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| **EVALUATION OF THE EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL INNOVATION PROGRAMME (EASI), INCLUDING THE EUROPEAN PROGRESS MICROFINANCE FACILITY (EPMF)***Technical annex* |

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# Introduction

The European Economic and Social Committee has drawn up an information report assessing the **implementation of the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EASI), including the European Progress Microfinance Facility (EPMF),** during the period 2014-2020 in selected EU Member States (Austria, France, Hungary, Italy, and Lithuania). It reflects the views of the social partners and civil society organisations on the coherence, effectiveness and inclusiveness of the EaSI programme, especially, compared to other EU and national initiatives/programmes. The EESC also aimed to reach the beneficiaries of the three EaSI axes (PROGRESS, EURES and Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship).

Based on findings collected during virtual meetings in selected EU Member States and expert online questionnaire replies, this technical annex **gathers, analyses and summarizes the views of civil society organisations, as well as of public authorities, on the implementation of EaSI, including the EPMF.**  In particular, stakeholders were invited to present their views on the overall *effectiveness* of the EaSI programme as well as its perception and implementation at the national and regional level; *relevance* in terms of its coherence not only with other EU-level initiatives but also with other national initiatives/programmes, and the opportunities for synergies and complementarity of EaSI and EPMF with EU and national funds, in particular with the ESF co-financed actions. Furthermore, the added value of civil society, i.e. the *level of inclusion* of civil society organisations in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the EaSI programme in the selected countries was assessed, together with exploring ways on how to improve the involvement of social partners and CSOs in future actions of the programme, as well as how to facilitate its communication and information by the European Commission and the national authorities.

The information report and the present annex aim at **informing policymakers on the implementation of the EaSI programme, including the EPMF, in 2014-2020 in selected Member States**, and will thus be shared with the European Commission and other concerned stakeholders.

#  Methodology and Sampling

The members of the EESC study group collected the views of civil society organisations as well as of public authorities through two channels: five virtual fact-finding "visits" in the selected countries and a targeted online questionnaire (CSOs only).

Additionally, secondary data collection on the EESC's past work on the subject was also analyzed.

## Virtual fact-finding meetings

The virtual fact-finding meetings included semi-structured interviews with local civil society organisations and representatives of public authorities, generally following the thematic structure of the questionnaire. They took place via the *Interactio* online platform.

The sample of Member States was selected by the study group based on criteria adopted by the EESC Bureau on 22 January 2019. The European Commission was also consulted.

The countries were selected based on:

* *political spread* e.g. high/low level of implementation, application success rates, most/least affected by the legislative proposal/programme, etc.;
* *geographical spread* i.e. by setting up five groups of Member States and choosing one from each group.

The EU Member States selected for this information report where virtual fact-finding meetings took place were the following: **Hungary (9 March 2022), Lithuania (18 March 2022), Italy (21 March 2022), France (25 March 2022)** and **Austria (30 March 2022).**

## Questionnaire

The questionnaire was created on the EU Survey online portal, using a combination of question formats (filter questions, closed and open-ended questions, a grid). The questionnaire consultation was open from 9 March to 4 April 2022.

The aim of the questionnaire was to complement the information obtained from the fact-finding meetings. Composed of 29 questions, the questionnaire was sent to organisations in the Member States selected for the fact-finding meetings (not only to those participating in the virtual meetings, but also to other relevant organisations).

## Respondent breakdown

During the five fact-finding virtual "visits", the EESC delegation consulted in total about **53 representatives of civil society organisations and public authorities.**

In addition, **33 contributions[[1]](#footnote-2)** were collected through the online questionnaire, including 6 representatives of the business sector (18%), 12 representatives of workers' organisations (36%), and 15 representatives of various interest stakeholders (46%).

Graph 1.



Regarding the origin of the respondents, 12 % of the questionnaire respondents came from Austria, 15% from France, 40% from Italy, 21% from Lithuania and 12% from Hungary.

Graph 2.

The complete list of organisations consulted via the virtual fact-finding meetings and via the questionnaire is available in chapter 5 of this report.

# Focus of the information report

The Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme (2014-2020) was a financing instrument designed to promote a high level of quality and sustainable employment, guarantee adequate and decent social protection, combat social exclusion and poverty, and improve working conditions in the Member States and in the other participating countries, i.e. European Free Trade Association/European Economic Area (EFTA/EEA), European Union candidate and pre-candidate countries.

The programme has three axes: (1) supporting the modernisation of employment and social policies with the PROGRESS axis, (2) job mobility with the EURES axis and (3) access to micro-finance and social entrepreneurship with the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis. Cross-cutting aims — such as gender equality, non-discrimination, and combating poverty and social exclusion — are supported at across all three axes.

The European Progress Microfinance Facility (EPMF) was launched in 2010 and operated until 2016. It was funded by the European Commission and the European Investment Bank and managed by the European Investment Fund (EIF). EPMF offered to financial intermediaries (banks and non-bank institutions) from EU Member States the possibility to apply for funded instruments (loan and equity instruments) or guarantees in order to strengthen their microfinance portfolio. The selected financial intermediaries provided micro-loans up to 25 000 EUR to micro-entrepreneurs.

The EaSI ex-post evaluation, carried out by the European Commission, is focusing on the programme's activity period running from January 2014 until December 2020, also targeting the European Progress Microfinance Facility (2010 – 2016).

With a view to complementing the EC's evaluation, the EESC evaluation focused specifically on the following issues:

* Coherence: aiming to gather stakeholders’ opinion on the coherence of EaSI not only with other EU-level initiatives but also with other national initiatives/programmes.
* Complementarity: aiming to gather stakeholders’ views on the complementarity of EaSI and EMPF with EU and national funds.
* Implementation at national/regional level: the EESC evaluation also attempted to obtain information on how EaSI and EPMF are perceived and implemented at the national and regional level, as well as tried to identify ways in which the national/regional implementation could be improved.
* Horizontal issues (such as paying attention to vulnerable groups, promoting gender equality, fighting against any type of discrimination, and combating poverty and social exclusion), considering EESC's experience in the topic of social inclusion.
* Reaching out to end beneficiaries, in particular for the three axes of EaSI programme, but also for EPMF.

## Overview of EaSI implementation in each of the selected Member States

As regards the five selected countries of this evaluation, the EaSI implementation in each one of them can be summarized as follows[[2]](#footnote-3):

* **Austria**: Over the three axes, a total of 22 Austrian organisations were involved as (co-) beneficiaries in 19 different grants amounting to around 16,000,000 EUR. Of these, 73% of funds went towards the implementation of the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis, 12% to the PROGRESS axis, while the remaining 15% were involved in the EURES axis.

It is worth pointing out that more than one quarter of the projects financed through EaSI in Austria were in the field of care. In this regard, the projects focused at the development of innovative patient-centred approaches both to long-term and community care, as well as at a more gender balanced workforce in this field. Moreover, around 15% of projects dealt with the issue of integration of vulnerable groups, focusing mainly on refugees and their families, while another 15% aimed at the development of the ecosystem for social enterprises, especially by setting up incubators and innovative financing practices.

On the side of the beneficiaries, it is worth emphasising that the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy (*Europäisches Zentrum für Wohlfahrtspolitik und Sozialforschung*) has played a major role in the implementation of EaSI, taking part in three different initiatives for a total of 2,100,000 EUR in the years 2018-2019. Moreover, in 2019, Impact Hub Vienna has also taken active part in two distinct projects financed under the EaSI umbrella for a total of around 1,500,000 EUR.

* **Lithuania**: A total of 25 Lithuanian organisations were directly involved as (co-)beneficiaries in 13 different grants amounting to approximately 6,000,000 EUR in the period 2014-2020. The division of the 13 projects in the different axes was 30% PROGRESS, 40% EURES, and 30% in Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship, while the funds were allocated as follows: 20% to PROGRESS, 37% to EURES, and 43% to the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis.

In terms of the topics most commonly dealt with under the EaSI umbrella, the majority of the projects in Lithuania dealt with posted workers. The initiatives addressed the subject by sharing best practices, improving access to information, raising awareness, analysing the shortcomings in EU legislation as well as directly working on recognised issues on the matter (e.g. by promoting cooperation between stakeholders). One specific focus in this regard is on promoting equal rights for posted workers.

Another central theme in Lithuania was access to finance for social entrepreneurship. In this regard, it is worth pointing out that in 2018 a substantial microfinance agreement was signed under EaSI between the European Investment Fund and Swedbank. It aimed at supporting micro-businesses in the Baltic countries (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) for a total of 123,000,000 EUR. Moreover, in 2020 the Lithuanian Central Credit Union was involved in a 3,000,000 EUR financing agreement aimed at capacity building from the partnership of the EIF and private equity fund Helenos.

* **France**: In the period 2014 and 2020, a total of 69 French organisations were involved as (co-) beneficiaries under the EaSI umbrella. Of the 36 projects funded by the programme in France, around 30% were carried out under the PROGRESS axis, 50% under EURES, and the remaining 20% under the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis. Meanwhile, of the 38,000,000 EUR given out to fund the different initiatives, 17% was allocated to PROGRESS, 76% to EURES, and 7% to Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship.

The topics most commonly dealt with in France spanned between different issues. First, posted workers have been a central focus of the EaSI implementation in this country, with different initiatives aiming to improve specific aspects such as access to information and transnational cooperation. Secondly, French organisations participating in EaSI dedicated particular attention to workers' training and skill development, for example, by mapping good practices and skill levels in some EU countries or by providing direct training. The last topic worth emphasising here is social entrepreneurship. In this regard, civil society organisations dedicated particular attention to access to finance, working towards the creation of crowdfunding platforms, new investment instruments for social enterprises, as well as providing direct support and training to the entities working in the sector.

One final aspect to point out here is the centrality of France in the implementation of EURES. As already examined, 76% of the money received through grants involving French organisations was aimed at the implementation of this axis. In this context, *Pôle Emploi*, a public establishment of administrative nature dealing with employment issues, was the biggest beneficiary, taking part in 17 different grants between 2014 and 2020 for a total of approximately 30,000,000 EUR.

* **Italy**: Among all Member States, Italy presents the highest number of participants to the EaSI programme, with a total of 169 (co-)beneficiaries taking part in 66 different grants. Overall, in the running period between 2014 and 2020, around 65,000,000 EUR were allocated to initiatives involving Italian organisations and public authorities. In absolute numbers, Italy has seen 64% of its projects being implemented along the PROGRESS axis, 34% along the EURES axis and 12% along the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship one. Nonetheless, in terms of funding, the 36% of it was allocated to PROGRESS, 57% to EURES, and 7% to the promotion of Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship.

Concerning the topics on which Italian organisations focused the most, 39% on the initiatives dealt directly or indirectly with the problems of posted workers. Specifically, along the PROGRESS axis of EaSI, projects were directed at increasing security, safety, monitoring, and data availability across different sectors – such as construction and transport – mainly through the development of best practices, and the promotion of cooperation among Member States and other stakeholders. Social inclusion and integration of vulnerable groups was also a popular theme, with 11% of initiatives addressing this issue. Finally, 6% of projects directly dealt with the financing of social enterprises, 5% with work-life balance, and 5% with the reskilling and upskilling of (vulnerable) workers.

On the side of the beneficiaries, it is worth emphasising the central role played by the Autonomous Region Friuli-Venezia Giulia *(Regione Autonoma Friuli-Venezia Giulia*) and the National Agency for Active Labour Policies *(Agenzia Nationale per le Politiche Attive del Lavoro)* – and their partners – in the implementation of EURES in the Adriatic area.

* **Hungary**: Under the EaSI programme, Hungarian organisations were involved in a total of 14 grants for a total of roughly 7,000,000 EUR between 2014 and 2020. In terms of the number of initiatives implemented in Hungary, the spread along the three axes of EaSI was 50% in PROGRESS 14% in EURES, and 36% in Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship. Spending in the country also follows a similar division, with 60% of the funds devoted to PROGRESS, 7% to EURES, and 33% to the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis. It is to be pointed out that no grants involving Hungarian organisations were allocated during the years 2017 and 2019.

Turning now to the topics most commonly dealt with in Hungary, it can be seen that one main focus was inclusion and integration. In this regard, vulnerable groups – especially the elderly and Roma people – were targeted by actions involving housing, pensions, and employment in around 35% of the initiatives. On the Social Entrepreneurship side, Hungarian initiatives mainly focused on investment readiness and capacity building for social enterprises.

The implementation of EURES in Hungary has seen one main organisation involved, Magyar Koztarsasag, combining for a total of around 500,000 EUR between 2014 and 2015. The largest grant involving a Hungarian organisation – amounting to around 1,300,000 EUR and accounting for 20% of all EaSI funds allocated to the country between 2014 and 2020 – was that given out to the Metropolitan Research Institute in 2015 and aimed at the promotion of housing and employment for vulnerable groups.

# Primary data: findings and analysis

## Effectiveness

According to the European Commission Better Regulation toolbox, the criterion of effectiveness "considers how successful EU action has been in achieving or progressing towards its objectives"[[3]](#footnote-4).

*General conclusions*

The majority of the questionnaire respondents (61%) considered that the EaSI programme had strengthened the objectives and coordination of action at national and EU level in the fields of employment, social affairs and inclusion, with 15% being of the opposite opinion (not strengthened) (Question 1).

*Graph 3.*

When it comes to different groups of respondents, employers' organisations representatives were the most optimistic with 83% holding the view that the EaSI programme had achieved the above-mentioned goals, whilst the opinion of workers' organisations representatives was equally split – with 42% agreeing to this view and 42% disagreeing. When it comes to CSOs representatives, 67% viewed the programme in a positive light.

In terms of country differences, Austrians, the French and Lithuanians were the most positive with 100%, 80% and 71% of the respondents respectively considering that the EaSI programme had strengthened the objectives and coordination of action at national and EU level in the fields of employment, social affairs and inclusion, whereas only 38% of the Italians and 50% of Hungarians viewed the programme as having achieved its objectives. Moreover, 31% of Italians and 25% of Hungarians were of the view that the programme had not achieved the afore-mentioned goals.

*Graph 4.*

During the semi-structured interviews in **France** participants expressed satisfaction with the overall impact of the EaSI programme in the period 2014-2020. The implementation of the programme has enabled the projects carried out by the organisations represented in the meetings to achieve the objectives of the three strands of the programme (modernisation of employment and social policies, labour mobility, and access to microfinance and social entrepreneurship).

Regarding the axes of the EaSI programme (Question 2), the most popular axis in a cross-country view was the PROGRESS axis with 42% of the respondents considering that their Member State had most focused on it, followed by the EURES axis (33%). Only 18% of the respondents considered that the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis had been in the center of focus in their country.

Regarding the separate countries, Hungary (75%), France (60%) and Lithuania (43%) had focused most on the PROGRESS axis, whilst in Italy only 38% and in Austria only 25% of the EaSI funds had been devoted to this axis. EURES axis had been most popular in Italy (62%) and in France (40%), whereas the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis had been the most important in Austria (50%) and equally important as the PROGRESS axis in Lithuania (42%).

*Graph 5.*

During the semi-structured interviews in **Austria** it was mentioned regarding EURES that the funding was very generous but not in line with the Austrian labour market standards. Furthermore, the Chamber of Labour was not in the position to monitor the quality of the jobs provided.

In **Italy** the programme was said not to be well known, with the exception of the EURES axis. PROGRESS and Microfinance axes also have a lot of potential, but only few organisations know about their existence. The list of final beneficiaries is very limited. Communication and information on the programme should be improved; namely through awareness raising campaign.

When asked about their opinion of the EaSI-funded actions in their country (Question 3), almost half of the respondents viewed them as adequate (42%), 21% considering them as very good, using or monitoring them regularly; finally, an equal number of respondents (18%) considered them as poor or were unsure of the answer.

When comparing the responses per country, Austrians and the French were the most positive with 75% and 40% respectively considering that the EaSI-funded actions in their country had been very good and they used them or monitored them regularly; in contrast, in Lithuania and Hungary no respondent had chosen this answer. 57% of Lithuanian respondents, 50% of Hungarian respondents and 46% of Italian respondents considered the actions as adequate, while 50% of Hungarian respondents, 23% of Italian respondents and 14% of Lithuanian respondents even went to say that the EaSI-funded actions in their country could be regarded as poor.

*Graph 6.*

During the semi-structured interviews, the **Lithuanian** stakeholders expressed the view that the EaSI programme was a useful and beneficial financial instrument in supporting SMEs (family businesses etc.). Furthermore, social entrepreneurship had been boosted in Lithuania mainly thanks to the funding received under EaSI. Stakeholders also agreed that, although with room for improvement, the overall management of the EaSI programme in Lithuania was positive.

An example of where the EaSI was seen as extremely useful was with regard to the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis in the work of the Lithuanian Central Credit Union, as it was not easy to attract capital in other ways; the Union redistributed the funding received under this axis to the smaller enterprises of its network (like farmers, for whom it is more difficult to receive funding from more traditional sources like banks).

In **Austria**, the importance of the EaSI programme was mentioned in terms of social banking and providing financial solutions to support companies and organisations in getting access to finance, when they otherwise would be excluded from it. It was said that, in principle, the EaSI programme could be regarded as a very important instrument, as it covered a client segment in Austria in microfinance, social entrepreneurship and start-ups which would normally be excluded from the financing instruments. The EaSI instruments were highly relevant also for the classic NGO type of organisations. Furthermore, participants agreed that the implementation of the EaSI programme in Austria had been effective overall. It was noticed that the programme worked especially well in the field of health and care.

An example of a project implemented under the EaSI programme in Austria was mentioned: a guarantee for the employment of young people focusing on those who do not pursue vocational training after having graduated from school. This project was very effective for youth who otherwise would not have access to the labour market. This was said to be a very positive effect of the EaSI programme.

Finally, an Austrian participant emphasised the fact that the implementation and effectiveness of the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis of the programme highly depended on the existing market conditions in the countries which are implementing the projects. This meant that some Member States were faster in putting the programme into practice than others.

In **Hungary**, it was noted that the EaSI programme had been successful in facilitating cooperation among social partners in different countries and empowering them to pursue the programme's objective more intensively. It also supported countries like Hungary, where social dialogue is not so developed, to partake in the EU social dialogue.

The **Italian** participants had difficulties in assessing the effectiveness of the EaSI programme because of the lack of data on its real impact on the beneficiaries. It was therefore recommended to improve information and communication on such data.

Participants during the semi-structured interviews in **France** generally had a good perception of the EaSI programme and stated that their respective projects could not have been successful without the support of the funds. Some representatives stressed in particular that the EaSI programme enabled project actors and partners to build mutual trust and good cooperation, as well as noted the possibility offered by the EaSI programme to work with other local entities towards the same objective, and for small structures to engage in actions for which they had no capacity otherwise.

However, the French stakeholders also highlighted some implementation difficulties, mainly related to the administrative and financial capacity of project organisation. For example, all participants agreed on the need for staff with expertise and time devoted to the management of EaSI supported cases. Furthermore, many stakeholders considered the administrative steps to obtain the funds to be cumbersome. Hence, several participants suggested a simplification of administrative procedures by offering common management tools at EU level, thus avoiding the need for each project bearer to create their own tools and platforms (e.g. the "Mobility Tool" common to project promoters under Erasmus +).

*Specific conclusions*

When asked to assess the effectiveness of the EaSI programme in achieving its **horizontal objectives** (Question 4), the respondents of the questionnaire presented rather similar views in that they considered the programme to have been mostly “moderately effective” or “not effective” in achieving them. Only in one category - “Paying attention to the more vulnerable sections of society, such as young people, women and migrants” – did the respondents from all the examined countries view EaSI as having been “very effective” (33%).

With regard to promoting gender equality, the majority of respondents (36%) held the view that the programme had been “moderately effective” in this aspect, with 24% considering it as “not very effective”.

When it came to combating discrimination, 30% viewed EaSI as having been “not very effective” and 24% as – “moderately effective”.

Promoting a high level of sustainable and quality employment by the EaSI programme was deemed by an equal number of respondents (33%) as both “moderately effective” as well as “not very effective”.

Regarding the objective of “Ensuring adequate and decent social protection”, 33% of all respondents considered that the EaSI programme had been “moderately effective” towards achieving this goal, 24% - “not very effective”, 15% - “very effective” and 9% - “not effective at all”.

The achievement of both the objective of “Combating long-term unemployment” and “Combating poverty and social exclusion” was viewed by the majority of respondents as not having been very effective (33% in both cases). With regard to combating long-term unemployment, the highest number of respondents held the view that the EaSI programme had not been effective at all (12%).

In a country comparison perspective, for the Austrian respondents the EaSI programme had been “very effective” in all categories with the level of satisfaction ranging from 50% to 100%. The effectiveness of the EaSI programme in no category was considered as not having been effective at all.

Respondents’ views in other countries were not so positive, however. The French respondents were mostly “unsure” in how to evaluate the effectiveness of EaSI in the mentioned categories, however, those who responded, viewed the programme as having been either “very effective” or “moderately effective” in all categories.

The Italian respondents held the view that the programme had been “not very effective” in achieving the objectives of all the categories (the dissatisfaction ranging from 38% to 54%). Only 8% to 15% of all Italian respondents considered EaSI to have been “very effective” in any of the horizontal objectives.

The Lithuanian respondents’ answers were quite mixed, with the majority however considering the effectiveness of the EaSI programme in achieving the horizontal objectives to have been “moderately effective” or “not very effective”, with quite a number of respondents also being unsure. “Paying attention to the more vulnerable sections of society, such as young people, women and migrants” received the highest number of “very effective” (29%), and “Promoting a high level of sustainable and quality employment” was considered “not very effective” by 43%.

When it comes to the Hungarian respondents, none held the view that the programme had been “very effective” in achieving the horizontal objectives, with the most considering it as having been “not very effective” in all of the objectives except for “Promoting gender equality” (“moderately effective” – 75%) and “Ensuring adequate and decent social protection” (“moderately effective” – 50%).

During the semi-structured interviews, the **French** stakeholders demonstrated through the presentation of their respective projects that EaSI was relevant in addressing vulnerable groups, promoting gender equality, combating discrimination and combating poverty and social exclusion. Two examples were mentioned in this regard: the EURES project, led by the Grand Est region, which offered cross-border employment opportunities and supported companies in their recruitment difficulties. The project is aimed in particular at jobseekers, people seeking cross-border mobility and students; it is also inclusive in the broad sense (it includes in particular persons with disabilities). Another project "A roof on your head: a job in your pocket!" carried out by Lyon metropolis targets young people with social and economic vulnerabilities (marginalisation, homelessness or complex family situations) and not using social assistance. The project also addresses age-related discrimination in access to minimum resources (access to a minimum income for young people aged 18-25).

In **Hungary**, it was noted that as some of the projects paid particular attention to vulnerable groups, such as young and older people, they contributed to the overarching objectives of the EaSI programme. Furthermore, it would be very important to involve in the implementation of the programme organisations that operate in the most socio-economic disadvantaged areas of Hungary. This would contribute to realising programme's objectives in the area of combating poverty and social exclusion.

In **Austria**, participants agreed that the EaSI implementation in Austria had been highly relevant on the issues of gender equality, combating poverty and fighting social exclusion. Also, it was pointed out that the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis had not been directly but rather indirectly relevant in helping vulnerable groups – namely through the funding of social entrepreneurs who then worked with them. Furthermore, one participant pointed out that their organisation gathered evidence of the EaSI programme improving the quality of life of people taking part in it, with positive impact being particularly important for the most vulnerable groups.

*Graph 7.*

When asked whether they considered the EaSI actions effective in supporting the implementation of the **European Pillar of Social Rights** (Question 5), only 18% of the respondents viewed them as "very effective", with 33% considering them "moderately effective" and 30% "not very effective". However, no one was of the opinion that they had been "not effective at all".

The views among countries regarding the effectiveness of EaSI actions in supporting the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights were very diverging. The respective EaSI actions in Austria were regarded to 75% as very effective, whereas in France this number reached only 20%, in Lithuania – 14%, in Italy – 8%, and in Hungary no one viewed them as very effective. The most negative views as to the effectiveness of EaSI actions in terms of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights were held in Italy with 54% of respondents considering them as not very effective. In Lithuania this number reached 29% and in Hungary – 25%.

*Graph 8.*

During the semi-structured interviews in **Italy**, the stakeholders noted that the objective of the EaSI programme was coherent with the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and contributed to the reinforcement of social dialogue, however, there was a need for improving knowledge and information about the programme to make it more effective. In general, nevertheless, the actions within EaSI were thought to have contributed to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Regarding the recent **Covid-19 pandemic** (Question 6), most respondents (39%) were unsure as to whether the actions of the EaSI programme had been adapted to the change brought about it, with 33% considering that they had been adapted and 27% - that they had not been adapted.

Looking at the answers in a country comparison, it seemed that a large part of respondents in all countries (31%-50%) were unsure in how to respond to this question. Of those who had an answer, 50% in Austria, 60% in France and 43% in Lithuania considered that the actions of the EaSI programme had been adapted to the change brought about by the pandemic, with Italians and Hungarians having the least optimistic view (54% and 25% respectively were of the opinion that the EaSI programme had not been adapted to the changes).

*Graph 9.*

In total, only 39% of the respondents to the questionnaire considered that the actions of the EaSI programme helped promote **employment and social inclusion** in the current period of crisis, whereas 27% did not agree (Question 7). 30% of respondents were unsure.

*Graph 10.*

On the question whether the EaSI programme had the **flexibility to respond to labour market changes** **and changing policy needs** in a timely manner throughout its duration (Question 8), respondents were divided: 36% answered yes, 27% answered no, and 36% were unsure.

*Graph 11.*

Respondents were asked to assess whether the three EaSI’s axes contributed to the programme’s objectives and expected results (Question 9). The PROGRESS axis seems to be considered the most satisfactory (36% of respondents considered it very satisfactory or satisfactory), even though 24% of respondents were unsure. The EURES axis comes in second position with 33% of respondents considering it satisfactory. However, the EURES axis did not receive any answer as "very satisfactory". Moreover, the number of respondents unsure about their answer counterbalance this result (36%). The Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis gathered the lowest results with 21% of respondents considering it very satisfactory or satisfactory. Nonetheless, this result could be unrepresentative, as almost half of the respondents were unsure (39%).

With regards to differences between countries, the PROGRESS axis' contribution to the programme’s objectives and expected results was considered as very satisfactory or satisfactory by the majority of Austrian and French respondents (50% and 60%, respectively), while the rest was unsure about how to assess this feature. On the other hand, Lithuanian respondents' views on the PROGRESS axis' contribution were quite conflicting, as they were equally divided between very satisfactory or satisfactory and adequate (42% each). Finally, while in Hungary half of the respondents assessed this axis' contribution as satisfactory, in Italy, 31% only judged it as adequate, with the same share of respondents for both countries considering it either poor or being unsure (25% and 23% respectively).

As for the EURES axis, it must be noted that the great majority of Austrian and French respondents were unsure about how to assess its contribution to the programme’s objectives and expected results (100% and 80% respectively). Hungarian respondents' views, on the other hand, were equally split between satisfactory and adequate (50% each). As for Italy and Lithuania, while around two in five respondents (38% and 43% respectively) considered this axis contribution as satisfactory, 31% of Italian respondents felt that it was only adequate and 29% of the Austrian ones was unsure about it.

Finally, the totality of French respondents and half of the Austrian and Hungarian ones was unsure about how to assess the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis' contribution to the programme’s objectives and expected results. As for the rest of respondents, they evaluated this axis' contribution as very satisfactory in Austria and as poor in Hungary. Similarly, almost two in five Italian respondents assessed the axis' contribution as poor (38%). The majority of Lithuanian respondents, on the other hand, was equally divided between satisfactory, adequate and unsure (29% each).

During the semi-structured interviews in **Italy** it was noted that EURES and in a lesser extent PROGRESS had contributed to the EaSI objectives and expected results. However, the same could not be said about the Microfinance axis. It was therefore suggested to have a more comprehensive approach, better coordination and a national strategy coordinating the three axes, to avoid fragmentation in the measures taken.

*Graph 12.*

Respondents to the questionnaire were given the possibilities to **point out gaps in the implementation of EaSI activities** (Question 10 – open question).

Even though respondents believe the EaSI projects to be of high quality and relevance, they considered the lack of awareness and knowledge on the different axes of the EaSI programme as one of the main gaps. Organizations stressed that the programme was mainly known only by technicians or intermediaries, and information did not reach final beneficiaries and citizens. They also noted that the communication on the opportunities offered was weak and therefore recommended that promotion and information should be improved in view of the new programming period.

The lack of knowledge was also felt on the possible interconnections between the axes and other EU funding programmes. Respondents pointed at a risk of overlap between the projects financed by the EaSI programme and those financed by the European Structural Fund, in particular by the European Social Fund. They suggested to create a stronger synergy between the EaSI and the ESF + programme and to identify a comparison tool that allows for a greater overview of the different programmes.

Another shortcoming identified by the respondents was the administrative process to receive the funds of the EaSI programme. They stressed extensive paperwork, heaviness of the files to assemble which makes the process very bureaucratic. They also considered the administrative procedure to have adapted slowly to market changes (e.g. pandemic, changes in business environment).

Several respondents strongly advised to increase the involvement of social partners in the implementation of EaSI activities. They considered in particular that the role of social partners in the governance process was weaker than the one exercised in the ESF programme.

One respondent also mentioned the difficulty of financing the continuity of EasI projects when they have demonstrated their effectiveness. In **France**, it was said to be difficult to integrate the pursuit of these innovative projects into the ESF programme.

Finally, **Hungarian** respondents highlighted a lack of government coordination, which they considered as an obstruction to the proper implementation of EaSI projects.

Furthermore, the majority of respondents (64%) agreed that the system of **access to financial resources and technical assistance**, and to the financial programmes and instruments available to support the sustainable development of national microfinance sectors, should be simplified (Question 11). 27% of respondents were unsure.

*Graph 13.*

More than half of the respondents also declared that their organization did not have awareness or knowledge on the former Progress MICROFINANCE facility (58%) (Question 11a). 27% indicated that they were aware of the former facility, but only 3% to a large extent, 12% to a certain extent and 12% to a limited extent. However, the results on the extent to which organisations were aware of the former Progress MICROFINANCE facility could be unrepresentative as 73% of respondents did not answer to that question.

*Graph 14.*

Respondents to the questionnaire were given the possibility to **present their expectations about the access and the implementation of EaSI activities** (Question 12 – open question).

Respondents mainly pointed out at expectations related to the main objectives of their respective projects, e.g. foster financial inclusion, overcome obstacles to the cross-mobility of workers, bringing young people into work or training etc. Respondents indicated having particularly high expectations on the modernization of employment, social policies and labour mobility.

Regarding the organization of projects, respondents expected a good intermediation and implementation with other partners and the European Commission. One respondent explained that in the EURES axis, one partner organization set up a permanent coordination table, allowing to set the objectives of the project, to strengthen collaboration, and improve bilateral cooperation.

Respondents involved in the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis stressed that they expected the EaSI programme to help improve the availability and accessibility of microfinance, and to expand microfinance capabilities for their organisation.

Respondents also repeated their expectations for a greater involvement and information about the EaSI programme to social partners, as stated in the European Code of Conduct for Social and Institutional Partnership. Some respondents also pointed at their expectations for a better involvement of NGOs in helping solve employment issues.

## Relevance (Consistency and synergies with other funds and simplification)

|  |
| --- |
| According to the European Commission's Better Regulation toolbox, the criterion of relevance *"looks at the relationship between the needs and problems in society and the objectives of the intervention and hence touches on aspects of design. Relevance analysis also requires a consideration of how the objectives of an EU intervention (…) correspond to wider EU policy goals and priorities."* [[4]](#footnote-5) |

*General conclusions*

With regards to the importance of **creating synergies** **with the European Social Fund and other funds** **and programmes** for the success of the actions of the EaSI programme (Question 13), more than half of the respondents (67%) considered it "very important" or "important", while almost one fourth (24%) was unsure about its added value.

Similarly, the overwhelming majority of Lithuanian respondents considered synergies with the ESF and other funds and programmes "very important" (43%) or "important" (43%). In France, on the other hand, respondents' views were split between "very important" (40%) and "unsure" (60%). The same share of respondents in Hungary and Austria found synergies "very important" (25%) and "important" (50%) for the success of the actions of the EaSI programme. As for Italy, 38% of respondents considered synergies "very important" while the rest was evenly split (23% each) between "important" and "unsure".

*Graph 15.*

The importance of building synergies with the ESF and other funds and programmes was confirmed in the semi-structured interviews with stakeholders. In **Austria**, the current lack of synergies was considered by the participants as a weakness of the EaSI Programme. Therefore, it was suggested that efficient combination of programmes would be useful, especially in order to cover the pre-financing period. According to stakeholders, particular attention should be paid to the issue of synergies with regards to the EURES strand. Moreover, one stakeholder appealed to the European level to focus more on possible synergies and suggested that perhaps resources from different programmes could be blended for certain calls. Coordination between programmes and DGs targeting the same target groups needed to be ensured.

When asked about the **EaSI programme's consistency with and complementary to other programmes and funds** (Question 14), the majority of respondent (58%) was unsure about how to assess this feature, with 27% considering that the EaSI programme is consistent with other programmes and funds.

*Graph 16.*

When it comes to the different categories of respondents, more than 60% of the employers and civil society organisations (67% and 60% respectively) were unsure whether the EaSI programme was complementary to other programmes and funds, with one third of respondents confirming such consistency. As for the workers, half of the respondents were unsure about this aspects, with one in four denying any complementarity with other programmes and funds.

During the semi-structured interviews, a point criticized by the **Austrian** stakeholders was that some combinations of EU programmes were not possible. For example, organisations that use EU funding (ESF and others) do not get pre-financing or the advanced payment (they would get, for example, 20% in advance, but more is needed before the rest of the 80% are paid). Especially smaller organisations have a problem financing the period until they receive the bulk of the payment. Therefore, efficient combination of programmes would be useful; of course, not to encourage double funding, but to cover this specific period in time.

Furthermore, the Austrian stakeholders mentioned an example: a pilot project called "Mobilize SMEs", in which the Austrian Chamber of Commerce was a project partner for cross-border support of SME workers being posted to other EU countries and candidate countries. DG EMPL organised a call where there could have been a lot of synergies with the ERASMUS programme from DG GROW, however, no match-making platform had been made by now (two years after the beginning of the project), which should have been part of the project. There could also have been synergies with ERASMUS on posting of apprentices. Therefore, the suggestion would be before organising further calls under the EURES strand, attention should be paid to the issue of synergies.

Following up on the previous questions, 24% of respondents provided **additional comments on which programmes they deem consistent with EaSI** (Question 14bis). The majority of respondents (75%) identified the ESF as the most complementary to the EaSI programme, with only 12% indicating National and Regional Operating Programmes in the framework of Structural funds.

When it comes to the differences among countries, most French respondents (60%) were "unsure" about this aspect, with 40% confirming the Programme's consistency with other funds. On the other hand, in Hungary and Lithuania, the overwhelming majority of respondents (100% and 85% respectively) were "unsure" about this feature of the EaSI Programme. Finally, Austrian and Italian respondents were evenly distributed between the "yes" and "unsure" (25% and 38% respectively), with 23% of respondents denying the programme consistency with other funds in Italy and 25% in Austria.

In particular, the **Hungarian** stakeholders who participated to the semi-structured interview reported that some complementarity can be observed with other EU rural development programmes. As some applicants are not eligible for the latter, the EaSI Programme could step in to improve labour mobility and boost digital and entrepreneurial skills in rural areas.

As for the possible **overlaps or duplication of actions between EaSI and other programmes and funds** (Question 15), almost half of the respondents (45%) was unsure about whether there were any. On the other hand, one third of respondent confirmed that there were some overlaps with other programmes and funds, while the rest of them replied negatively (21%).

*Graph 17.*

During the semi-structured interviews in **Austria**, the stakeholders mentioned that the topics of the EaSI programme – youth, employment, anti-discrimination, policies for people with disabilities – were considered as highly relevant. It was said that it was difficult having several similar programmes covering the same or similar topics or people with similar problems, therefore a recommendation for the European Commission would be to design programmes to cover all of the mentioned problems and target audiences, instead of having many different programmes, because then the people at the national level do not know which programme to turn to for support. It would be more useful to have the funds more brought together.

Moreover, 21% of respondents provided additional comments on **which programmes they consider as overlapping with EaSI** (Question 15bis). The majority of them (57%) identified the ESF as the most overlapping to the EaSI programme, with 29% reporting there were duplications with both the Interreg Funds and the ESF.

Similarly, in Hungary and Austria, half of the respondents were "unsure" about whether there were any overlaps with other programmes, with the rest of the respondents equally divided between "yes" and "no". In France and Lithuania, while the majority of respondents (60% and 57% respectively) was "unsure" about this aspects, the remaining 40% denied any duplication with other programmes and funds. Finally, Italian respondents were almost equally split between the different reply options (38% yes; 31% no; 31% unsure).

Stakeholders' views on possible overlaps or duplication of actions between EaSI and other programmes and funds were rather mixed also during the semi-structured interviews. **Italian** participants reported that there were some duplications with Italian and European programmes, and in particular with the ESF. To avoid this, it was recommended to increase the focus of the programme and develop synergies and complementarities with similar programmes. In this respect, the inclusion of EaSI in the ESF+ in the next programming period was regarded as a positive development.

Also in **Lithuania**, participants pointed out that there was some overlapping between different EU programmes, which made it problematic to choose between them.

In **France**, on the other hand, a representative from a public organisation specified that there was a systemic difference between EaSI and other EU funds. The richness and specificity of the EaSI programme lies in its ability to bring together institutional decision-makers and stakeholders.

As for national programmes, **Hungarian** participants stated that there were limited overlaps, as they tend to be more focused on specific aspects and do not leave much leeway for social partners on implementation. It's worth noting, however, that the Hungarian Government implements a rural development programme called the Hungarian Village Funding Scheme, which is aimed at halting depopulation and improving the living circumstances in rural areas.

*Specific conclusions*

Regarding the **consistency and complementarity of the EaSI programme with the European Structural and Investment Funds (EIS funds) and in particular the ESF** (Question 16), two in five respondents (39%) felt it was "quite a lot", while 30% was unsure about this feature of the programme.

*Graph* *18.*

Respondents' views were quite conflicting depending on the country. In Hungary, the great majority of respondents (75%) reported that the EaSI programme was "quite a lot" consistent with the EIS funds, with 25% replying that complementarity was "not very much". As for Italian respondents, while the majority (38%) agreed that the EaSI programme was "quite a lot" complementary with the EIS funds, more than a fourth (31%) was of the idea that the Programme's consistency with these funds was not too much. More than half of respondents in France and Austria (60% and 50% respectively) were "unsure" about this aspect of the Programme. However, while the rest of French respondents agreed that the EaSI programme was very much complementary with the EIS funds, in Austria, they were evenly split between "quite a lot" and "not at all". As for Lithuania, almost three in five respondents (57%) were of the idea that there was "quite a lot" of complementarity, with 43% being unsure about whether there was any.

During the semi-structure interviews, several **French** participants indicated that they were benefiting from other EU funds in parallel with EaSI funds. Thus, they confirmed that EaSI can be articulated with different funds, including ESF and ERASMUS +.

When asked about **possible synergies with ESF actions** and, in particular, with active labour, training and social inclusion policies (Question 17), more than one third of respondents (36%) declared that the EaSI programme has not exploited them very much. On the other hand, the same share of respondents (27%) considered that the programme has managed to exploit these synergies "quite a lot" or was "unsure" about this feature.

In both Hungary and Italy, the majority of respondents (75% and 54% respectively) were of the view that there were not many synergies with ESF actions, with around one fourth stating that they were "quite a lot" (25% and 23% respectively). In France, on the other hand, most respondents (60%) were "unsure" about this aspect of the programme, with the rest of respondents (20% each) dividing equally between "not very much" or "not at all". As for Lithuania, respondents held quite conflicting views with almost three in five (57%) declaring there were "quite a lot" of synergies while the rest (43%) was unsure about it. Finally, Austrian respondents were evenly distributed (25% each) between "quite a lot", "not very much", not at all" and "unsure".

*Graph 19.*

As for the EaSI programme contribution to meeting the **country-specific recommendations of the European Semester** (Question 18), more than one in three respondents (36%) was unsure about its extent. 30% of respondents stated that the programme didn't contribute much to the country-specific recommendations, while 21% considered its contribution to be "quite a lot".

*Graph 20.*

When it comes to the differences among countries, most Italian and Lithuanian respondents (46% and 43% respectively) agreed that the EaSI programme contributed "quite a lot" to meeting the country-specific recommendations of the European Semester, with around 30% of respondents being "unsure" about this aspect. In Hungary, on the other hand, the large majority of respondents (75%) was of the view that the programme did not contribute very much to implementing the recommendations, while one in fourth reported that the EaSI programme's contribution in this domain was "quite a lot". More than half of French respondents (60%) was "unsure" about this feature of the programme, with the rest equally divided between "very much" and "quite a lot". Similarly, in Austria, most respondents (75%) seemed "unsure" about the Programme's contribution.

The semi-structured interviews also yielded mixed result with regards to the country-specific recommendations of the European Semester. **Italian** participants were of the view that the EaSI programme did not contribute to adequately implement the country-specific recommendations, in particular those addressing vulnerable groups.

On the other hand, in **Hungary**, as some of the projects implemented under the programme were aimed at strengthening social dialogue, they were considered to contribute to meeting the country-specific recommendations of the European Semester.

With regards to the **Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis of the EaSI programme** (Question 19), the questionnaire inquired about its complementary to and consistency with other European and national programmes providing assistance and financial support to micro- and social enterprises. Once again, more than half of the respondents (55%) was "unsure" about how to assess this aspect, while 27% was of the view that this axis is complementary and consistent with other European and national programmes.

*Graph* *21.*

In Italy and Lithuania, almost the same share of respondents (38% and 43% each) either confirmed this axis' complementarity with other European and national programmes or were "unsure" about it. In France, Austria and Hungary, the majority of respondents was once again unsure about the Axis' complementarity with other European and national programmes (100%, 75% and 50% respectively). However, in Austria and Hungary, one in four respondents denied there was any complementarity at all.

During the semi-structured interviews, **Austrian** participants pointed out that the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis has been indirectly relevant in helping vulnerable groups – namely through the funding of social entrepreneurs which then worked with them.

## Inclusion of civil society and added value

On the question if their **organisation had been regularly consulted on the implementation of the EaSI programme** (Question 20), 60% of respondents replied no, 21% yes and 18% were unsure. Among those who felt they had been consulted (Question 20bis), the **level of involvement** was considered very good by 6%, good by 9% and a majority of 84% did not reply.

With regards to the respondents' categories, employers were equally divided between yes, no and unsure. As for workers, the overwhelming majority of respondents (83%) reported not to have been consulted in the implementation of the EaSI programme. Finally, the majority of civil society organisations (53%) denied having been consulted, with more than one in four respondents (27%) confirming such involvement.

In a country breakdown, only respondents in France felt that their organisation had been consulted on the implementation of the EaSI programme in the majority of cases (40%). In all other countries most respondents felt that there had been no regular consultation, with Hungarians responding with a 100% "no", Italians – 77%, Austrians – 50% and Lithuanians – 43%.

With regard to the level of involvement, the rate of "no answer" ranged from 75% in Austria to 100% in Hungary (France – 80%, Italy – 85%, Lithuania – 86%). Only 20% of the French respondents and 15% of the Lithuanian respondents considered their involvement in the implementation of the EaSI programme as "very good", and 15% in Italy and 25% in Austria as "good".

During the semi-structured interviews, the **Italian** stakeholders noted that there was no stable and structured consultation of civil society organisations on the EaSI programme by the Italian public authorities. It was said that the involvement of civil society organisations only took place if they had to participate in a notice for a project co-financed by the Commission. Italian stakeholders also mentioned that the list of EaSI beneficiaries could be extended, and a more prominent role given to social partners in the management of the programme. Moreover, it was noted that the role of social partners in the management of the EaSI programme was weaker than in other funds; this should be improved.

In **Lithuania,** trade union representatives noted that social partners did not have many opportunities to directly apply for participation in certain EU funding programmes. For example, with regard to the posting of workers' Directive, which was one of the projects financed by EaSI, the Baltic trade unions made a joint application for the funds, with the aim to further the cooperation among the social partners in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. **Hungarian** participants also stressed the scarce involvement of social partners.

In **France**, participants indicated that they became aware of the EaSI programme mainly through European partners and networks of which they are members or through European affairs departments (for the largest structures). The smaller structures indicated that they became aware of the programme via the project coordinators.

In **Austria**, it was said that the involvement of civil society had worked well in terms of the design, but there was a lot of room for improvement regarding the knowledge, information and involvement of social partners in EaSI projects. In general, the participants pointed to a feeling of engagement both in the decision-making processes and planning of the projects.

It was said that in **Hungary** the social partners had limited opportunity to voice their opinion and the reaction period was usually very short. In addition, it was not clear how the intended aims of the programme should be reached, and social partners were not involved in this discussion.

Going to the specific axes (Question 21), 51% of the participants were unsure about the **level of involvement of civil society organisation in the design phase** for the PROGRESS axis, while 24% felt they had not been included. For EURES, 54% were unsure and 30% felt they had been included. For the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis, 48% were unsure and 27% considered they had not been involved.

In Italy, only 8% of the respondents felt that the public authorities included the social partners and civil society organisations in the design of EaSI operations under the PROGRESS axis, however, in terms of EURES 54 % felt included. Regarding the Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis, the majority were unsure (38%).

In Hungary, the overwhelming majority felt that there had been no inclusion of social partners and civil society organisations (75%, 50% and 75% respectively).

In Lithuania, most respondents were unsure as to the answer to this question (71%, 85% and 43% respectively) with 14% feeling that the social partners and civil society organisations had been included in the design of the PROGRESS and Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axes.

In France, 20% of respondents felt that the social partners and civil society organisations had been included in the design of the PROGRESS and EURES axes with the rest being unsure.

Finally, in Austria the responses were the most positive with 25% of respondents feeling that the social partners and civil society organisations had been included in the design of all three axes, and the remaining respondents not saying "no" but being "unsure".

During the semi-structured interviews, the **Italian** stakeholders noted that the governance of the programme itself should be improved to involve more social partners and civil society. It is necessary to provide structured dialogue between national authorities, civil society and stakeholders, with exchanges of good practices and experiences, similarly to the national table of partnership set up for EURES.

Furthermore, it was stressed that it would be important to set up a national contact point for the EaSI programme involving civil society organisations on a regular basis. It would also be important for the future for the European Commission to organise visits to the Member States to monitor the EaSI programme and to involve civil society organisations directly. It would also be necessary to improve, both from national public authorities and from the European Commission, the provision of information and the way in which the opportunities of the EU programme can be communicated, by involving civil society organisations. Another point mentioned was that it would be useful to extend the PROGRESS axis to other stakeholders, namely inter-professional funds or other joint bodies.

*Graph* *22.*

Regarding the **knowledge by the final beneficiaries of EaSI-funded actions and operations of the origin of the resources and programmes** (Question 22), 48% of participants declared they were aware of it, against 24% who were not aware and 24% unsure.

In **France**, stakeholders explained that final beneficiaries of the EaSI-funded actions were generally aware of the EU origin of the funds, but that they had no knowledge on the exact fund used.

*Graph 23.*

When asked how to **improve the capacity and involvement of the social partners and civil society organisations in future actions of the EaSI programme** (Question 23), participants made several suggestions.

Training should be provided for organisations, especially the smaller ones, on how to apply for the programme, as well as to improve flexibility, reduce bureaucracy and increase budget to make the instruments more accessible.

National authorities and the European Commission should better communicate and inform about the programme and its content, increasing networks between organisations, especially between smaller organisations and umbrella organisations and advertising more the calls for proposals. Information could be provided also in the form of information session through webinars.

CSOs and social partners should be kept regularly informed on the possibility of participating in the programmes; a separate communication channel for NGOs and social partners could be created. This could take the form of a cooperation platform to enable the social partners and NGOs to know each other and submit projects.

National authorities should establish national contact points for the programme who should engage in structured dialogue with social partners. Mixed working groups with civil society could also be organised.

Social partners should be more involved in all the phases of the programme: co-design, implementation and evaluation. This aspect should be tackled in the new programming period, when EaSi will be included in ESF+ and will therefore follow the rules applying to Structural funds.

During the virtual visits, further recommendations were also put forward.

In **Hungary**, most of the organisations were able to access the programme through umbrella organisations or as part of a consortium. Therefore, it was suggested to introduce direct tendering to allow grass-root organisations to make the most of the programme. The future national contact points could disseminate information through tender advisors and CSOs platforms, who usually rely on a strong network. It was also felt that national ministries were not the best placed to take contact with the applicants and disseminate information. As the programme provides direct funding, it should be up to the European Commission to improve its communication around the programme.

In **Lithuania**, it was pointed out that the application and reporting processes were problematic for some organisations, especially those with a smaller capacity little to no experience with EU funds. Participants agreed that the creation of a contact point to provide information would greatly help the inclusion of civil society. Subsequently, the Lithuanian public authorities informed that the European Social Fund Agency had already been selected and will become the national contact point for EaSI programme, and is looking forward to a more targeted communication, as well as inclusion of social partners in the process.

The same suggestion to appoint a national contact point for the programme was raised in **Italy**. It was also felt that, similarly to the national table of partnership set up for EURES, it was necessary to provide structured dialogue between national authorities, civil society and stakeholders, with exchanges of good practices and experiences. Consumer organisations should be more involved especially on the Microfinance axis.

In **France**, participants suggested a targeted, broader, more open communication based on relays already involved in these programmes. They also stressed the need for better visibility of European programmes and better indications for accessing them.

In **Austria**, participants highlighted the need for simplification of the programmes and of the bureaucratic procedures. Access to the funds should be discussed at the EU level, as some CSOs have been discouraged to apply just because the rules have been complicated. Stakeholders also felt that the social partners should be involved properly, also at regional level. Furthermore, as Austria is a federal country, it is even more challenging to have an oversight over the different available EU tools and instruments. Therefore, anything that would help create transparency would be much welcome.

The **communication and information of the EaSI programme** (Question 24) was rated as poor by 54% of the respondents, adequate by 21%, good by 18% and very good by 3%. To improve it, they suggested more information and communication at national level, targeting CSOs and social partners, also through increased use of social media, and by using a simplified and user-friendly language. It was also suggested to set up an information platform or designated webpage in national language, information events tailored to national/local needs providing opportunities for exchanges on good practices, visits of the European Commission with meetings with social partners, simplification of the language used.

When it comes to the different countries, around seven in ten respondents in Hungary and Italy (75% and 69% respectively) rated the communication and information of the EaSI programme as poor, with 25% of Hungarian respondents and 15% of Italian ones judging it as adequate. Similarly, 43% of respondents in Lithuanian found the communication and information of the programme to be poor, with 29% of them considering it as adequate. On the other hand, half of the Austrian respondents judged communication to be good, while the rest of the respondent considering it to be adequate or poor (25% each). Finally, while two in five French respondent evaluated this aspect of the programme as poor, the rest of the respondents divided equally among the other response options.

During the semi-structured interviews in **Austria**, stakeholders noted that the lack of knowledge on EaSI may mean that organisations are afraid to apply for EaSI funds, as they think they lack the knowledge or the administrative burden is just too much (not only the EU red tape, but the national Austrian bureaucracy as well). Overall, the programme was not very well-known, and the need to improve the availability of information, the visibility of the programme along with its communication was emphasised. For example, it was mentioned that all participants got to know and take part in the programme because they were contacted by third parties. While they recognised them as important pieces of the puzzle, the national and regional contact points did not have a great influence in this regard.

*Graph 24.*

During the semi-structured interviews in **Italy** the participants noted that, in general, only experts were familiar with the EaSI programme. Therefore, only a few companies could benefit from it, the application procedure also being too complex, it was considered "a lost opportunity".

In **France**, stakeholders had different views on the communication with the services of the European Commission. It was said that EaSI project coordinators were in direct contact with the Commission. (Co-)beneficiaries tend to be in contact with coordinators. Some participants stressed the support of the European Commission in preparing the response to calls for tender. Other participants felt it was more difficult to exchange with the services of the European Commission. In particular, they would have liked to have an interview prior to the implementation of the project.

When **asked if the communication and information systems of EaSI-funded actions needed to be modified to ensure that the final beneficiaries are sufficiently informed** (Question 25), 73% thought a change was necessary, against 4% who thought that it was not and 5% who were unsure.

*Graph 25.*

*Additional comments*

In the last question of the online survey (open question), respondents were given the possibility to **submit free comments in addition to their replies to the different questions.**

Respondents made some suggestions for improvements:

* Simplifying the application process
* Reducing cash flow risks for partners with an immediate financing of the projects
* Improving the combination of the different EU instruments
* Evaluating ex-ante the adequacy of the activities
* Defining more clearly the role of public authorities, social partners and local communities with respect to private subjects in the implementation of projects
* Collecting data on the direct or indirect creation of jobs fostered by the implementation of the projects
* Extending the principles of the European Code of Conduct for Social and Institutional Partnership to the EaSI programme for a better involvement of social partners
* Improving communication, dissemination and promotion on the EaSI programme, especially the PROGRESS and Microfinance axes
* Sharing of best practices
* Allowing for greater integration of the EaSI activities and other activities carried out with FSE

# Secondary data: literature review of EESC work

**In** [SOC/542](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/european-pillar-social-rights-soc542) **on European Pillar of Social Rights (2017)**, the Committee stated that the Pillar must offer a positive project for all and should apply to all EU Member States, while acknowledging that the Eurozone may need particular instruments/mechanisms. The Committee believed that the future of work – with all the opportunities and challenges this presents – should be a key priority in the debates regarding the Pillar.

The EESC noted that the Pillar must also address the specific challenges occurring in the labour market and social protection systems with a view to achieving a fair balance between the economic and social dimension, as well as contributing to the fight against poverty, social exclusion and inequalities.

The EESC acknowledged that the European economic and social model is based on the shared understanding of the importance of increasing employment, social progress and productivity, as the underlying key factors for sustainable economic growth, which benefits everyone in a fair manner. The process of preparing the Pillar is an opportunity to reaffirm our shared commitment to the European social model, while ensuring that national welfare systems and labour markets are adaptable and fit for the future.

The EESC emphasized the need for growth and competitiveness in the whole of the EU. In this context, the Committee stressed the necessary interlinkage between economic, employment and social policy.

The Committee suggested that, as a starting point, the Pillar should promote the existing EU social acquis and its full and proper enforcement. Where new binding legislative initiatives and instruments are considered, this must be done in line with existing legal bases and procedures. The legal status of the Pillar is yet to be determined, as is also its relationship to the Core International Human Rights Instruments. However, the EESC stressed that social rights must apply to everyone living in the EU and in all EU Member States, while acknowledging that particular instruments/mechanisms may be needed for the Eurozone.

The EESC stressed that it is imperative to better define the scope of the Pillar. The EESC was of the view that this initiative should include all citizens, covering all phases of the life-cycle. The EESC is concerned about the lack of reference to asylum seekers and migrants in the Commission’s Communication on the Pillar.

Finally, the Committee underlined that the role of civil society must be better recognised and reinforced. Civil dialogue needs to be strengthened to ensure that people, including young people and those in vulnerable situations or facing discrimination, feel that they are able to participate in the design, implementation and review of policy-making processes. The social partners have a specific role to play in the elaboration and implementation of policies directly or indirectly affecting employment and labour markets. Social dialogue must be promoted and supported, while respecting the autonomy of the social partners and collective bargaining and increasing the social partners' capacity to engage in social dialogue.

**In** [SOC/564](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/impact-social-dimension-and-european-pillar-social-rights-future-european-union) **on Impact of the social dimension and the European Pillar of Social Rights on the Future of the European Union (2017)**, the EESC stated that a realistic future for the European Union can only be based on marrying a sound economic basis with a strong social dimension. In particular, modern welfare provision and fair life opportunities help to empower people and promote social harmony and economic development.

Furthermore, the Committee reiterated that delivering on the Treaty objectives of balanced economic growth and social progress leading to improved living and working conditions should be the guiding principle in determining the future orientation of the EU's social dimension. Further steps would need to be taken at the most appropriate level, including joint initiatives in key areas where EU action provides clear added value and, where possible, should be focused on outcomes. The EESC expressed the belief that a clear roadmap for the implementation of the EPSR would help to foster convergence and achieve its objectives.

The EESC also proposed that impact assessments should include an evaluation of compatibility with the EPSR. Within the Better Regulation agenda, there should be more focus on whether and how initiatives facilitate social progress for citizens and can be easily complied with and enforced. The EESC sees its role as monitoring this process, supporting it via debates at national level, and as insisting that more transparency and participation of civil society is necessary.

**In** [ECO/457](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/funding-european-pillar-social-rights-own-initiative-opinion) **on Funding the European Pillar of Social Rights (2018)**, the Committee noted that the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights (the "Social Pillar") and the need for its implementation, along with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, should constitute one of the guiding lines in the negotiations on the next EU multi-annual financial framework post-2020.

The EESC stressed that making a reality of the Social Pillar will require improvements in Member States. The Social Scoreboard, produced alongside the Pillar, points to shortfalls and substantial divergences across the EU. Overcoming these shortfalls will require commitment from all levels, including Member States, social partners and civil society actors. It will also require a robust budgetary base, investment and current spending. Consideration needs to be given to how this will be financed.

The Committee noted that private sector investment can make a contribution in some areas – such as expanding digital access – when appropriate regulatory conditions are created. Private sector investment will however not be enough and cannot ensure against exclusion of the socially weakest, seen as an important issue within the Social Pillar.

Further, it emphasized that proper implementation of the Social Pillar would depend on appropriate policy reforms within Member States, for example, to create appropriate mechanisms for quality job creation, for enhancing skills and for ensuring efficient use of public resources. The Committee, in accordance with its previous opinions, advocated structural reforms geared towards social and economic development: more and better jobs, sustainable growth, administrative and institutional quality, and environmental sustainability. Such reforms should be country-specific, consistent with National Reform Programmes (NRPs) to improve well-being and backed by democratic support, not a one-size-fits-all approach for all Member States.

Implementation of the Social Pillar will require a strengthening of the financial resources available. Hence, the EESC stressed that sufficient resources must be made available for the implementation of social policies. The Committee also stressed the need to target more resources towards supporting cohesion policy, support for working people and citizens in general. At the same time, the EESC agreed that increased funding should not be limited only to security, defense and external border control. The European Social Fund is an important driver for more convergence and the EESC reiterated its demand that it should not be reduced if the future challenges are to be met in view of the next EU multi-annual financial framework.

Finally, the Committee stressed that the implementation of the Social Pillar requires the active ownership, responsibility and participation of relevant stakeholders at all the different levels: the European institutions, the Member States and regional and local authorities, as well as the social partners and other civil society stakeholders.

**In** [SOC/614](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/european-pillar-social-rights-evaluation-initial-implementation-and-recommendations-future-own-initiative-opinion) **on The European Pillar of Social Rights – evaluation of the initial implementation and recommendations for the future (2019)**, the EESC noted that it had consistently advocated upward convergence and a more effective social policy at both EU and Member State levels. The European Social Model (ESM) should also be strengthened and updated as an international reference. The effective implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) of 2017, reaffirms the shared commitment to the ESM in the framework of a new socially inclusive strategy.

The Committee stressed that when taking action to implement the EPSR, through both policy programmes and legislative initiatives at EU and national level, the targets and principles of the Treaties, the distribution of competences between EU Institutions and Member States (MS) and, where appropriate, the non-regression clause, have to be respected in a balanced way.

Furthermore, it was of the opinion that European legislation in appropriate areas should set a framework with general common standards, respecting the specific national situations and social systems and recognising effective and enforceable social rights for citizens at EU and national level. The targets of the Pillar should be respected in all areas of EU policy by using the horizontal clause.

The EESC emphasized that it is important to establish and adopt basic standards for reliable and effective social protection systems and fundamental services of general interest, which should be assessed on a regular basis by independent evaluators.

It suggested that the Commission and the European Parliament should propose mechanisms for the proper involvement of all the representative social stakeholders, including the social partners and civil society organisations, at all relevant levels in the implementation of the EPSR. Particular attention should be paid to the different roles and the strengthening of collective bargaining at national level, which can anticipate or be an alternative to legislation in specific areas of the labour market.

The Committee reiterated that it has already called for a clear and coordinated roadmap setting priorities for the implementation of the Pillar and the enforcement of existing social rights and standards. Fundamental needs and rights especially of vulnerable groups, disparities of opportunities, income and wealth within and between MS, inclusion policies and appropriate conditions for public and not-for-profit-services and social enterprises should be addressed as a priority.

**In** [INT/925](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/role-social-economy-creation-jobs-and-implementation-european-pillar-social-rights) **on The role of social economy in the creation of jobs and in the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (2021)**, the EESC considered it necessary to consolidate the operational criteria adopted by the EU institutions to promote proper recognition of social economy organisations and enterprises, in their various legal forms. These criteria require that social objectives of general interest take precedence, that democratic governance involving a range of stakeholders be adopted, and that even when "limited profitability" is achieved, this is used to help pursue their statutory objectives.

The Committee expressed the belief that, when the role of the social economy in creating and maintaining employment involves disadvantaged workers and disadvantaged areas, appropriate support policies are needed that give proper recognition to the general-interest role of these organisations, which, although taking the form of private legal entities, perform an essentially public function. These support policies are needed at four levels:

* tax policies and taxation systems that recognise the general-interest role;
* policies to promote public and private investment that fosters the development of social-impact finance – including by harnessing public procurement and concessions;
* policies to support the stable employment and economic leadership of workers in social economy enterprises; and
* policies to support the skills level of staff and technological innovation in social economy organisations.

With regard to creating and maintaining jobs, the EESC expressed the view that the formula known as worker buy-outs is a good practice not only for re-launching companies in crisis but also for transferring SMEs whose founders have no successors. To this end, it might be worth setting up a specific European investment fund.

The EESC pointed out that social economy organisations, and in particular voluntary associations, are fundamental to cohesion, nurturing social capital and supporting the responsible role played by civil society.

Finally, the Committee stressed that decent working conditions and democratic governance are key elements for social economy enterprises and that, where these elements are not provided for by statute, as they are in social and workers' cooperatives, provision should be made for specific forms of consultation and worker participation. The EESC also advocated and expressed the hope that the Action Plan for the Social Economy would provide the opportunity to deploy operational tools and practical legislative proposals.

**In** [SOC/679](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/action-plan-implementation-european-pillar-social-rights) **on Action plan on the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (2021)**, the EESC welcomed the Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights ("the Plan") and its implementation at EU and national level, with due regard for respective competences, and considered it very timely, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic had disrupted every aspect of human life, worsening pre-existing social issues, and put tremendous pressure on state institutions, communities, organisations and businesses alike.

The EESC supported the vision and goals set out in the Plan and welcomed the concept underpinning the Plan that adopting relevant and consensual social targets will help focus policy efforts on reaching results and constitute an important incentive for reform and investment in the Member States. The EESC also underlined that the Action Plan should be based on concreteness and tangibility, with actions that are measurable and accompanied by monitoring frameworks jointly agreed among relevant stakeholders and encompassing the social, environmental, and economic criteria.

The EESC expressed the belief that guaranteeing minimum social standards for every person living in the EU is of the utmost importance for building a fair and inclusive society. In implementing the social pillar, a balanced mix of legislation and soft law should be sought. The legislation should be fully compliant with the Charter of Fundamental Rights as well as with the better regulation principles, and be subject to thorough consultation with the social partners and civil society organisations at EU and national level.

The Committee reiterated that competitiveness and higher productivity based on skills and knowledge are a sound recipe for maintaining the well-being of European societies. We need to reinforce the strengths of our European social market economy system, while removing its weaknesses, and thus adapt it to face the challenges ahead.

The Committee considered that specific objectives and targets should be set for all of the 20 principles of the Pillar. The EESC also invited the Member States to be ambitious in voluntarily setting their own targets so that all Member States together with the social partners and civil society organisations, contribute to the achievement of the European targets. The quality and results of the dialogue related to the Pillar and the Plan should be monitored, supported and communicated by the European Commission. The objectives and targets should be included in the reporting mechanism provided by the European Semester and the national reform plans.

The EESC suggested that as European coordination mechanism for the application of the Plan the framework of the European semester should be used. This coordination mechanism could take the form of an EU inter-institutional forum on the social pillar, which would convene on a regular basis to assess progress and give new impetus to the Plan.

The EESC agreed with the concern expressed in the Plan for the groups most affected by the pandemic, including women, young people, low-skilled and low-paid workers, temporary, self-employed and migrant workers. The allocation of EU funds for the priorities should be monitored, both in terms of the resources available from the Commission and in terms of resources allocated by Member States and the social partners.

The EESC endorsed the Commission's encouragement to the European Parliament and the Council to conclude negotiations on the revision of the social security coordination rules in order to improve the mobility of workers and provide adequate social protection within the EU, without creating excessive burdens for employees and companies.

**In** [SOC/699](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/guidelines-employment-policies-member-states-2) **on Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (2021)**, the Committee welcomed the proposal for a Council Decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States, stating that the guidelines are a useful benchmark for steering the employment policies towards supporting the gradual hoped-for exit from the crisis situation caused by the pandemic and for directing the various forms of economic support towards a favorable outcome in terms of employment. Moreover, these guidelines provide a valuable reference for resilience and recovery measures to lay the foundation for the creation of quality jobs in an environmentally and socially sustainable economy. Coordinating effective employment policies is a key way to improve the level of cohesion between Member States and reduce social and economic disparities.

Further, the EESC stated that the employment guidelines must take into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market, the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and the outcome of the Porto Social Summit, which set ambitious social targets for employment, combating poverty and access to skills.

The Committee emphasized that European policies need to be coordinated with the objectives of the employment guidelines, strengthening the labour market, supporting firms' productivity and competitiveness, as well as the social market economy of the European Union and strengthening structural measures for the transition from temporary job protection measures to quality job creation. In these processes, full use must be made of social dialogue, collective bargaining and the participation of the social partners and civil society representatives in decision-making.

As regards Guideline 7, "Enhancing the functioning of labour markets and the effectiveness of social dialogue", the EESC advocated establishing a European digital platform for matching of labour supply and demand. It would set a shared standard among Member States and employment services, so as to promote active policies and European mobility, including by strengthening public and private employment services.

In tandem with strengthening employment policies aimed at employed work, the EESC considered it important to boost the capacity of Member States to promote self-employment and professional work, especially among young people. The EESC also reiterated the importance of designing effective inclusion policies, to be considered as a crucial investment in that same growth and upgrading of economic and production systems.

Finally, Guideline 8 aims at "promoting equal opportunities for all, fostering social inclusion and fighting poverty". The EESC agreed with this approach, as it is essential to frame an employment policy strategy that ensures equal opportunities in the labour market and in employment relationships. The relationship between welfare, the labour market, the functioning of the economy and the fight against inequality and poverty constitutes a fundamental orientation and guideline for employment policies capable of establishing a connection between economic growth and social development.

The EESC also reiterated the importance of designing effective inclusion policies, to be considered as a crucial investment in that same growth and upgrading of economic and production systems. It is also crucial to introduce measures to avert the risk of "new poverty" among low-income workers, in conjunction with other coherent anti-poverty strategies.

# List of organizations consulted

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Organisation Name** | **Member State** | **Consultation via online questionnaire** | **Consultation via meetings** |
| Austrian Chamber of Commerce | Austria |   | x |
| Erste Group Bank AG | Austria | x | x |
| WIFI Burgenland | Austria |   | x |
| Austrian manufacturing union PRO-GE | Austria |   | x |
| Vienna Chamber of Labour | Austria |   | x |
| European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research | Austria | x | x |
| Impact Hub Vienna | Austria |   | x |
| Centre for Social Innovation GmbH | Austria |   | x |
| Austrian Red Cross | Austria |   | x |
| Austrian Federation of Trade Unions Production Union | Austria | x |   |
| Zentrum für Soziale Innovation GbH (ZSI) | Austria | x |   |
| Association France ACTIVE | France |   | x |
| Mouvement des Enterprises de France Moselle (MEDEF) | France | x | x |
| Project Management and Training Centre (PVMC) | France |   | x |
| Pôle Emploi Grand Est  | France |   | x |
| CGT Federation of Construction | France |   | x |
| Intermediary Association DeFI | France |   | x |
| Metropolitan area of Lyon | France |   | x |
| Centre Inffo | France |   | x |
| Association lyonnaise d'écoute et d'accompagnement (ALYNEA) | France |   | x |
| National Institute of Labour, Employment and Vocational Training (INTEFP) | France |   | x |
| GIP Continuous training and vocational integration | France | x | x |
| Pôle emploi | France |   | x |
| Local Committee for Independent Youth Housing (CLLAJ) | France | x | x |
| Centre for Studies and Research on Qualifications (CEReq) | France |   | x |
| Initiative France | France | x |   |
| IDEIS | France | x |   |
| Confederation of Hungarian Employers and Industrialists | Hungary |   | x |
| Association of Construction Workers' Unions | Hungary |   | x |
| National Association of Large Families | Hungary | x | x |
| Young Farmers Association | Hungary |   | x |
| Ministry of Innovation and Technology | Hungary |   | x |
| Hungarian Trade Union Confederation "MASZSZ" | Hungary | x | x |
| LIGA Trade Unions | Hungary |   | x |
| Single Parents' Centre Foundation  | Hungary |   | x |
| CEEweb | Hungary | x |   |
| ÉFÉDOSZSZ | Hungary | x |   |
| Confindustria | Italy |   | x |
| CNA Nazionale | Italy | x | x |
| Confartigianato  | Italy | x | x |
| Confagricoltura | Italy | x | x |
| CGIL | Italy | x | x |
| CISL | Italy | x | x |
| UIL | Italy | x[[5]](#footnote-6) | x |
| ANPAL (National Agency for Active and Labour Policies) | Italy |   | x |
| Federsolidarita | Italy |   | x |
| Legacoop Sociali  | Italy |   | x |
| Consulenti del Lavoro  | Italy |   | x |
| CNCU | Italy |   | x |
| ACU | Italy |   | x |
| Centre for Independent Living | Italy |   | x |
| CIU-Unionquadri | Italy | x | x |
| Confcooperative | Italy | x | x |
| Movimento Consumatori APS | Italy | x |   |
| Consiglio Nazional dell’Ordine dei Consulenti del Lavoro | Italy | x |   |
| Lithuanian Central Credit Union LKU  | Lithuania | x | x |
| Lithuanian Trade Union "Solidarumas" | Lithuania | x | x |
| Project Management and Training Centre (PVMC) | Lithuania | x | x |
| UAB Katalista | Lithuania |   | x |
| Lithuanian Youth Council  | Lithuania |   | x |
| Ministry of Social Security and Labour - Department on EU Investments | Lithuania |   | x |
| European Social Fund Agency | Lithuania |   | x |
| Katalista Ventures | Lithuania | x |   |
| Council of Lithuanian Youth Organisations | Lithuania | x |   |
| Association Langas Į AteitĮ | Lithuania | x |   |
| Vilnius University | Lithuania | x |   |

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1. Please note that four distinct UIL representatives filled in the online questionnaire on EU survey. UIL is the only organization that gave multiple responses to the questionnaire. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. All the information provided in the following paragraphs is derived from the data provided by the European Commission about the different grants given out to the five selected countries in the EaSI calls for proposals run in the period 2014-2020; some of this data can be accessed via [Awarded grants - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (europa.eu)](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=632&langId=en) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/file_import/better-regulation-toolbox-47_en_0.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/better-regulation-toolbox-47_en_0.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Please note that four distinct UIL representatives filled in the online questionnaire on EU survey. UIL is the only organization that gave multiple responses to the questionnaire. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)