- ☐ Do not know

16) Please describe 1-2 projects with attention to climate action, if possible with weblinks / documentation

Additional data

Your organisation reports annually in SFC2014 the share of the costs of operations that can be linked to climate action. We kindly ask you to provide additional data to help to put the financial figures into perspective.

17) Please report the (estimated) outputs and results achieved by climate actions supported by ESF.

In case official data is not available, please provide (rough) estimates, either in absolute numbers or as share of the total OP.

Participations reached by climate action operations:

Number of people gaining employment (with climate action component):

Number of people entering educational programmes (with climate action component):

Number of people that obtained a qualification (with climate action component):

Thank You!

Thank you for taking our survey. Your response is very important to us.

Background

1. Please select your country, and where relevant, for which OP your organisation is the Managing Authority.

Support in mainstreaming climate actions

2. Please indicate your awareness of the guidance material developed by the European Commission in order to support you in mainstreaming climate action in ESF (URL to DG CLIMA factsheets with examples)

I had not seen these factsheets until now

I have seen these factsheets before, but did not use these for programming / implementation of ESF

I have seen these factsheets before and used them for programming / implementation of ESF

Please explain your answer [...]

3. Please indicate how adequate each of the following aspects has been to support you in mainstreaming climate actions into ESF operations

	Adequate	Not adequate	No opinion / do not know
Guidance documents provided by European Commission			
Targeted guidance provided by DG EMPL desk officer responsible for your country			
Additional support by other European Commission officials			
SFC2014 to report on climate actions			

4. Every year when submitting the AIR on ESF, you are asked to indicate an ESF Secondary Theme to each financial entry if relevant. What methodology / criteria do you use to allocate the ESF secondary theme of "supporting the shift to a low carbon, resource-efficient economy" to allocated funding (OP) and/or the reported costs (AIR)? (e.g. using a rough ex-ante estimate, or based on an ex-post screening of operations for certain criteria, or information provided by beneficiaries, no standard methodology etc.)

Please be as specific as possible, and provide the criteria if relevant.

Attention to climate action

5. How do you qualify the attention to climate action *in the programming* of your ESF programme in relation to what the description of the Operational Programme in SFC2014 contains:

Much more operations with attention to climate action are planned than what is mentioned/visible in the Operational Programme

The planned attention for climate actions in ESF is well captured by the Operational Programme

The description of the ESF Operational Programme suggests more activity on climate action than what is actually planned

6. How do you qualify the attention to climate action in the implementation of the ESF OP you manage so far?

Much more operations included attention to climate action than what has been reported in the Annual Implementation Report so far

The attention given to climate actions in the ESF programme on the ground is well captured by the Annual Implementation Report

The reporting in the Annual Implementation Report for ESF suggests more activity on climate action than what has taken place on the ground so far

7. How prominently would climate action have featured in the ESF OP without action at the EU level in this area?

More attention to climate action than in the current ESF programme

Roughly the same level of attention to climate action

Less attention to climate action than in the current ESF programme

Do not know

8. To what extent are the climate actions in the ESF OP linked to (climate actions in the) other ESI funds (ERDF, CF, EFRD, EMFF)?

Clear links that support synergies between Funds

Thematic links exist, but no clear synergies are supported

No links between climate actions in ESF and other funds

Do not know

If positive: please give an example.

Characterisation of climate action in your Operational Programme

9. When looking back to all calls for proposals concluded by the MA since 2014, to what extent have requirements on climate action been used as selection criteria for project calls?

Dedicated call for climate action projects funded by ESF: __%

Call for ESF proposals with at least one mandatory requirement on climate action: __%

Call for ESF proposals with optional selection criteria on climate action : __%

Calls for ESF proposals with no explicit attention for climate action: __%

10. Which of the following options best characterises the operations with attention to climate action?

*Adaptation: i.e. anticipating the effects of climate change and taking appropriate action, including taking advantage of opportunities (e.g. support for training in skills needed because of climate change) [...]%

*Mitigation: i.e. concrete action to reduce global warming (e.g. supporting energy transition, research into climate challenges, etc.) [...]%

*Cannot distinguish between the two: [...]%

11. Which type of climate actions can be found in the OP you manage? (can select more than one)

- Financial incentives towards employment in the green sector
- Traineeships, internships or apprenticeships in the green sector
- Training programmes / qualification tracks towards green skills
- Scholarships with a green focus
- Creation / revision of curricula towards green objectives
- No specific climate actions, but more general mainstreaming of climate action into 'regular' ESF operations
- No explicit attention for climate action in ESF operations [skip next two questions]
- Other, namely:
- Do not know

12. What target groups are addressed by operations in your OP with a focus on climate action (can select more than one)?

- Unemployed
- Inactive
- Employed
- Young people (> 30 years old)
- Older people (55+)
- People with low qualification (ISCED 1-2)
- People with higher qualifications (ISCED 5-8)
- Migrants or marginalised communities
- People with a disadvantage
- Other, namely,
- No specific target groups explicitly addressed
- Do not know

13. What sectors are addressed by operations in your OP with a focus on climate action (can select more than one)? (categories based on Statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community – NACE rev.2)

- Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Mining and quarrying
- Manufacturing
- Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply
- Water supply; sewerage, waste management
- Construction

- Wholesale / retail trade
- Transportation and storage
- Accommodation and food service activities
- Information and communication
- Real estate activities
- Professional, scientific and technical activities
- Administrative and support service activities
- Public administration and defence
- Education
- Human health and social work activities
- Arts, entertainment and recreation
- Other services, please specify [...]
- No specific sectors explicitly addressed
- Do not know

14. Please give an example of 1-2 projects, if possible with weblinks / documentation.

[...]

Additional data

15. Your organisation reports in SFC2014 annually the share of the costs of operations that can be linked to climate action. Through this survey, we ask you to provide some rough estimates about the outputs and results achieved by climate actions supported by ESF.
- How many participants do you estimate are reached by climate action operations (absolute or percentage of entire OP)
 - How many unemployed / inactive people gained employment in green / sustainable jobs? (absolute or percentage of number of people gaining employment)
 - How many people entered educational programmes with a climate action component? (absolute or percentage)
 - How many people obtained a qualification with a climate action component? (absolute or percentage)

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE EU

In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct information centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you at: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

On the phone or by email

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696 or
- by email via: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE EU

Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website at: https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en

EU publications

You can download or order free and priced EU publications at: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publications>. Multiple copies of free publications may be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local information centre (see https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en).

EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1952 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>

Open data from the EU

The EU Open Data Portal (<http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en>) provides access to datasets from the EU. Data can be downloaded and reused for free, for both commercial and non-commercial purposes.

