

WOMEN AND THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

This document describes the European Social Fund:

- I. How the Social Fund works: its spheres and methods of intervention and the types of aid it can provide.
- II. Women and the Social Fund: what has it done so far?
What can it do from now on?
- III. A practical guide; applications for assistance from the Social Fund for training operations for women.

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FOREWORD

Operations for which the European Social Fund grants assistance are open to men and women without discrimination. However, to help solve certain special labour market problems relating to women, the Social Fund has, since 1 January 1978, been helping to finance vocational training operations for women:

- aged over 25,
- who have lost their jobs or wish to return to work after a break,
- with no - or inadequate - qualifications.

These vocational training operations must involve measures aimed at:

- preparing for working life or motivating a new choice of occupation,
- helping with placement and occupational integration.

Preference is granted when selecting applications:

- to non-traditional training operations, i.e.:
 - in sectors where women are under-represented,
 - in jobs traditionally reserved for men,

in order to help balance the division of the labour market between men and women;

- to operations with assured openings:
 - vocational training in the strict sense, leading to jobs corresponding to the level of training received,
 - pre-training, leading to training for skilled jobs.

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INTRODUCTION

The European Social Fund (ESF) was set up in 1958 by Article 123 of the Treaty of Rome "in order to improve employment opportunities for workers in the common market and to contribute thereby to raising the standard of living", with the task of "rendering the employment of workers easier and of increasing their geographical and occupational mobility within the Community".

The legal provisions defining the activities of the Social Fund and governing its operation have been amended several times in line with economic and social developments in the Community, the last amendment being made in December 1977.

The Fund is an instrument of Community employment policy which can help to prevent or offset the effects on the employment situation of developments in the common market and the implementation of Community policies and intervene when specific joint action appears to be called for to improve the balance between supply of and demand for manpower within the Community (Article 4 of the Council Decision of 1 February 1971, as amended by that of 20 December 1977).

It may also provide financial assistance for operations designed to deal with employment problems which arise in less-developed regions or regions in which there is a decline in the main activities, branches of the economy particularly affected by technical progress or groups of undertakings in difficulty (Article 5 of the Decision referred to above).

I. HOW THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND WORKS

A. AREAS OF INTERVENTION

1. Intervention under Article 4*

Aid from the European Social Fund may be granted to:

- persons leaving agriculture to pursue non-agricultural activities,
- persons employed in the textile and clothing sector or who leave this sector,
- migrant workers,
- young unemployed persons or job-seekers aged under 25,
- unemployed women, or women seeking employment, aged over 25.

2. Intervention under Article 5*

The European Social Fund may provide aid for:

- unemployed persons, persons threatened with unemployment or underemployed in less developed areas or areas in which there is a decline in the main activities,
- persons working in economic branches affected by technical progress,
- persons affected by difficulties encountered by groups of undertakings,
- the integration or reintegration of handicapped persons into economic life.

3. Pilot schemes and preparatory studies

Furthermore, the Social Fund may promote, carry out or give financial aid to preparatory studies and pilot schemes (involving a maximum of 30 persons) designed to point the way for subsequent activities (opening up of new areas of intervention, effectiveness of aid measures, etc).

*Of the Council Decision of 1 February 1971, as amended by that of 20 December 1977.

B. METHOD OF INTERVENTION

The European Social Fund's financial contribution to an operation corresponds to that made by the national public authorities; e.g., the Fund may contribute up to 50% of the total cost if the operation is carried out by a public body. In the case of a private body, the promoter may obtain a financial contribution from the public authorities, in which case the Fund grants a sum equivalent to that provided by the latter.

Example:

(a) Operation carried out by a public body:

contribution:	public body	50
	Social Fund	<u>50</u>
	total	100%

(b) Operation carried out by a private body:

contribution:	private body	30
	public authorities	35
	Social Fund	<u>35</u>
	total	100%

The list of public authorities authorized by each Member State to provide financial aid for operations which are the subject of an application for assistance from the Fund may be obtained from the national departments responsible for the coordination and forwarding of applications (see Annex 1).

The Fund's contribution is 10% higher in certain regions characterized by an especially serious and prolonged imbalance in employment: Greenland, Ireland, Northern Ireland, the Mezzogiorno and the French Overseas Departments.

Aid from the Fund is paid in instalments as the operation proceeds. Advances may be granted, the first as soon as the Member State in question certifies that operations have begun, the second when the Member State certifies that half the operation has been completed in keeping with the conditions laid down in the application. Each advance may correspond to up to 30% of the total amount.

C. TYPE OF AID MEASURES

Financial contributions from the Social Fund, described in general terms above, cover the following aid measures:

- (a) aid to facilitate the training of persons who need to acquire, increase, adapt or improve their professional knowledge or skills.

For example, these measures may cover:

- the cost of the preparation, operation and management of training courses, including the training of instructors, staff expenditure, teaching aids and equipment, rental of buildings (or depreciation of the investment over a six-year period), administrative costs, insurance, maintenance, heating, lighting and power costs,
- expenses involved in attending the course, including the cost of remuneration for trainees, subsistence expenses, travel, teaching material.

NB: Social security and unemployment benefits are specifically excluded from expenditure eligible for assistance.

- (b) aid to facilitate the removal costs of persons and members of their families obliged to change their place of residence in order to pursue a professional or trade activity; for example:

travel expenses,
removal expenses,
resettlement expenses.

- (c) aid to facilitate the integration into the new social and working environment of persons and members of their families obliged to change their place of residence in order to pursue a professional or trade activity.

- (d) aid for eliminating obstacles which make it difficult for handicapped persons and workers aged over 50 to take up available employment,
- (e) aid to promote better conditions of employment in certain regions. This aid takes the form of a subsidy paid to workers by the undertaking while the former undergo additional training and/or obtain practical experience. The Social Fund may make a contribution towards this subsidy of 30% of the gross average earnings paid in the undertaking for equivalent jobs over a maximum period of six months.

As of 1979 assistance will be granted from the Fund on the basis of unit costs per person and per unit of time, after discussion with the Member State in question when the application is approved. These unit costs will be fixed on the basis of:

- information provided by the Member State,
- experience obtained from similar operations.

D. THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND COMMITTEE

The task of the European Social Fund Committee is to help the Commission administer the Fund. It has 54 members (appointed by the Council) and comprises two Government representatives, two employees' representatives and two employers' representatives per country.

The Committee plays an advisory role in examining applications for aid and drawing up guidelines for the management of the Fund.

II. WOMEN AND THE SOCIAL FUND

A. Pilot schemes and preparatory studies

The objective of the Social Fund's pilot schemes and preparatory studies is to guide the Community authorities in their choice of areas to be opened up for intervention.

They also demonstrate the value of new types of operations which may subsequently serve as models.

In 1977, 1 300 000 units of account were contributed towards the financing of 118 projects in such varied areas as:

- youth employment,
- the integration of migrant workers,
- the training of instructors,
- training for management,
- training in new techniques,
- small businesses and individual concerns.

Since 1975, seven projects - current or completed - have dealt exclusively with special problems concerning the employment of women.

- (a) Going back to work after the age of 35 involves special problems for women who have interrupted their working life or have never worked. Case studies of 400 women who went to the "Return to Work" Centre in Paris showed up the major difficulties involved in reintegrating into the working world:
- lack of knowledge of the labour market,
 - out-of-date qualifications,
 - lack of self confidence, etc.

The five-week part-time course helped trainees to prepare for their future activities through:

- greater self-awareness and knowledge of their aptitudes,
- updating of these aptitudes,
- psychological back-up,
- provision of information on training courses and jobs,
- preparation for the working world,
- personalized vocational guidance.

This scheme could be used as a model for other projects designed to prepare women for a return to work.

(b) The experiment carried out by the CREAC (Centre de Recherche et d'Etudes pour l'adaptabilité des Cadres - Research and Study Centre on retraining for middle management) in Paris involved women with a pressing need to pursue a paid activity, but without the minimum qualifications recognized by an employer.

The objectives were as follows:

- to provide trainees with a directly marketable skill,
- to instil a practical approach to life in an undertaking and its environment,
- to promote trainees' progress and advancement.

The course alternated psychological training and the acquisition of techniques (shorthand-typing, bookkeeping) with periods of work experience (to prepare and facilitate the recruitment process).

(c) The project carried out at Manchester University involved older women and their opportunities for occupational reintegration.

A study was made of how to adapt courses to the objectives in question, the degree of satisfaction obtained in the job found, the impact of the return to work on family life and differing social attitudes to the return to the working world.

Various needs were pinpointed:

- the psycho-sociological preparation of the family environment,
- an increase in educational and specialized training services,
- an improvement in guidance,
- changes in attitudes towards the possibility of a late career.

(d) Training for the reintegration of women into new types of part-time activities was designed to meet the socio-cultural needs which arise in modern cities and which can no longer rely entirely on voluntary work. This project took the form of a survey on the requirements in this sphere and the means of fulfilling them, and led to the setting up of information "workshops". Other "workshops" are envisaged, on emergency household help, help with children and the textile sector.

(e) A study on women in managerial positions in the textile industry dealt with their situation, the attitudes of their male and female colleagues and the influence of recruitment, selection and promotion methods. This study led to a training operation designed to facilitate the promotion of women to posts of responsibility.

(f) An information campaign involving 30 women from rural areas in a priority urban development zone.

A period of counselling and pre-training was followed by training in group organization, particularly as regards further education activities and activities aimed at "senior citizens".

(g) Current pilot schemes include:

(i) training of girls for jobs as engineers, with a three-fold aim:

- to open up employment prospects for women in a traditionally masculine sector,

- to demonstrate, in this sector, the professional value of women who have received an appropriate training,
- to alert young girls and those responsible for providing guidance (counsellors, parents, teachers) to the new job openings for women.

The programme, which covers a two-year period, comprises two stages: technical training in training centres and on-the-job experience.

(ii) The training of unemployed women for jobs traditionally reserved for men. The experiment has two stages:

- a survey amongst unemployed women and undertakings in the region,
- training for "men's" jobs and individual or collective placement operations.

B. Opportunities for women under Article 5

Since 1 May 1972 it has been possible to grant assistance from the Social Fund under Article 5 for training schemes for women aged over 35 wishing to return to work. However, no operations have so far been carried out under this heading, mainly because of the "regional" nature of Article 5: projects must be carried out in one of the priority regions, i.e., those in which there are serious development and employment problems. Unfortunately, these regions inevitably offer the fewest job openings for women. To ease the conditions of eligibility for the projects, the reform of the Social Fund in December 1977 made provision for "taking women out" of Article 5 while opening up Article 4, which is not subject to regional criteria, to these projects.

C. Opportunities for women under Article 4

The decision to open up Article 4 of the ESF to women was made following the declaration by the Heads of State of Government meeting in Rome on 25 and 26 March 1977 on the need to resolve certain specific problems as regards the training and employment of women. The deterioration in the position of women on the labour market had shown the need for Community action in this sphere in liaison with all the activities of the Bureau for questions concerning women's employment¹. Decision No 77/804/EEC (see Annex 2) taken on 20 December 1977 entered into force on 1 January 1978. It is generally known as "Article 4 - Women" and deals with women aged 25 or over²:

¹ Specialized department set up in 1976 in the Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs at the Commission.

² Women under 25 are eligible under Article 4 for aid to young persons affected by employment difficulties.

- with no vocational qualifications
or
with inadequate vocational qualifications

- who have lost their job
or
who wish to exercise an occupation for the first time or after a long break.

The Social Fund assists vocational training operations on condition that they are combined:

- with measures to facilitate integration into working life or motivate new choices, for example through information concerning the labour market (entitlement to equality, social legislation, employment contracts, conditions of employment, etc.) and jobs available, opportunities to enter occupations traditionally reserved for men, updating of basic knowledge and skills, psychological back-up, individual and non-discriminatory vocational guidance, etc. The measures referred to are given by way of example and are not restrictive;

- measures to facilitate integration into an occupational activity offering job openings; for example, placement aid and follow-up services for women in their new jobs.

The aim of these supporting measures is to deter women from turning to trades or professions which are overcrowded or do not suit them owing to lack of adequate information or training geared to the labour market (where there is a decline in most of the traditionally feminine occupations).

In its guidelines for the management of the ESF (see Annex 3), the Commission decided to grant preference to training operations for

jobs in which women are under-represented in order to improve the balance between the number of men and women in the various sectors and trades and at all levels in the hierarchy - particularly in posts of responsibility.

These NON-TRADITIONAL training courses may vary from one country to another depending on the national culture, but the overall objective is to promote equality between men and women by giving the latter the training they lack in spheres with job openings.

D. Opportunities for young persons under Article 4

Since 1975¹, Article 4 of the ESF has been open to young persons aged under 25, both boys and girls, affected by employment difficulties. Priority has been given for 1979 to 1981 to:

- vocational preparation measures geared towards integration into working life and access to skilled training,
- occupational retraining measures (young persons with basic training for which there is no demand),
- vocational training in certain regions.

First level priority is granted to advanced training measures for young women and girls designed to encourage the access of women to occupations in which they have been traditionally under-represented. Again the stress is on NON-TRADITIONAL training.

¹ Decision No 75/459/EEC, OJ No L 199 of 30 July 1975 and Decision No 77/802/EEC, OJ No L 337 of 27 December 1977, generally referred to as "Article 4 - young persons".

III. PRACTICAL GUIDE

Before submitting an application for assistance from the Social Fund for vocational training operations for women it is essential to:

- check that the project is covered by the Council Decision (see Annex 2) published in OJ No L 337 of 27 December 1977;
- check that the project is in keeping with the guidelines for the management of the European Social Fund. These guidelines (see Annex 3) are only indicative for 1978. Even if they are extended to other types of operations the priorities, which will be fixed as of 1979, will probably be along the same lines, i.e., training for non-traditional jobs;
- proceed via the national departments responsible for centralizing and forwarding to the Commission applications for assistance (for names and addresses see Annex 1). The standard form for applications for assistance should be obtained from them (Specimen in Annex 4).

The competent department of the Commission (European Social Fund, V/C/3, Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs, 200 rue de la Loi, 1049 Brussels, Belgium) is at the disposal of promoters for any additional information they may require.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

An application for assistance must:

- be made on the standard form,
- be forwarded via the national departments.

An application which does not fulfil these conditions cannot be given consideration.

The main items of information to be presented when drawing up an application are as follows:

(a) Body responsible for implementing the operation.

The Commission can only recognize one responsible body for a specific operation.

(b) Public authorities guaranteeing successful completion of the operations (in the case of an application submitted by a private body).

(c) Brief description of the project.

This description must list the essential factors providing grounds for the application, elucidate the operation and enable its scope and effectiveness to be assessed.

The following should also be indicated:

- the objective of the project,
- the number and situation (on the labour market) of the persons involved,
- the period of implementation of the operation.

(d) Technical details of the operation.

Specify whether the operation comprises:

- a phase providing preparation for working life,
- a phase providing motivation for new choices of occupation,
- a phase of actual vocational training,
- measures aimed at facilitating entry or re-entry into the new occupation.

For each phase, the following should be specified:

- place,
- duration (in hours),
- timetable (full-time, part-time, day-release, etc.),
- types of skill or qualifications involved,
- programmes (subjects taught, and levels),
- methods used (practical work, theory, training periods, in-service training, etc.).

(e) Financial details of the operation.

Submit an estimate for the whole operation:

- overall,
- broken down by category of expenditure likely to be eligible for assistance from the Fund.

Give details of planned sources of financing to cover the expenditure:

- contribution by the body responsible for the operation,
- contribution from the public authorities, in all cases where the responsible body is a private organization,
- amount requested from the European Social Fund.

(f) Background to the operation.

State the main socio-economic factors which have led to the setting up of the operation:

- at local and regional level: the economic and employment situation, in terms of rates of activity and unemployment amongst men and women,
- the situation of the women who are to take part in the operation:
 - . are they women who have never received vocational training or did not acquire qualifications in their previous job(s)?
 - . are their qualifications inadequate or unsuitable to meet labour market demands?
 - . have they lost their jobs? If so, how long ago?
 - . do they wish to exercise an occupation for the first time? Or after a long break?

THOSE RESPONSIBLE AT NATIONAL LEVEL FOR COORDINATION WITH THE SOCIAL FUND

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Monsieur R. Schintgen
Conseiller de Gouvernement adjoint
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COUNCIL DECISION
of 20 December 1977
on action by the European Social Fund for women
(77/804 EEC)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community,

Having regard to Council Decision 71/66/EEC of 1 February 1971 on the reform of the European Social Fund ⁽¹⁾, as amended by Council Decision 77/801/EEC ⁽²⁾, and in particular Article 4 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament ⁽³⁾,

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee ⁽⁴⁾,

Whereas the Heads of State or of Government, meeting in Rome on 25 and 26 March 1977, agreed on the need to undertake action to resolve certain specific labour market problems, especially as regards the training and employment of women;

Whereas the situation as regards women who are unemployed or seeking employment shows the need for specific joint action aimed at improving the balance between supply and demand on the Community labour market;

Whereas, in order to overcome specific obstacles to the entry or re-entry of women into working life, vocational training for women must be accompanied by complementary measures; whereas it is also essential to encourage the vocational adaptation of instructors;

Whereas the procedures of the Fund have been defined in Council Regulation (EEC) No 2396/71 of 8 November 1971 implementing the Council Decision of 1 February 1971 on the reform of the European Social Fund ⁽⁵⁾, as amended by Regulation (EEC) No 2893/77 ⁽⁶⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ No L 28, 4. 2. 1971, p. 15.

⁽²⁾ See page 8 of this Official Journal.

⁽³⁾ OJ No C 266, 7. 11. 1977, p. 13.

⁽⁴⁾ Opinion delivered on 26 and 27 October 1977 (not yet published in the Official Journal).

⁽⁵⁾ OJ No L 249, 10. 11. 1971, p. 54.

⁽⁶⁾ See page 1 of this Official Journal.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

1. Assistance may be granted from the Fund, pursuant to Article 4 of Decision 71/66/EEC, for operations to encourage the employment of women of or over 25 years of age with no vocational qualifications or with insufficient vocational qualifications where the entry or re-entry of these persons into working life proves particularly difficult, provided that these operations are for:

- women who wish to exercise an occupation for the first time or after a long break, or
- women who have lost their employment.

Such operations must include vocational training measures in the framework of measures aimed, on the one hand, at preparing for working life or at motivating new choices of occupation and, on the other, at facilitating entry into occupations where there are job prospects.

2. Assistance may also be granted from the Fund pursuant to Article 4 of Decision 71/66/EEC for vocational adaptation operations for instructors where these persons pursue their activities in connection with the operations referred to in paragraph 1.

Article 2

The aids eligible for assistance from the Fund pursuant to this Decision shall be those laid down in Article 3 (1) of Regulation (EEC) No 2396/71.

Article 3

This Decision shall be published in the *Official Journal of the European Communities* and shall enter into force on 1 January 1978.

It shall apply to operations covered by applications for assistance which have received the approval of the Commission before 1 January 1981.

Done at Brussels, 20 December 1977.

For the Council

The President

H. SIMONET

E. Operations relating to women

(Council Decision 77/804/EEC) (1)

Experience in the management of the Fund indicates the need for at least one year's operational experience before drawing up precise guidelines for a new field of intervention.

Applications will therefore be examined on a case by case basis in 1978, taking into account the need to encourage specific new programmes, as distinct from traditional actions more appropriate to other fields of intervention, and measures designed to support Community objectives towards the realization of true equality of opportunity for women in the world of work.

Particular favour will, therefore, be accorded to applications which, linked to concrete employment prospects, are designed to improve the job balance between the numbers of males and females in helping women enter training for posts at a suitable level where they are at present under-represented.

It is desirable that adequate attention be paid to accompanying measures such as guidance and job information, placement compatible with training received and, in the case of women returning to work after interruption, adequate retraining in self-presentation on the job market.