

Public Consultation on the Evaluation of ESF to support social inclusion

RREUSE (Reuse and Recycling European Union Social Enterprises) represents over twenty-seven social enterprises of European relation and one member from the U.S.A. RREUSE welcomes the opportunity to comment on the effectiveness of the ESF in promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and discrimination covering the period from 2014 to 2018.

A number of RREUSE members benefit from the ESF to support national networks of social enterprises, including members such as RepaNet of Austria and AERESS of Spain. RREUSE consulted with its social working group to attain the following feedback.

-The network encourages ESF to build upon its good track record, however, notes during the period under evaluation, greater flexibility in processes would allow innovation, creativity and risk taking, amounting to further impact on target groups. The network wishes to highlight such complex areas need tailor-made integration of services that should be more flexible. Across social enterprises, for example, workers or volunteers have needs that can be difficult to predict, which may not be reflected through the ESF.

-Overall, the network indicates the need for integrated investments, looking at long term solutions that benefit social, public, civil society, as well as the environment. Members believe ESF moneys should be used to improve sustainable outcomes for people rather than offering a temporary solution. There is scope for the ESF to engage and invest in this area, notably to adapt jobs to the circular economy, which members believe little has been done (overall) to encourage green job creation. As key circular economy and social economy stakeholders with local expertise, members seek further consultation and support in going deeper with innovative approaches for sustainability.

- The network shares a vision that the ESF has the potential to trigger stronger cooperation between local authorities in order for ESF projects to prepare a basis for more sustainable future State interventions. There is scope to link with national administrators more effectively. Specifically, members believe funding should connect existing stakeholders.

-Members noted the need for circular economy to be better mainstreamed into EU funding, adding the potential for the ESF to bolster circular objectives between social economy, business, education and public administrators. Members expressed a willingness for the ESF to align with regional, national and EU strategies related to the circular economy. The integration of a green axis as one of the priorities of the ESF fund was also expressed.



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-In terms of applying for ESF funds, there is space for empowering civil society organisations to be in a better position to apply for European funding. Members recognised the enormous benefits but stressed that limited resources often hindered them from applying for such opportunities. Overall, the need to have greater supports (technical assistance for example) to help organisations apply for EU funds was mentioned.

Going forward, RREUSE and members look forward to supporting the opportunities that ESF+ presents, with the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The network stresses the importance of consistent political will to orientate ESF funds to support green jobs across all of Europe.

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RREUSE is an independent non-profit organisation representing social enterprises active in the field of re-use, repair and recycling, with 27 members across 25 countries in Europe and the USA.

Our main vision is for Europe to support the role of social enterprise in a circular economy, providing meaningful work opportunities to thousands of vulnerable members of our community through innovative economic, social and environmentally beneficial activities.

RREUSE's primary mission is to help tackle poverty, social exclusion and a throwaway culture by promoting policies, best practices and partnerships that support the professionalism and development of social enterprises working in environmental services with high potential for local and inclusive job creation, notably re-use and repair.