DRAFT

European Commission



Assessment of climate action

How to assess the mainstreaming of climate action in Operational Programmes

ESF

European Social Fund
2014-2020

Climate Action

Introduction

This Fact Sheet outlines the main issues to be considered when assessing the mainstreaming of climate action in the European Social Fund (ESF) Operational Programmes (OPs) for the period 2014-2020.

A separate Fact Sheet describes the potential for mainstreaming climate action in ESF OPs.

The ESF is one of the five European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). The Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) for ESIF and the ESF Regulation define the contents of the ESF OPs. The CPR defines 11 Thematic Objectives (TOs) and the ESF regulation defines the corresponding investment priorities and provides further directions for targeting the support of the ESF.

In addition to the ESF-specific OPs, in the 2014-2020 programming period there will also be multifund OPs covering the ESF and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and, in some cases, the Cohesion Fund (CF).

Guidance issued by the Commission provides details on the programme document structure and contents of the ESF programmes.

The assessment of climate action in the OP will focus on five areas of the programme document:

- Strategic approach
- Priority axes and investment priorities
- Financing plan
- Territorial development aspects
- Implementation arrangements.

It is essential that the assessment gives due regard to the specific country, sector and/or regional context and relevant climate challenges.

The assessment will investigate how climate action has been incorporated and indicate areas where there is further potential for mainstreaming of climate action. The assessment will be adjusted to the programme scope.

Strategic approach

The climate assessment will address the Programme's contribution to the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, with respect to the shift to a low-carbon, resource-efficient and climate resilient economy.

The assessment will evaluate the challenges and opportunities identified from this structural transformation and the approach which is intended to support this shift. Also included will be an assessment of how sustainable development - as it relates to climate change mitigation and adaptation - will be promoted in the programme preparation and implementation.

The assessment will further explore whether the Programme - when and where proposing climate-related actions - addresses the relevant Country Specific Council Recommendations (CSR); is consistent with the relevant provisions of the Partnership Agreement; and takes into account relevant national and/or regional strategies in the area of climate change.

Furthermore, the assessment will consider the coherence between, on the one hand, the selected TOs, investment priorities and the indicative funding allocation and, on the other, the potential for the Programme to promote climate action.

Priority axes and investment priorities

The climate assessment will focus on the investment priorities which might address challenges relating to the labour force transition towards low-carbon skills, jobs and working methods.

For each of the priority axes, the climate assessment will cover relevant investment priorities, types of actions, and the selection of operations.

The assessment will verify consistency between, on the one hand, the strategic approach and the anticipated contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy, and, on the other hand, the specific objectives, actions envisaged and principles for selection of operations.

Furthermore, the assessment will investigate how the principle of sustainable development has been addressed and how the Programme is expected to contribute to the climate-related actions of other OPs.

Financing plan

A key indicator for climate action at Member State level is the share of ESIF support that will be used for climate change objectives. This relates to the EU's commitment that climate action objectives will represent at least 20 % of EU spending in the period 2014-2020. The indicative share envisaged for the Programme will be assessed against this objective and against the programme scope.

Territorial development aspects

The overall approach to territorial development will be assessed by analysing whether opportunities arising from synergies in climate action are exploited.

If relevant within the programme scope, the focus will also be on how the Programme proposes to ensure skills upgrading and job creation through community-led local development approaches in support of the shift to a low-carbon, climate resilient economy. Furthermore, the assessment will cover the programme's approach for supporting and complementing other programmes by enhancing climate actions in urban areas and other territories.

Implementation arrangements

The assessment of implementation arrangements will include the climate aspects of the plan for meeting the ex-ante conditionalities of TO 4 and 5. In addition, it will be verified whether actions have been taken to involve relevant partners in the preparation and implementation of the programme.

EMFF Operational Programmes – assessment of the climate mainstreaming

	Programme part	Main areas for climate assessment	Reference[1]	Template[2]
1	Strategic approach		CPR 24.1	Section 1
1.1	Strategy for the OPs contribution to the delivery of the Europe 2020 strategy and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion	Assess the proposed strategy concerning the: - Identification of the structural challenges on the labour market to support the Europe 2020 target of transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy - Consideration of relevant Flagship Initiatives related to the Europe 2020 climate objectives - Identification of education system adjustment needs to facilitate the labour market transition to support a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy - Areas for ESF complementary support for promotion of climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation in other Operational Programmes - Consistency with identified needs and opportunities from national/regional climate strategies or action plans - Climate-related needs and challenges deriving from the CSRs - Promotion of the principle of sustainable development in the area of climate change (CPR 8) - Consistency of proposed strategy in the area of climate change with the findings of the ex-ante evaluation - Consistency with climate change objectives and other climate-related provisions of the Partnership Agreement	CPR 87.2(a)(i) CPR 8 CPR 24.4	Section 1.1
1.2	Justification for the selection of TOs and corresponding investment priorities	The climate assessment will: - Assess whether the selection of TOs and investment priorities contributes to addressing climate-related challenges (e.g. upgrading the skills and competences of workers, enterprises and enterpreneurs to climate change; educating the workforce in green growth/energy sectors; investment in institutional capacity and public administration to deal with climate-related issues) - Assess whether the selection of TOs is consistent with climate-related Europe 2020 targets and CSRs - Verify that the justifications take into account the findings of the ex-ante evaluation	CPR 87.2(a)(ii) CPR 8	Section 1.1
1.3	Justification of the financial allocation	The assessment will consider: - Justification for allocation by TO for consistency with the climate-related challenges of the strategy of the OP - Justification regarding the contribution to the transition to a low-carbon and climate resilient economy - Impact on allocations for investment priorities, also for those which are complementary to climate actions of other OPs - Allocations to the climate-related specific objectives of investment priorities, as appropriate - Consistency of allocation with ex-ante evaluation findings	CPR 24.1	Section 1.2 Table 2

[1] Reference to the legal proposal for the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR), where e.g. CPR 8.1 refers to CPR article 8.1
[2] Template refers to the "Draft template and guidelines for the content of the Operational Programme", version 3, 21.05.2013

	Programme part	Main areas for climate assessment	Reference[1]	Template[2]
2	For each priority axis and investment priority	This part will assess the mainstreaming of climate action across the Programme and will further focus on the priority axis and investment priorities with climate action potential.	CPR 24.2 and CPR 24.3	Section2

2.1	Priority axis description	- Assess whether each priority axis appropriately reflects the relevant policy targets and needs identified in terms of climate change, directly or indirectly referring to:
		  - the support of labour force transition towards a low-carbon and climate resilient economy
		  - reform of education and training system in order to match skills required in a low-carbon and climate-resilent economy
			CPR 87.1	Section 2.A.0

2.2	Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority	- Assess whether the climate action potential in the specific objectives are consistent with the investment priority of the associated priority axis - Verify consistency of the objectives that relate to climate challenges with the potential for mainstreaming of climate action	CPR 87.2(b)(i)	Section 2.A.1
2.3	Actions to be supported under the investment priority	- Assess action description in support of reaching optimum climate mainstreaming potential - Verify how the sustainable development principle is taken into account, e.g. job creation in the resource efficiency sector, trainings in green procurement or the support of social enterprises in the area of recycling and reuse (CPR 8) - Assess any anticipated use of financial instruments in relation to climate action	CPR 87.2(b)(iii) CPR 8	Section 2.A.2 Section 2.A.2.1 Section 2.A.2.3
2.4	Guiding principles for the selection of operations	- Assess promotion of climate change mitigation and adaptation in the principles for project selection (CPR 8), e.g. upgrading of skills or capacity building for effective public administration	CPR 87(3)(i) CPR 8	Section 2.A.2.2 Section 11.1
2.5	Contribution of the planned actions of the priority axis to TO 1-7	- Assess foreseen contribution of actions to those of non-ESF programmes that target the reading of TO 4 and 5, e.g. training of workers to use low-carbon equipment	CPR 87.1	Section 2.A.3
3	Financing plan		CPR 24.2	Section 3
3.1	Indicative amount of support to be used for climate change objectives	- Verify that the support for the fulfilment of climate objectives is appropriate within the scope of the Programme and the EU commitment that climate action objectives will represent at least 20 % of EU spending in the period 2014-2020	CPR 87.2(g) CPR 24.5	Section 3.2.B (Table 19)
4	Integrated approach to territorial development		CPR 24.1	Section 4
4.1	Community-led local development	- Assess the possible use of this instrument in connection with the identified needs for job creation and skills upgrading in the sectors related to the transition to a low-carbon, climate-esilient economy	CPR 87.2(c)(iv)	Section 4.1
4.2	Support for sustainable urban development and the use of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI)	- Verify that any arrangements for sustainable urban development and ITI consider the climate challenges of urban areas - Assess proposed ESF direct or indirect support with regards to climate action	CPR 87.2(c)(iii)	Section 4.2 Section 4.3 Table 20
5	Implementation arrangements			
5.1	Involvement of relevant partners	- Verify that relevant partners have been involved and consulted when preparing aspects of the Programme relevant to climate change and that planned actions are described in order to ensure their involvement in the implementation of programmes	CPR 87.2(e)(iii)	Section 7.2

[1] Reference to the legal proposal for the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR), where e.g. CPR 8.1 refers to CPR article 8.1
[2] Template refers to the "Draft template and guidelines for the content of the Operational Programme", version 3, 21.05.2013

Background information

Why do we need to take climate action?

Tackling climate change is one of the great challenges facing the EU and its global partners.

The need for urgent action is clearly reflected in the Europe 2020 Strategy and the EU's ambitious 20/20/20 targets for climate change mitigation, i.e. to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20 % (30 % if the conditions are right); to reduce energy consumption by 20 % through increased energy efficiency; and to meet 20 % of energy needs from renewable sources.

Climate change is already happening and its effects will become more severe in coming years. So we need to take action on mitigation, and we also need to act to protect people, buildings, infrastructure, businesses and ecosystems from the impacts. These adaptation measures, which will make us more resilient to the adverse impacts of climate change, will become increasingly important. Adaptation measures can be taken at national, regional and local levels. Adaptation measures include, for example, actions that can stimulate more efficient water use, and the development and implementation of design standards that protect constructions against the impacts of future climate conditions and extreme weather events. Other examples include building flood defences, raising the levels of dykes, and replacing exposed power overhead lines with underground cables. It also includes measures to take advantage of possible opportunities arising from climate change. The aim of the EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change is to help make Europe more climate resilient and enhance its preparedness and capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change.

Building a low-carbon and climate resilient economy will enhance Europe's competitiveness, create new, greener jobs, improve energy security and bring health benefits to Europe's citizens by making the air cleaner.

EU funding over the period 2014-2020

The EU budget has an important role to play in promoting climate action in all sectors of the European economy and in catalysing the investments needed to meet the climate targets and ensure climate resilience. Investment is needed in a wide range of technologies that improve energy efficiency, in renewable energy sources and related infrastructure, and in the adaptation to climate change.

Based on a proposal put forward by the Commission, the European Council concluded on 7-8 February 2013 that 'Climate action objectives will represent at least 20 % of EU spending in the period 2014-2020 and therefore be reflected in the appropriate instruments to ensure that they contribute to strengthen energy security, building a low-carbon, resource efficient and climate-resilient economy that will enhance Europe's competitiveness and create more and greener jobs.

European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)

ESIF include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

The ultimate responsibility for implementing the EU budget lies with the European Commission, but the ESIF are implemented under 'shared management', with individual EU countries actually distributing the funds and managing expenditure. Checks and balances are in place to ensure the funds are managed properly and in accordance with the rules.

Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)

The CPR sets out the means to achieve consistency with the economic policies of the EU and its Member States, coordination mechanisms among the ESI Funds and with other EU policies and instruments, horizontal principles and cross-cutting policy objectives. It lays down arrangements to address territorial challenges, suggests action with high European added value and sets out the principles and the priorities for action.

Each Member State will prepare a Partnership Agreement, in cooperation with its partners and in dialogue with the Commission. In preparing the Partnership Agreement, each Member State translates the elements set out in the CPR into the national context and sets firm commitments to achieve the EU's objectives through the programming of the ESIF.

ESIF will be implemented through programmes in accordance with the Partnership Agreement. Each programme will cover the period 2014 - 2020. It will set out a strategy explaining how the programme will address the national and/or regional needs and contribute to the EU's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, in line with the applicable regulations and the Partnership Agreement.

The CPR defines eleven Thematic Objectives (TOs), which will contribute to the implementation of the EU's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The eleven TOs are:

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

The fund-specific regulations define for each TO the corresponding investment priorities.

TO 4 and 5 are dedicated to climate change mitigation and adaptation. In addition, climate action issues can be mainstreamed into other TOs. Hence, ESIF can significantly contribute to the achievement of the climate objectives and the transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy.

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The European Social Fund (ESF) will make an important contribution to the transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient Europe.

This Fact Sheet outlines the key issues to be considered when assessing the climate mainstreaming in ESF Operational Programmes.

The ESF is one of the five European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) under the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR). These funds play a key role in achieving the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The five funds will contribute to the target that climate-related expenditure will represent at least 20 % of EU spending in the period 2014-20, while helping to improve energy security, build a low-carbon, resource-efficient and climate-resilient economy that will boost Europe's competitiveness and create more and greener jobs.

The CPR defines 11 Thematic Objectives that will contribute to the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy. The ESF covers Thematic Objective 8, 9, 10 and 11. There is major potential for mainstreaming climate action into support from the ESF to these Thematic Objectives. By doing so, the ESF can contribute towards reaching at least 20 % climate-related expenditure out of the overall EU budget.

Disclaimer: This Fact Sheet is a draft version based on the European Commission's legislative proposals of October and December 2011, and March 2012. It does not prejudge the outcome of the ongoing legislative process and the resulting regulations, including the provisions on the eligibility of various actions and on the thematic concentration.

Further information

DG Climate Action:
http://ec.europa.eu/clima

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