

**ESF 2007 - 2013**

**EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND  
2007-2013**



Unione europea  
Fondo sociale europeo



**MINISTERO DEL LAVORO,  
DELLA SALUTE E DELLE POLITICHE SOCIALI**

Direzione Generale per le Politiche  
per l'Orientamento e la Formazione





Cohesion policy main aim is to reduce regional growth disparities, by supporting the regions which have gained some delay in keeping pace with social and economic changes.

Cohesion policy is financed by the Community budget, that is mostly composed of the Member States contributions.

## The indications of the Third Cohesion Report

The Third Cohesion Report, elaborated by the European Commission on February 2004, contains concrete recommendations on the priorities to be followed and on how to use the resources for cohesion policy after 2006.

The Report suggests that regional policy should focus on a limited number of key topics (such as innovation, knowledge society, environment and risk prevention, accessibility and services of general economic interest) and it defines three different objectives (or priorities):

- *Convergence* objective: supporting growth and job creation in lagging regions.
- *Regional competitiveness and employment* objective: promoting the economic dynamism.
- *Territorial cooperation* objective: promoting a balanced development of the Union territory.

In addition, financial tools to support cohesion policy have been identified, namely the Structural Funds:

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), devoted to material and nonmaterial investments promoting the reduction of regional disparities;
- European Social Fund (ESF), devoted to interventions promoting and improving human capital in its different forms (employment, labour productivity, social inclusion);
- and the Cohesion Fund (CF), devoted to projects involving environment and transport infrastructures (only for Member States with GDP per person lying below 90% of the EU-average).

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<b>Objectives/Priorities</b>	<b>Financial Tools</b>
<b><i>Convergence</i></b>	<i>ERDF, ESF, Cohesion Fund</i>
<b><i>Regional competitiveness and employment</i></b>	<i>ERDF, ESF</i>
<b><i>Territorial cooperation</i></b>	<i>ERDF</i>

## 2007-2013 Regulations

To implement the recommendations of the Third Cohesion Report, the European Commission presented some proposals for the new Structural Funds Regulations (July 2004).

A strong partnership, which have significantly contributed to the definitive drawing up of the Regulations, has been carried out between the European Union and the Member States. The Italian Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies, as ESF national leading authority, took part in the discussion for the ESF Regulation to represent the national point of view.

2007-2013 Regulations are the following:

- Council Regulation no. 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund.
- Regulation no. 1081/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on European Social Fund.
- Regulation no. 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund.
- Council Regulation no. 1084/2006 of 11 July 2006 establishing a Cohesion Fund.



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- Regulation no. 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on a European grouping for territorial cooperation (EGTC).
- Commission Regulation no. 1828/2006 of 8 December 2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation no. 1083/2006.

## The European Social Fund Regulation

For the new programming period the ESF renews its mission strengthening the link with the European Employment Strategy.

The new **ESF Regulation** underlines some main features:

- strengthening of links with the European priorities on employment and social inclusion;
- significant contribution to the implementation of the *Convergence* and *Regional competitiveness and employment* objectives;
- mainstreaming of innovative actions and transnational cooperation;
- promoting good governance and partnership.

ESF priorities are:

- a) increasing adaptability of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs;
- b) enhancing access to employment and the sustainable inclusion in the labour market;
- c) reinforcing the social inclusion of disadvantaged people and combating the discrimination in the labour market;
- d) enhancing human capital;
- e) encouraging partnerships, pacts and initiatives promoting reforms in the field of employment, labour market and inclusiveness.

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In addition, and only for the *Convergence* objective<sup>1</sup>,

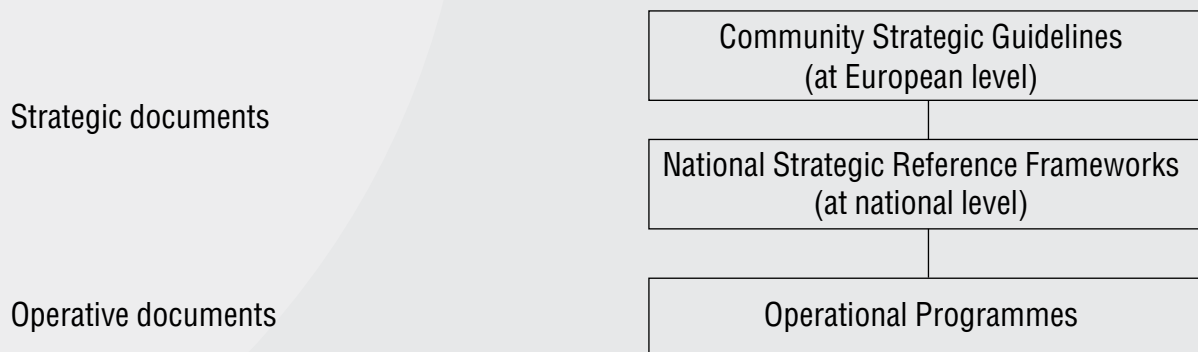
a) expanding and improving investment in human capital;

b) strengthening institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services at national, regional and local level and, where relevant, of the social partners and non-governmental organisations.

## The structure of 2007-2013 programming period

The new programming period presents a completely renewed and more strategic approach.

Following the dispositions of Structural Funds General Regulation (1083/2006) the structure of the new programming is based on:



<sup>1</sup> *Apulia, Campania, Calabria, Sicily and Basilicata (the latter as a phasing out region).*



### ***The Community Strategic Guidelines***

In October 2006, the Council adopted, upon European Commission proposal, the *Community Strategic Guidelines*<sup>2</sup> on economic, social and territorial cohesion, defining a framework for the intervention of Structural Funds at European level.

The cohesion Guidelines, defined in accordance with the renewed Lisbon Strategy<sup>3</sup> priorities, are:

- making Europe and its regions a more attractive place to invest and work;
- improving knowledge and innovation to foster growth;
- more and better jobs.

In matter of employment and human resources (guideline: more and better jobs), the priorities of the Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion are the same as those contained in the European Employment Strategy<sup>4</sup> (EES).

### ***The National Strategic Reference Framework***

At national level, Regulation no. 1083/2006 requires the definition of a *National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF)*.

Such a document, drafted on the basis of the Community Strategic Guidelines, establishes the strategy to be followed under the cohesion policy in each Member States. It represents the strategic reference framework for the definition of Structural Funds' activities implemented through the Operational Programmes.

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<sup>2</sup> Council decision of 6 October 2006 on Community strategic guidelines on cohesion (2006/702/CE).

<sup>3</sup> COM (2005) 24 final of 2.2.2005 - Communication to the Spring European Council: working together for growth and jobs. A new start for the Lisbon Strategy.

<sup>4</sup> COM (2005) 141 final of 12.4.2005 - Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs (2005-2008).

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In Italy, the definition of the strategy is not limited to Structural Funds. It is also related to national additional resources implying a seven-year programme engagement. Such a choice meets the need to better achieve development together with competitiveness and productivity resumption throughout Italy.

The strategy defined in the 2007-2013 Framework is composed of 4 basic macro-objectives:

- developing knowledge systems;
- improving life quality, safety, and social inclusion;
- strengthening productive chains, services and competitiveness;
- internationalising and modernising economy, society and administration.

After a submission stage, the Framework was adopted by the European Commission on 13 July 2007.

## ***Operational Programmes***

In the meanwhile, the Operational Programmes, foreseen by the National Strategic Framework, have been elaborated.

The Operational Programmes co-financed by the ESF are the result of a strong partnership between regions, social partners and Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies. The latter has provided assistance to regions in order to improve communication on common issues related to the start-up of 2007-2013 programming period and to encourage the dialogue with the European Commission.

Between November and December 2007, after a period of negotiation, the European Commission approved through appropriate Decision all the Operational Programmes foreseen by the National Strategic Framework.



## ESF Regional Operational Programmes in Italy

There are 21 ESF Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs) in Italy. Sixteen ROPs concern Regions and Autonomous Provinces under the *Regional competitiveness and employment* objective<sup>5</sup> and five concern Regions under the *Convergence* objective<sup>6</sup>.

The strategy of the Operational Programmes focuses on the priorities defined by ESF Regulation. It consists of priority axes with a common structure.

The priority axes of the ROPs are:

- Adaptability
- Employability
- Social inclusion
- Human capital
- Transnationality and interregionality
- Technical assistance
- Institutional capacity (only for regions under the *Convergence* objective).

Through interventions of different nature, such Programmes offer a wide range of new opportunities for the qualification of human capital and for a stronger relationship with the labour market (e.g. training actions, integrated pathways, support to labour services and women employment, interventions for disadvantaged people and active ageing, analysis of needs, etc.).

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<sup>5</sup> *Abruzzi, Aosta Valley, Autonomous Province of Bolzano, Autonomous Province of Trento, Emilia Romagna, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Latium, Liguria, Lombardy, Marches, Molise, Piedmont, Sardinia, Tuscany, Umbria, Veneto.*

<sup>6</sup> *Apulia, Calabria, Campania, Sicily, and, in addition, Basilicata (phasing out region).*

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## ESF National Operational Programmes in Italy

Together with the Regional Operational Programmes, there are 3 National Operational Programmes (NOPs), two of which are held by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies which is the ESF leading authority in Italy.

1) *Regional competitiveness and employment* objective:

- *Azioni di sistema* NOP held by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies;

2) *Convergence* objective:

- *Governance e Azioni di sistema* NOP held by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies;
- *Competenze per lo sviluppo* NOP held by the Ministry of Education, University and Research.

*Competenze per lo sviluppo* NOP focuses on human capital and promotes interventions supporting and fostering the innovation of the education system. It aims at increasing the participation and quality in education. Its action is also aiming at increasing the institutional capacity of public administration to manage the educational system.

### ***The ESF National Operational Programmes held by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies***

These Programmes meet the need of ensuring one unique intervention for vocational training and labour policies strongly linked with Regional Operational Programmes. These NOPs, usually addressed to systems, also originate from the countries' need to deal with specific issues related to the labour market reform on the one side, and to vocational education and training system (including the continuing training system) on the other.

As far as the vocational education and training system is concerned, a major effort is required in order to



produce a close matching between supply and demand for skills and provide an easier access to the labour market.

The recent approach to training has been less traditional, tailored on individual needs and productive system requirements and accompanied by a network of systems (employment centres, training system, university system, entrepreneurship, etc.) and more articulated interventions (guidance, work experiences, drawing of individual training plans, etc.). Such approach should be further strengthened.

Continuing Training requires a stronger relationship between regional programming and interventions managed by the *National Joint Multi-Sectoral Funds (Fondi paritetici interprofessionali)*.

Finally, the need to qualify the training offer and to face irregular work are two main issues in Southern Italy.

The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies, through its NOPs, wants to meet these challenges, by strengthening two macro-objectives of the European agenda: more and better jobs and human capital investments, increasing the value of the Regional Operational Programmes and their capacity of being a critical mass towards some key issues, felt as central to the achievement of the two said objectives.

The NOPs general objective is to promote and strengthen the integration of VET and labour systems while enhancing, under the *Governance e azioni di sistema* NOP, the institutional capacity.

Beyond the differences in territorial competence and related eligibility of specific actions, the two NOPs also differ in their structure: *Governance e azioni di sistema* NOP contains, besides the priority axes *Adaptability, Employment, Human capital, Transnationality* and *Technical assistance*, two more axes: *Equal opportunities and non-discrimination* and *Institutional capacity*.

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NOPs key issues are:

- strengthening the employment services and systematizing their information systems;
- disadvantaged people employability;
- matching training and skill needs;
- transnationality.

The issues pointed out under *human capital* priority are: identification and sharing of vocational and training standards, acknowledgement and certification of competences, accreditation, apprenticeship, collaboration in matter of continuing training, transfer of good practices, quality of VET, strengthening in social dialogue, promoting a transnational dimension, monitoring and evaluation both at a general and specific level (e.g. set up and implementation of a Statistic System on Vocational Training).

A significant role in *Governance e azioni di sistema* NOP is played by a specific axe devoted to rights and equal opportunities.

The need to strengthen the administrative capacity of Member States is considered as a strategic factor in improving competitiveness throughout the European Union. This NOP meets the need through the *Institutional capacity* axe, which pays particular attention to control capacity, policy programming and public service management.

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Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies NOPs general objective is to promote and strengthen the quality and integration of VET and labour systems aimed at inserting and reinserting unemployed people in the labour market and at improving employed people professional skills.

### **Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies**

Directorate General for Guidance and Training Policies

Via Fornovo, 8

00192 Roma - Italy

tel. +39 06 46834760 fax +39 06 3222358

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