



**THE ROLE OF TRADE UNION
ORGANISATIONS IN PLANNING AND
MONITORING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COHESION POLICIES IN THE NEW FINANCIAL
FRAMEWORK FOR 2014-2020**



European Economic and Social Committee

- ▶ **Study on the role of trade union organisations and the social partners in planning and monitoring economic and social cohesion policies in the new financial framework for 2014-2020**

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Methodology:

To collect the necessary information for this study we proceeded as follows:

- collection and analysis of documents listed, in particular, in reports by the European Commission, Council and Parliament, the EESC, the ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation), European workers' and employers' organisations and workers' and employers' organisations from each Member State forming part of the sample: Germany, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Hungary, Ireland;
- collection and analysis of information provided by trade-union and employers'-organisation representatives in the representative sample from the sample countries by means of a questionnaire supplemented by interviews with the representatives;
- collection and analysis of information provided by representatives of EU institutions: European Commission DG Regio and DG Employment and Social Affairs.

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1. Introduction:

1.1 Issues surrounding the decisions taken on the EU budget for the 2014-2020 period in a context of economic and social crisis.

In early July 2013 the European Union institutions (Commission, Council and Parliament) adopted the Multiannual Financial Framework, i.e. the EU budget for the 2014-2020 period, after months of difficult discussions and negotiations in a context of unprecedented financial, economic and social crisis in the EU Member States.

The upshot is that the EU budget for 2014-2020 will have to be cut by about 7% of the budget for the previous period, 2007-2013 (EUR 908 billion of expenses covered as against EUR 977 billion), although the agreement provides for some flexibility as regards use of the funds.

However, according to the Commission's Strategic report (published on 18 April 2013) on implementation of economic and social cohesion programmes for 2007-2013, investments financed by the ESF, the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund have helped to find a way out of the crisis and generate growth, allowing, in particular, a significant increase in the number of people benefiting from employment support (from 10 million per year before 2010 to almost 15 million per year since), and significant speeding-up of results since 2010 in the area of support for SMEs: around 400 000 jobs were created (half of which in 2010-2011), including 15 600 jobs in research and 167 00 jobs in SMEs.

Through these three funds - the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund - EU economic and social cohesion policy has invested EUR 347 billion (EUR 75 billion from the ESF) in the 27 Member States for the period 2007-2013. This sum represents 35% of the EU's total budget for this period (EUR 975 billion).

In addition, after the sovereign debt crisis worsened, fiscal consolidation hit Member States' fixed investment very severely: it declined by 12% in real terms over two years (2009-2011) across the EU and by at least this amount in Spain and Greece. Almost EUR 36 billion – or 11% of the total funds – had been reprogrammed from one area of assistance to another by the end of 2012 to support the most pressing needs and strengthen certain support measures. Of that, more than EUR 30 billion concerned the ERDF and Cohesion Fund and nearly EUR 5.5 billion the ESF.

The strategic report also stresses the importance of the far-reaching reforms currently being negotiated regarding EU cohesion policy for the 2014-2020 period, in particular more

strategic concentration of resources on key priorities and more results- and evaluation-based action.

Another noteworthy element of the EU 2014-2020 budget's objectives is the Commission's recommendation endorsed by the Council and the European Parliament to dedicate at least 20% of the EU budget to European climate and Energy Package projects (the European 20-20-20 Directives), also bringing to bear the EIB contribution (for which energy efficiency and renewable energy investments are a priority), as a way out of the crisis, with substantial impact on jobs and how the social and professional transition - where the training needs to be met are a key issue - is managed. Spain has piloted good partnership practices (2007-2013) in planning and implementing projects of this kind involving trade union organisations (*Empleaverde* programme and *Informa-Ambiental* project).

However (and this is the core of the study), the Commission's proposals, endorsed by the Council and the European Parliament, on the funds from the Common Strategic Framework for 2014-2020 clearly require Member States to involve the economic and social partners, and therefore trade union organisations, in all stages of the process of managing the funds covered by our study, i.e. the Structural Funds (ESF and ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund, which are dedicated to EU economic and social cohesion policy.

Application across the board of the partnership principle (including a European Code of Conduct on Partnership (ECCP)), which is based on Article 5 of the proposed Common Provisions Regulation, serves to pursue a number of objectives.

The aim is to optimise management of European funds and facilitate effective use thereof in a way that will meet the needs and expectations of the target communities. The process must allow the knowledge and expertise of partners engaged in their sphere of interest to be harnessed, thus optimising the implementation of the policies pursued. Lastly, it must foster dissemination of innovation and a culture of dialogue, but also greater appreciation of the measures launched.

The critical analysis of the way the partnership is implemented in the 12 countries covered by the study during 2007-2013 clearly shows the benefits of this last point.

Examples of good practice already exist in all the countries concerned, and these concern all stages of the process of Structural Funds management, i.e. planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating use of the funds. Nevertheless, the analysis also reveals major disparities between the different European Union Member States. In fact, the quality of the partnership can vary greatly from one country to another and, in many cases, involvement of the partners is purely nominal. What is worse, as is the case in Germany, for example, there

may be major differences in the way the partnership is implemented between the different regions within one country.

This seems paradoxical. In fact, if the partnership is to help achieve the objectives pursued by European strategies and must therefore be effective and bring real added value, it must of necessity be strong and solid.

Even the definition of the partnership includes the concepts of involvement, shared goals and contribution, but also the equality and shared responsibility of the partners. However, implementing an effective partnership requires a number of pre-requisites to be in place.

Firstly, the partnership must cover all stages of the management process. Most importantly, it must be implemented as far up the chain in the process as possible. Participation in the planning phase is essential in order to influence the objectives pursued and the ways used to achieve them.

Evaluation is just as important. It ensures ongoing optimisation of the measures taken and is decisive in securing their sustainability. However, if the partners are to be involved in all stages of the process, they need to be given the means and the capacity to carry out the tasks entrusted to them. The multi-level process of Structural Funds governance is, in fact, highly complex. This capacity-building requires the partners to have essential characteristics, but they also need resources such as structures for assistance, but also for coordination and representation.

Lastly, the partnership cannot exist without formalised governance. The involvement of many different partners, the needs in terms of coordination and circulation of information, but also the need to ensure transparency, require clear rules to be defined. Here, the balance can be even more difficult to achieve as the value added by the partnership sometimes comes from the flexibility accorded to those involved.

1.2 The capacity to involve trade unions upstream of planning procedures relies to a large extent on a culture of social dialogue.

The planning stage in Structural Funds management is a key stage in that it is dedicated to definition of the objectives, strategies and measures that will be implemented. It is therefore essential that trade union organisations are involved in defining the National Strategic Reference Framework and putting together operational programmes. At European level, generally speaking, workers' organisations are involved in these processes, although this involvement can take different forms according to the specific situation of each country. In all the Member States covered by this study, trade union organisations are viewed as advisory bodies and are represented in tripartite social dialogue forums where influence over

the content of the National Strategic Reference Frameworks and programmes is important. The quality of the involvement can, however, vary, as it depends in particular to a large extent on the culture of social dialogue in a given country. The point at which trade union organisations are involved can vary according to this culture, and can be more or less upstream of the decision-making process. Moreover, differences are also apparent in the frequency of meetings and access to documentation. Balanced representation of the partners also needs to be ensured. In Hungary, for example, the National Development Council, which is responsible for overseeing and evaluating the country's development policy, has 43 members, including 20 employers' representatives and 6 representatives of trade union organisations.

Involving trade union organisations upstream is very important as it makes it possible to influence strategic approaches. This has been stressed numerous times by the trade union organisation representatives interviewed for the purposes of this study (e.g. Germany, Poland, Spain, France). A context analysis must also be carried out at the planning stage. This will reveal whether the partnership is appropriate (number and kind of participants, aim of the partnership) and whether its role is properly understood by the participants. It will also allow a shared analysis of needs and precise identification of target groups, and also of (regulatory or legal) obstacles and the blockages that can arise. Lastly, it is also the opportunity to take stock of previous partnership experiments and an excellent time to identify synergies.

A number of examples of this kind of context analysis have been recorded during this study. Thus, in certain cases (Germany or Ireland, for example), definition of strategic approaches has taken place alongside organisation of conferences in order to take stock of progress made in the work and the approaches chosen and to collect participants' comments.

In Italy the consultations on the programming of the 2007-2013 Multiannual Financial Framework started in 2005. At national level they took the form of 10 themed sessions focusing on the 10 cohesion priorities established, in order to achieve the NSRF priorities. The social partners were able to express their views and also presented a common position on the procedures for engagement of partners.

In France, the climate of crisis after 2008 encouraged the state to take into account between 2010 and 2012 in the national monitoring committee trade union organisations' demands for transfers between the ESF priority assistance areas.

In Hungary, a huge public consultation was held, involving several thousand organisations. This kind of action is a good example of transparency and allows consultation of local organisations, which may be hard to contact via the normal consultation process. The example of Ireland also deserves to be mentioned. In Ireland, a very broad partnership

agreement on a large number of topics was negotiated and implemented upstream of the definition of the national development plan (a huge investment plan involving a sum of over EUR 180 billion), part of which concerned use of the Structural Funds. The preparatory work was carried out on the basis of the work of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC). Although this is an example of good practice, it should, however, be mentioned that since then the partnership agreement concluded at national level has been rejected by one of the parties.

In fact, although the economic and social partners are consulted in ways that differ according to the country, it should still be stressed that practice can also vary within the same Member State depending on the period. Regrettably, therefore, the practice of social dialogue and, therefore, the involvement of partners in planning, remain in part at the mercy of political change.

1.3 The added value brought by the partnerships is undoubtedly most visible when it comes to defining calls for projects and the procedures for selecting projects.

Although the planning stage has been singled out as being of paramount importance, the impact of the partnership can potentially be greatest during the stage of defining calls for projects and taking decisions on financing.

As regards defining the procedures to be implemented, generally speaking trade union organisations are not involved much in defining rules. This is because of the technical nature of this phase, the role entrusted to the administration here and the difficulty of involving the partners in this procedure. Nevertheless, as stressed above, trade union organisations have a role to play, particularly in terms of identifying potential barriers or blockages. In this country, between 2004 and 2006 it was observed that the legislative framework did not provide a definition of the partnership for implementing projects, which could seriously hold up the establishment of partnerships. A type-contract was therefore drawn up and put on line in order to rectify the situation.

As regards drafting calls for proposals and selection of projects, here, too, the involvement of trade union organisations depends to a large extent on the level of social dialogue in the country. The level of involvement can range from consultation from the preliminary stage onwards to mere provision of information. As a general rule, trade union organisations still point out, however, that they are more involved in the management of funds from the European Social Fund than funds from the ERDF.

Yet there is no doubt that it is here that the value added by the partnership is greatest, and that the partnership should be greatly strengthened by familiarity with target groups,

situations on the ground and everyday needs. In Europe, there are examples of good practices that clearly demonstrate the benefits of management by the partners themselves.

Thus, in Germany, involving trade union organisations in this stage clearly resulted in the projects financed and their impact being relevant and sustainable. For example, the introduction of the "good arbeit" criterion contributed to this. According to this criterion, businesses wishing to obtain funding have to meet certain conditions in terms of salaries, health and safety at work and ongoing training. The Witer-Bilden initiative is another example of good practice. In this programme, which finances training-related measures and is managed directly by the social partners, sustainability is ensured by making provision of funds conditional on the existence of a collective training agreement in the sector.

In France, despite the fact that it is traditionally centralist, trade union organisation involvement in ESF regional monitoring committees has led to projects implemented by trade union organisations and supported by the ESF, such as projects for training a sample of trade unionists in two regions (on issues related to gender equality in employment, career security and sustainable development).

In Spain, the Education and Training Network project supported by the ESF for preventing school dropouts in Castilla La Mancha actively involved trade unions, local authorities and local associations in jointly defining the priorities for each of the stages of the project.

On the other hand, the situation in Poland reveals the weaknesses caused by failing to involve trade union organisations. One example is a recent call for a project which asked applicants to submit a project on assessment of the training needs of a panel of businesses while providing an advance assessment of the costs related to these - yet to be identified - training courses. Again in Poland, a trade union organisation was recently refused funding for a training programme on the operation of European Works Councils on the grounds that, according to the administration, the project would not contribute to greater involvement of Polish trade union organisations in European social dialogue forums.

1.4 Much remains to be done in terms of formalising the partnership procedures, particularly as regards the monitoring and assessment stage.

As regards monitoring and assessment, in all the sample countries trade union organisations are represented on monitoring committees. However, there, too, practices can differ according to the culture of dialogue existing in the different Member States. As regards the ESF, workers' organisations are full members and have voting rights. In some cases they have the same prerogatives as regards the ERDF and the EAFRD. However, that is more rare, and there can be differences within the same country. Above all, work still needs to be done on formalising the partnership. Even in the case of Germany, the difficulty of obtaining all the

necessary documents in advance and a certain lack of transparency in the use of the funds were highlighted.

Moreover, trade union organisations, like the other partnerships, are hardly involved in assessment of Structural Funds management, their involvement being limited to merely passing on information. Greater involvement of these organisations would undoubtedly raise the quality of these assessments, which are often characterised by a predominance of quantitative requirements and implementation of measures which only have short-term effects. Moreover, it would also generate considerable feedback on experiences, which could be brought to bear to significantly influence the following programming period. Lastly, the potential role of the social partners should not be underestimated either in mid-term reviews of management of the funds. In Italy, dialogue between partners and then with state representatives led to a process being implemented which enabled over EUR 3 billion from the Structural Funds to be redirected towards measures for combating the effects of the economic crisis in the southern regions.

1.5 Development of technical assistance is one of the main demands of trade union organisations in the context of Structural Funds management.

Extending and enhancing the technical capacities of trade union organisations are a concern that was highlighted in the vast majority of the countries covered by this study. The technical capacity of partners is essential in that it governs the quality of their contribution to the partnership. Technical assistance for trade union organisations, as for the other partners, is, however, to be considered from several angles. On the one hand, it concerns the need to acquire technical skills in Structural Funds management, but also in fund-related issues addressed in the context of operational programmes. It also concerns the issue of operating support. The organisations asked, particularly those from countries such as Poland or Finland, often highlight the lack of resources made available to them. Lastly, the development of partnerships in the 2014-2020 programming period should also be addressed. Extending partnerships will require closer coordination and, therefore, additional resources.

Structural Funds management is a complex mechanism. It may look difficult to grasp, particularly for people who also have activities "on the ground" connected to their membership of a trade union organisation. Although, in the majority of cases, training is organised for participants in monitoring committee meetings, certain trade union organisations, particularly in Poland, stress that this training is inadequate for the real needs of their representatives.

On the other hand, trade union organisation members involved in Structural Funds management do not always have in-depth knowledge of the economic and social issues

addressed. This situation is, above all, most worrying in regional structures, whose resources are not as great those of as national trade union structures. The need for trade union organisations to have their own budget is often raised, whether in order to hold training courses or to fund expert reports. In this regard, the experiment carried out in Italy, the Speslab project, is a very good example of good practice in this field, and should be applied across the board. Conducted under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with specialised institutes, the Speslab project holds conferences on management of European funds and issues which arise during the definition of policies implemented in the framework of the European Social Fund (youth unemployment, activation policies, training policies, etc.). Above all, the project has a regional dimension (round tables and workshops organised) and provides access to an on-line document base.

Another aspect of technical assistance that was stressed concerns organisational resources. Monitoring cohesion policy requires, in effect, time and resources. It entails travel and requires attendance at meetings, but also preparations to be made for these meetings. This can prove problematic, particularly for organisations which do not yet have the resources to finance full-time staff to work on these issues.

This issue was raised in particular by the Finnish organisation SAK, which described this state of affairs as one of the barriers to effective participation of trade union organisations in the planning, monitoring and assessment of Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund management. It is also a point of contention with the management authorities in Poland in negotiations on the future Multiannual Financial Framework.

The effect of the lack of resources is to reduce the time dedicated to European issues, to the detriment of the quality of partnerships and the value that can be added.

In Germany there are substantial differences between the different *Länder*. In certain *Länder* the social partners receive no assistance or only have a contact point. In others, however, the partners have assistance centres, in particular to make preparations for meetings, organise training courses or provide assistance for submission of projects, which are financed with funds dedicated to technical assistance. In Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, four jobs were financed in this way. Here, it should also be pointed out that in certain cases these centres are available to all the partners (workers, employers, but also sometimes NGOs), whereas in others each partner has its own assistance facility.

1.6 The provision of technical assistance across the board is even more necessary as the partnership principle has to be extended.

The issue of more resources is even more essential, as extending the partnership is supposed to bring greater trade union organisation involvement and will therefore require greater

input from them. It is not just a matter of workload or their technical input, but includes their knowledge of needs and expertise in the area. It also raises the issue of coordination and circulation of information. In this regard, the issue must be considered from two different points of view: that of the horizontal relationship with the other partners and that of vertical coordination.

With regard to the horizontal aspect, developing the partnership will lead to closer cooperation with the other categories of partners and therefore involve coming up against different points of view and working methods. The ability to work with representative organisations from other areas of interest thus requires development of expertise and experience in the matter. There has been little discussion of this in the various interviews held.

However, implementing appropriate structures, such as centres for coordinating the partnerships, should be looked into. For example, this kind of centre exists in Ireland, where POBAL provides assistance to partners to help them create and develop a partnership in the framework of projects financed by the Structural Funds. This assistance can take the form of training, but also of technical assistance in management or governance of the projects.

It must be pointed out that it is not just the social partners or non-governmental organisations that need to build capacity to work in partnerships. As has been stressed in the interviews and as mentioned, for example, in the Italian National Strategic Reference Framework, the partnership culture must also be disseminated within public authorities. Public authorities will, in fact, play a key role in coordinating the partnership and have a substantial impact on how effective it is. This requires a dialogue capacity to be developed, understanding of the partnership and also resources to be made available.

Turning to the vertical aspect, this must not be overlooked. One of the objectives of the partnership is to bring convergence between Structural Funds management by the target communities and between actual needs in terms of resources. The question of the vertical flow of information is therefore crucial and requires sufficient resources to be brought to bear.

Moreover, the draft code of conduct proposed by the European Commission mentions the need to select partners according to their capacities and abilities to be part of the partnership.

2. Case studies on the samples forming the basis for the study: Germany, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland

3. Germany

3.1 Programming in Germany for the 2007-2013 period

3.1.1 Procedure

In Germany the National Strategic Reference Framework for the 2007-2013 period was defined under the auspices of the Ministry of the Economy and Technology, which has the role of national management authority. As Germany is a federal republic, this required a complex procedure to be put in place. Indeed, in order to develop a unified, country-wide strategy that took into account the specific needs and characteristics of each region, a white paper was used, first and foremost, drawn up in close cooperation with regional authority (Länder) representatives, to define the NSRF and its goals. Numerous economic and social partners were also invited to take part in the discussions. These finally came to an end in January 2007, and the German NSRF was finally endorsed by the Commission in May of the same year.

The four main goals set out by the NSRF were converted into 36 operational programmes:

- 17 regional operational programmes relating to the European Regional Development Fund (one per Land + Lüneburg);
- 17 regional operational programmes relating to the European Social Fund (one per Land + Lüneburg);
- 1 national operational programme relating to transport, limited to Convergence Objective regions;
- 1 multi-objective national operational programme for the ESF, implemented throughout the country.

These different OPs were developed alongside discussions relating to the NSRF, in order to ensure some coherence. In fact, in Germany, each *Land* is responsible for developing its own OPs. The regional administrations are also responsible for implementing them. In this regard, it is important to specify that, as regards the administration of OPs at regional level, the supervisory authority may differ according to whether the funds come from the EAFRD, the ERDF or the ESF.

3.1.2 Involvement of the social partners

In accordance with the EU legislative framework, all the partners (i.e. the regional, local and municipal authorities, economic and social partners and organisations representing civil society) were involved in planning and drawing up the German NSRF. The consultations were carried out in two stages. Initially, a regional consultation process was established. The process was carried out through the work of monitoring committees, but also by holding

specific conferences and workshops. In certain regions regular working groups were also set up on issues such as adaptation of infrastructure or development of the private sector. Following the regional consultations and the evaluation procedure for the previous period, federal discussions started in 2006.

As regards monitoring procedures for the 2007-2013 period, the partners were involved at federal and regional levels and had voting rights. At federal level, trade union organisations had two representatives on the ESF monitoring committee and the committee on the National Strategic Reference Framework. At regional level their involvement could differ according to the prerogatives of the monitoring committees. Indeed, some Länder had joint monitoring committees for all the funds - ERDF, ESF and EAFRD. This was the case, for example, in Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. Other regions, such as Saxony-Anhalt or Thuringia, had joint committees for the ERDF and the ESF and separate committees for the EAFRD. Lastly, certain Länder had separate committees for each of the funds (Hesse, Hamburg, Saarland, among others).

Furthermore, in some regions the social partners had access to technical assistance (assistance, in particular, in the preparatory work for meetings, coordination, circulation of information). In Brandenburg and Saxony-Anhalt there was thus a joint support structure for all the social partners, under the umbrella of the trade union DGB. In Lower Saxony, as in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (financing of four and a half posts for the partners), assistance was provided individually to each of the partnership organisations.

According to the German trade union DGB, the quality of the partnership differs, however, according to the regions. Involvement of the partners in the definition and implementation of the various policies is sometimes inadequate and can range from prior consultation to mere provision of information to partners. The degree of involvement can differ between regions according to the goodwill of the administration or people in charge. Moreover, a large number of consultations (for example with regard to planning or assessment) have been carried out after the event. Often, the information necessary to effectively involve the social partners is provided too late. These elements have the effect of limiting the real influence of the partners on the decision-making process. In addition, the trade union organisation also points to other weaknesses such as the lack of coherence and transparency that can sometimes characterise use of funds, the priority given to measures with short-term effects (particularly with regard to the ERDF) and the shortcomings of the qualitative assessment criteria, which do not always allow the quality of the jobs created to be measured.

3.1.3 Examples of good practice in partnership

Despite these limitations, good practices in the area of partnership abound in the Federal Republic of Germany. Those described in the EESC study on "Developing the Partnership Principle in EU Cohesion Policy" include good practice regarding the functioning of the Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania Monitoring Committee. This is a forum responsible for shaping the general regional development policy. Its membership is divided equally between public and private partners (social partners, farmers, the environment and social welfare sectors, farmers) and it is responsible for all funds (ERDF, ESF and EAFRD). It meets relatively frequently and has a real say in decision-making. It also has a sub-regional structure (there are four sub-regions), working groups and other consultative bodies.

Another interesting initiative is the "Weiter Bilden" project. With a budget of EUR 140 million, this project reinforces companies' adaptability and competitiveness as well as workers' employability by funding training schemes.

Intended to promote lifelong learning in German companies, the project aims to co-finance measures to improve the vocational training system, for instance by strengthening consultative structures, identifying vocational training needs, transferring good practices, tools or methods, promoting the exchange of experience, reinforcing cooperation in the area of training or identifying skills specific to certain industrial sectors. Measures targeting employees who are under-represented in training programmes are particularly encouraged.

Projects which will receive financing are selected by a steering committee made up of representatives of employer and trade union organisations. This committee recommends the projects it considers to be the most interesting, and the high authority must then validate the financing. A coordination office has also been set up. This provides technical assistance for organisations wishing to apply for financing and advice on project development and the preparation of declarations of interest, as well as helping implement training agreements. It also provides technical assistance for the steering committee.

As regards the amount of financing granted, the ceiling is set at 80% of the investment (including all subsidies). The amount depends on two variables (see table below): the size of the company and the type of measures envisaged.

Type d'entreprise	Formations spécifiques (difficilement transférables à d'autres entreprises)	Formations générales (transférables à d'autres entreprises)
Les petites entreprises (Jusqu'à 49 salariés et chiffre d'affaires annuel ou un bilan n'excédant pas 10 millions d'euros)	45%	80%
Les moyennes entreprises (50 - 249 employés et chiffre d'affaires annuel n'excède pas 50 millions € ou un bilan n'excédant pas 43 millions d'euros)	35%	70%
Les grandes entreprises (Plus de 250 employés et des revenus annuels dépassant 50 millions d'euros ou un bilan annuel supérieur à 43 million d'euros)	25%	60%

Before any financing can be granted, there must be a sectoral-level collective agreement on training, signed by the social partners. This must have specific objectives, identify priority areas and target needs in terms of employee skills. The projects financed must help achieve these specific objectives. If no such agreement exists, the project allows for the possibility of concluding one beforehand. There is provision for technical assistance, including a guide.

As part of the "Weiter Bilden" initiative, which runs from 2009 to 2013, nearly 200 projects have already been financed in over 15 different sectors. The bulk of these projects concerned the metallurgy and electric sectors (over 50 projects), as well as healthcare (18 projects), public administration (over 20), services or trade. As regards the type of projects rolled out, the majority focus on the implementation of training schemes (43%), setting up staff development facilities (23%) and motivating target groups (13%). Over this period, 68 new training agreements were signed.

One of the aims of the project is to ensure that the various training policies have a lasting effect, and so there is a mechanism for following up on the projects financed. This means that there is an assessment procedure applied to all the projects carried out. Furthermore, in order to promote the distribution of good practices, the "Weiter Bilden" initiative also organises discussion and transfer workshops. The discussion workshops, organised on a monthly basis in Berlin, focus on various thematic priorities and offer an opportunity to consider possible tools to be implemented as part of the training process. The transfer workshops will focus on the distribution of good practices. A series of regional events, accompanied by discussion forums, is scheduled. A package of industry-specific events, in close cooperation with social partners on the ground, should also be organised. Lastly, as in the Italian Speslab project, the project internet site offers practical information and a series of good practice guides.

3.2 The 2013-2020 programming period

Discussions on the 2013-2020 programming period began in early 2012 under the auspices of the Ministry of the Economy, which also has responsibility for preparing the partnership strategy. As during the previous period, trade union organisations are involved in the discussions at federal and regional level. Nonetheless, unlike the previous period, the social partners are also represented during coordination meetings between the federal and regional tiers.

The DGB trade union considers that this innovation (the social partners were only consulted after the fact in the previous period) has significant advantages in terms of information flow. While it is difficult to influence the decisions (the social partners make up less than 10% of seats), their presence at coordination meetings means that they can obtain and distribute in real time information on progress, at both national and regional level.

As regards improvements to the partnership, trade union organisations stress the need to be genuinely involved in the planning and evaluation stages which are the most important when it comes to influencing the decision-making process. They also highlight the need to consolidate the procedures for implementing the partnership (representation, access to documents, deadlines, ensuring that there are no ups and downs in the quality of the partnership). A common position to this effect has been drafted with civil society organisations. Lastly, the German trade union DGB emphasises the need to establish qualitative criteria for evaluating the use of the Structural Funds, particularly as regards the quality of the jobs created.

4. Spain

4.1 Methodology

With a view to preparing this study, the Workers' Commissions Trade Union (CCOO), the General Workers' Union (UGT) and the Spanish Confederation of Employers' Organisations (CEOE) were contacted, but only the CCOO replied to the questionnaire and agreed to an interview.

The following sources were consulted: DG Regio, the DG for Community Funds (Spanish Ministry of Finance and Public Administration), the European Commission's website (Employment, social affairs and inclusion), the Spanish ESF website, the 2012 strategic follow-up report to the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF, or MENR in Spain), and information and documents obtained during the interview with the trade union.

4.2 Programming in Spain for the 2007-2013 period

The programming period for European funds in Spain includes the preparation of the National Reform Programme (NRP) and the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF, or MENR in Spain), developed by the State in partnership with all stakeholders and in cooperation with the European Commission, as well as the preparation of Regional and Multiregional Operational Programmes.

The following actors were involved in preparing the NSRF for the 2007-2013 period: the general State administration (via the various ministries and their subsidiaries), regional and local administrations, and economic and social actors, which contributed to the social and economic analysis of Spain.

The Directorate-General for Community Funds is the Spanish government department responsible for studying, evaluating and coordinating the management of the implementation of European Structural Funds, particularly the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund.

It is also responsible for managing regional incentives and financial and budgetary relations with the EU.

The administrative unit of the European Social Fund (UAFSE in Spain) is the body responsible for managing this fund in Spain. It is part of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security.

4.3 Financial breakdown for the 2007-2013 period by objectives

The funds in Spain for this period amount to EUR 35.2 billion and are broken down as follows:

OBJECTIVE	FUND	EU contribution in euro	Spain's contribution in euro	Contribution of national private capital in euro	TOTAL
Convergence	CF	3 543 213 008	885 803 252	0	4 429 016 260
	ERDF	17 389 180 821	7 323 713 602	0	24 712 894 423
	ESF	5 247 806 135	1 290 251 961	42 533 172	6 580 591 268
Total convergence		26 180 199 964			
Regional Competitiveness and Employment (RCE)	ERDF	5 668 011 330	4 191 641 506	0	9 859 652 836
	ESF	2 809 522 687	1 952 910 506	82 789 912	4 845 223 105
Total RCE		8 477 534 017			
European territorial cooperation	ERDF	559 257 033		0	559 257 033
Total CF		3 543 213 008			
Total ERDF		23 616 449 184			
Total ESF		8 057 328 822			
Total		35 216 991 014	15 644 320 827	125 323 084	50 986 634 925

The co-financing rate for Spain is as follows:

- 80% for Convergence objective regions and regions being phased into the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective
- 50% for Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective regions, except regions being phased in
- 85% for regions participating in the Cohesion Fund

As regards the ESF, 65% of Spain's budget for the 2007-2013 period is earmarked for the Convergence objective and 35% for the Competitiveness objective.

45% of the ESF (EUR 3.6 billion) has been allocated to measures to promote access to employment by modernising and reinforcing existing labour market institutions and creating new ones which are more preventive and proactive. EUR 225 million of this has been allocated to improving access to employment for women.

ESF-funded projects with a sustainable development dimension and an impact on employment peaked in Spain with the projects of the Biodiversity Foundation (set up by the

Spanish Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs), which acts as a bridge between employment policy and environment policy.

The CCOO union has flagged up two projects in which it has participated through its ISTAS Foundation: a study on the possibility of a change in Spain's production model given a more sustainable economy (in partnership with the Spanish sustainability observatory) and the project on diagnosis, awareness-raising, training and assistance for workers and delegates from SMEs to promote access to information and participation in environmental issues in the workplace (Informa-Ambiental project). The latter project is supported by the Empleaverde programme, an initiative started by the Biodiversity Foundation as part of the ESF's adaptability and employment programme. The project has a budget of EUR 465 000, of which 80% was contributed by the ESF, and has been rolled out in Andalusia, Castilla-La Mancha and Galicia. The Empleaverde programme has a total budget of EUR 44.1 million for the period 2007-2013.

As regards the Cohesion Fund, programming of expenditure for the fund has been weak in Spain, accounting for only 10% of total EU investment and 5.7% of total Spanish investment.

4.4 Level of implementation of Spanish funds for the 2007-2013 period

Below is a table setting out the weight of declared expenditure for ongoing programmes (in euro) up to 31 December 2011 for the ERDF, ESF and CF.

		Planned expenditure (a)	Declared expenditure (b)	(b)/(a)
ERDF	Cp+OP+PM	27 053 852 154	9 671 606 604	35.7%
	Competitiveness	3 894 334 612	1 394 413 125	35.8%
ERDF total		30 948 186 766	11 066 019 729	35.8%
COHESION		4 429 016 260	2 289 177 253	51.7%
ESF	Convergence	5 247 806 135	2 016 896 489	38.4%
	Competitiveness	2 809 522 687	1 626 617 200	57.8%
ESF Total		8 057 328 822	3 643 513 689	45.2%
TOTAL		43 434 531 848	16 998 710 671	39.1%

The impact of the continuing economic crisis at the start of the period certainly delayed expenditure, given the budgetary adjustments in all Spanish administrations.

In the run-up to the end of the period, the programming could be considered to need some form of adjustment to boost its financial effectiveness, as the original programming was unable to take into account the harsh recession hitting the Spanish economy.

4.5 Partnership in Spain

According to the CCOO, formal partnership is widespread in Spain. The CCOO is involved in the three funds: the ESF, the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund. However, at regional level, the CCOO are only involved in negotiations on certain projects.

The CCOO is very active in the monitoring committees, but not in the evaluation phase: the CCOO is only informed of the outcome of projects.

The CCOO considers that the chief limitation on its participation is the fact that it is a full member only as regards monitoring ESF funds; for the other European funds, its role is purely consultative.

Lastly, the CCOO welcomes the European Code of Conduct for Partnership, as the trade union considers that this is a way to spur on obligations for the Member States (particularly in countries where the code does not exist). In Spain, the CCOO is involved in the monitoring committee, and thanks to the Code of Conduct, its national involvement in the first stage of setting priorities regarding the partnership agreement for the 2014-2020 period has been strengthened. However, the CCOO does not yet know what impact its contribution to the common strategic framework, delivered at the December 2012 meeting, has had.

4.6 Examples of good practice in partnership in Spain for the 2007-2013 period

The CCOO has given an example of good practice in the area of partnership: a project run by the Network for education and training (co-financed by the ESF) to prevent early school leaving. This is a study on early school leaving in the region of Castilla La Mancha. It has the following aims: to identify all programmes and activities which aim to prevent and combat early school leaving in this region, and to identify mechanisms for communication and coordination between the various actors responsible for these programmes.

The partnership was set in motion by the UAFSE monitoring committee. The CCOO was involved in setting the priorities for each of the stages of this project, a decision-making process which functioned on the basis of consensus. In addition to the social partners, this involved representatives of the European Commission, the Spanish Ministry of Education, the Spanish Public employment service, the autonomous communities, associations of parents and students, representatives of the municipalities (FEMP) and the Spanish youth council.

In consequence, our understanding of early school leaving improved, resulting in better implementation of decisions on the shaping and implementation of policies (including those on vocational training).

4.7 The 2014 – 2020 programming period

The programming work for the 2014-2020 cohesion policy, coordinated by the Directorate-General for Community Funds, includes the preparation of Spain's association agreement and the operational programmes.

The EU 2020 strategy sets out cohesion policy's objectives for the period.

Spain will not receive any funds from the Cohesion Fund for the 2014-2020 period, and so, using only ERDF and ESF funds, Spain will focus on the following objectives:

- Investment for growth and jobs, with the support of the ERDF and ESF
- European territorial cooperation, with support from the ERDF only.

The ERDF will focus its investment in areas linked to the business environment and the provision of services to the public in certain areas.

The ESF will be structured around four thematic objectives: employment and labour mobility, education, skills and lifelong learning, promoting social integration and combatting poverty, and building administrative capacity. However, the measures supported by the ESF will also contribute to the thematic objectives.

Owing to the economic crisis in the eurozone and limited growth and job creation in several Member States, European Structural Funds provide various budget top-ups. Spain has EUR 1.8 billion, 500 million of which goes to Extremadura, the only Spanish region still included in the group of least developed regions. Andalusia, Canarias, Castilla-la Mancha, Galicia and the Murcia regions would then be classed as transition regions, and the others as more developed regions, resulting in a drop in the Structural Funds allocated to Spain over the 2007-2013 programming period.

4.8 Unified position of Spanish trade unions throughout the 2014-2020 financing period (CCOO and UGT)

ETUC and the Spanish trade unions defend the need to maintain an appropriate budget for cohesion policy and the Structural Funds for the forthcoming (2014-2020) European budget. Furthermore, the Spanish trade unions consider that access to European funds should not be subject to fulfilling macro-economic conditions (reducing the deficit and the debt).

The CCOO and UGT take a positive view of the amendment to Article 5 of the general regulation on partnership, which states that the Member States and public authorities must take steps to ensure the participation of the economic and social partners at every level and stage of the EU Structural Funds.

As regards the ESF, the CCOO and UGT are strong advocates of maintaining a minimum budget for investment in human capital.

The CCOO and UGT welcome the European Commission's proposal for the 2014-2020 period to maintain the active role of the social partners and step up their participation. They also believe that it is vital to maintain the Code of good conduct.

They also note that there has been major progress in developing participation, as the CCOO and UGT take part in all the monitoring committees for the 2007-2013 period.

In addition, the CCOO and UGT are pleased that the Directorate-General for Community Funds and particularly the Directorate-General for Land Use and Programme Evaluation have given them the opportunity – for the first time – to play a role in European programming in the pre-programming period, by asking them to contribute to the association agreement.

The Spanish trade unions are calling for an independent role in the Economic and Social Council. They consider that the role of businesses and trade union organisations cannot be replaced by the evaluation carried out by the Economic and Social Council.

The Spanish trade unions believe that to make cohesion policy more effective, participation must i) be comprehensive and cover every aspect of structural policy (for all funds, objectives and stages); ii) be of high quality, allowing for technical assistance to the social partners, where it is currently limited to the administration); iii) incorporate the regional level, so as to break through the one-way flow of information and achieve a consensus; and iv) introduce genuine territorial coordination at European, national, regional and sectoral level.

Moreover, CCOO and UGT have specific contributions to the thematic objectives and investment priorities.

5. Finland

5.1 2007-2013 programming period

Finland is among the countries receiving the least money from European cohesion policy. Over the 2007-2013 period, the total amount allocated to this country came to EUR 1.7 billion: EUR 1 billion from the ERDF and EUR 600 million from the ESF. The objectives governing the allocation of Structural Funds reflect those set by the Lisbon strategy.

The bulk of the funds that Finland has received were earmarked for activities related to R&D and support for innovation, SMEs and IT. There was particular focus on developing transport infrastructure, the protection of the environment and combating climate change. As regards

the ESF, emphasis was placed on lifelong learning, targeting the long-term unemployed in particular.

In Finland, the Structural Funds are managed at national and regional level. As regards the ERDF, five operational programmes have been developed, each region (the regions of South, East, West and North Finland, plus the Åland Islands) carrying out its own operational programme. The ESF comprises a national part, to which almost half of the available resources are allocated, and four regional programmes corresponding to each of the country's regions.

There are five national monitoring committees. There is a national monitoring committee for the ESF and four regional monitoring committees for the ERDF. The funds are managed via regional management committees, which tailor their financing to the various regional development priorities. These bodies have a three-part structure. In each of the 19 committees, an equal number of seats is assigned to the representatives of regional councils and municipalities, to representatives of the State and to the social partners. Each of the three Finnish trade unions - AKAVA (Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals in Finland), SAK (Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions) and STTK (Finnish Confederation of Professionals) has a seat and voting rights.

5.2 Partnership in Finland and programming the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework

While trade unions are consulted on programming and evaluating cohesion policy expenditure, their influence is limited. The social partners play a minor role in these structures. Furthermore, while the partnership principle is laid down as a guiding principle, along with sustainable development and equal treatment, there is no specific regulation on this point.

The discussions on cohesion policy for the 2014-2020 period, which began in early 2011, clearly show the trade unions' lack of influence. While the unions are well represented in the dialogue group set up at national level to shape future guidelines, they are absent from the two committees set up at regional level. These committees are made up exclusively of representatives of the authorities and administration. Consultations on the various projects carried out by these structures are organised with civil society organisations (including social partner organisations) by means of hearings during which the various interested parties can voice their views.

While Finnish trade unions are hoping that the European code of conduct on partnership will increase transparency and their own involvement, they also highlight the need to build their members' capacities. According to the SAK trade union, procedures for the management of

economic and social cohesion funds are partly bureaucratic, but they are also technically demanding. Most of the trade union members monitoring these issues do so on a voluntary basis, above and beyond their role as trade union representative in their company. The sheer complexity of the subjects under consideration leads to a certain disaffection regarding the monitoring and implementation of cohesion policies, which can only be addressed by building capacities.

6. France

6.1 Methodology

When preparing this case study, we held interviews with representatives of the main French trade unions affiliated to the ETUC, the CFDT and the CGT, which have a seat on the national ESF monitoring committee for the 2007-2013 period and are active in the INPAP (National body responsible for preparing the partnership agreement) with a view to the partnership agreement for the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework. We also collected and processed data from the institutional documents for the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 periods.

6.2 The 2007-2013 multiannual financial framework of European funds in support of economic and social cohesion policy in France

6.2.1 Funds allocated to France for the 2007-2013 period (in billions of euro) and financial breakdown across priority measures

By the end of July 2013, 92 176 projects in France had received EU funding, amounting to EUR 40.3 billion (EUR 15 billion ESF and EUR 22.5 billion ERDF), to finance economic and social cohesion policy.

France primarily used ESF support to combat unemployment and help those hardest hit to find work. Several programmes were set up to help job seekers from various social backgrounds to acquire the skills they need and to overcome the obstacles they encounter when looking for work.

Distribution criteria for the ERDF and ESF budget: the government decided how to break down the regional competitiveness and employment budget of EUR 9.1 billion between the ERDF and the ESF during the meeting of the Inter-ministerial Committee for Territory Management and Competitiveness (CIACT) on 6 March 2006. 56% went to the ERDF (EUR 5.1 billion in 2004 prices) and 44% to the ESF (EUR 4 billion). The government also decided on the breakdown of the budgets for the ERDF and, provisionally, for the ESF, by metropolitan region.

Financial concentration on a few strands of the operational programme

The distribution of Community resources in the ESF 2007-2013 operational programme for France concentrated 87% of appropriations on the first three strands (economic change; access to employment; social cohesion and combating discrimination), with more than two thirds going to strands 2 and 3.

The overall distribution is as follows (18 January 2007): adapting workers and companies to economic change - Strand 1: 20%; Access to employment for job seekers - Strand 2: 28%; social inclusion and combating discrimination - Strand 3: 39%; human capital and networking, innovation and transnationality - Strand 4: 9%; Technical assistance - Strand 5: 4%.

Distribution of ESF operational programme by priority strand for the entire 2007-2013 period

		Financement communautaire FSE A	Poids de l'axe	Contrepartie nationale B = C + D	Ventilation indicative de la contrepartie nationale		Financement total E = A + B	Taux de cofinancement F = A / E
					Financement national public C	Financement national privé D		
Axe 1	Adaptation des travailleurs et des entreprises aux mutations économiques	898 911 778 €	20%	1 094 384 098 €	496 395 335 €	597 988 763 €	1 993 295 876 €	45%
Axe 2	Accès à l'emploi des demandeurs d'emploi	1 274 606 474 €	28%	1 264 320 758 €	1 137 374 397 €	126 946 362 €	2 538 927 232 €	50%
Axe 3	Renforcer la cohésion sociale et lutter contre les discriminations pour l'inclusion sociale	1 755 845 348 €	39%	1 747 879 388 €	1 397 506 914 €	350 372 474 €	3 503 724 736 €	50%
Axe 4	Capital humain et mise en réseau, innovations et transnationalité	389 984 305 €	9%	314 985 503 €	244 488 522 €	70 496 981 €	704 969 808 €	55%
Axe 5	Assistance technique	175 216 070 €	4%	75 092 583 €	62 577 150 €	12 515 433 €	250 308 653 €	70%
Total	Programme opérationnel national FSE	4 494 563 975 €	100%	4 496 662 329 €	3 338 342 318 €	1 158 320 011 €	8 991 226 304 €	50%

The proposals drawn up by the social partners in the framework of the national ESF monitoring committee have been taken into account by the French authorities. The breakdown of the ESF budget was therefore revised in 2010 and again in 2012 to readjust the weighting of expenditure between the strands by transferring EUR 136 million to strand 1, now 86% planned (adapting workers and companies to economic change, integrating ESF support for the newly-established fund securing career paths) and strand 2, now 88% planned (access to employment for job seekers), following action by the trade unions, particularly the CFDT (see below). As the crisis became more severe, this request for a transfer was justified by the significant rise in training needs, both for workers and job seekers.

6.2.2 Provisions for implementing the ESF: a highly decentralised national programme

For the 2007-2013 regional competitiveness and employment objective, the French authorities established a national operational programme for the European Social Fund, in accordance with the Community regulations of July 2006 and the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), which sets the strategic guidelines for France in order to contribute to economic and social cohesion policy.

Following the government's decisions of 6 March 2006 (via the CIACT), employment policy is a national competence and its implementation is highly regionalised. The ESF operational programme is national, and its managing authority is the Ministry of Employment, Social Cohesion and Housing (DGEFP – Delegation-General for Employment and Vocational Training). Its implementation is over 85% decentralised at regional level, and the regional prefects of metropolitan France are appointed delegated managing authorities, with local-authority powers. The national and regional dimensions have set specific criteria for selecting projects supported by the ESF.

6.3 Monitoring mechanism for the 2007-2013 financial framework; monitoring and programming bodies at national and regional level

The optimisation of the implementation of the regional competitiveness and employment objective, co-financed by the ESF within a highly decentralised national OP in accordance with the NSRF, and by the ERDF via regional OPs, has created a monitoring system in France which includes a national ESF monitoring committee and multi-fund regional monitoring committees in which the social partners are actively involved. Decisions are taken by the representative of the managing authority (minister or regional prefect), after the committee has delivered its views and held discussions, under the rule of consensus.

6.4 Good practices in partnership, securing trade union and social partner participation in the dynamic of projects supported by the ESF

Many proposals drawn up by the social partners in the national ESF monitoring committee have been taken on board by the French authorities.

The breakdown of the ESF budget was therefore revised in 2010 and again in 2012 to readjust the weighting of expenditure between the strands by transferring EUR 136 million to strand 1, now 86% programmed (adapting workers and companies to economic change, integrating ESF support for the newly-established fund securing career paths) and strand 2, now 88% programmed (access to employment for job seekers), following action by the trade unions, particularly the CFDT. As the crisis became more severe, this request for a transfer was justified by the significant rise in training needs, both for workers and job seekers.

Article 5 of the 2006 (EC) Regulation on the ESF, particularly points 2 and 3, was applied correctly by the State and the regional and local authorities, spurred on by action by the two main trade unions CFDT and CGT, on the social partners' involvement in monitoring the ESF in the 2007-2013 period, at both national level (national consultation body for the preparation and monitoring of the national ESF operational programme) and regional level.

The scope of action by trade unions and social partners alike, as drivers and leaders of projects supported by the ESF, was expanded during the 2007-2013 period beyond the initial system set out in the OP which restricted it to support for worker mobility and redeployment, i.e.: overall active ageing strategies, developing vocational training for SME/SMI workers, certifying practical trade experience, the place of women in the labour market, combating discrimination and promoting diversity.

However, their involvement in preparing or implementing the ESF operational programme has been weak at national level, although it was genuine and active in many regions depending on the initiative of certain regional prefects. On the other hand, social partner and trade union involvement in ERDF governance in France, at both national and regional/local level, has been practically non-existent, except in a few rare cases.

At regional level, trade union action has led to the implementation of ESF-supported projects to raise awareness among and train trade unionists (in addition to subsidies from regional authorities) on issues covered by the five strands of the ESF and the guidelines of the Lisbon strategy as revised in 2005 – in particular, interesting projects carried out by the CGT in Brittany on professional equality (objective: equipping a hundred trade unionists and union members with the technical and legal knowledge needed to negotiate agreements in favour of gender equality in companies, particularly in SMEs/SMIs and crafts businesses in Brittany), and the project carried out by the CFDT in Ile-de-France on securing career paths and sustainable development.

6.5 The 2014-2020 programming period of the European Funds in support of economic and social cohesion policy in France. The strategy on the partnership agreement and partnership practices

The current 2007-2013 programming period is drawing to an end. At the same time, a possible French partnership agreement approved by the European Commission pursuant to articles 13-15 of the draft General Regulation is to define the strategic guidelines for implementing the European Funds during the 2014-2020 period, inspired by the "Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth".

A national consultation process on preparation of the 2014-2020 partnership agreement was

launched on 20 December 2012 and should be completed by the end of 2013. DATAR (*Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale*, interministerial spatial planning and regional competitiveness delegation) is responsible for coordinating this national consultation process and for drawing up the partnership agreement. INPAP (*Instance nationale de préparation de l'accord de partenariat*, national partnership agreement drafting agency) acts as the steering committee for national consultation and is the authority in charge of consultation and deciding on the strategic approach in the partnership agreement. This body comprises 70 members, including representatives of all trade union organisations as well as social NGOs and charities. Its task is to discuss contributions from the national partnership (300 representatives of bodies operating in the fields covered by European Funds) and the general public.

The National Sustainable Development Strategy for 2014-2020 is currently being drawn up in France, taking into account the future energy transition programme law (*loi-programme*) planned for the end of 2013. This strategy will make it possible to structure projects supported by the European Structural Funds in line with the European Commission's recommendation to allocate at least 20% of the EU's multiannual budget (2014-2020) to projects with a climate or energy dimension, and with significant benefits in terms of employment and meeting needs for new skills and training.

Taking into account the existing disparities, whether structural or cyclical (linked to the crisis) in nature, the strategy set out in the partnership agreement will aim both to mobilise the regions and to enable investments following a thematic approach. Five objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy have been translated into national objectives for France:

Domaine	Cible UE	Cible France	Donnée France
Emploi	75 % de la population âgée de 20 à 64 ans	75 %	69,1 % (2011)
Recherche et Développement	Investissement de 3 % du PIB	3 %	2,26 % (2010)
Environnement	Réduction des émissions de gaz à effet de serre de 20 % par rapport à 1990	- 14 % en 2020 hors ETS par rapport à 2005	- 7 % (2010 par rapport à 2005) ¹
	Utilisation d'énergie provenant de sources renouvelables à hauteur de 20 %	23 %	12,8 % (2010) ²
	Augmentation de 20 % de l'efficacité énergétique	130 Mtep en consommation d'énergie finale ³	155 Mtep (2010)
Education	Abaissement du taux de décrochage scolaire à moins de 10 %	9,5 %	12 % (2011)
	Un diplôme de l'enseignement supérieur pour au moins 40 % de la population âgée de 30 à 34 ans	50 %	43,4 % (2001)
Lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion	Réduction d'au moins 20 millions du nombre de personnes touchées ou menacées par la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale	9,6 millions (= 11,2 million - 1,6 millions) ⁴ <i>Objectif national en cours de redéfinition</i>	11,2 millions

Source : Eurostat

The remit of the French Partnership Agreement Fund translates into the 11 thematic objectives (TOs) listed below, in line with the underlying principles of draft European regulations for the 2014-2020 period. At the same time, ERDF and ESF measures need to focus on a limited number of thematic objectives depending on the category of the region concerned.

OT 1. Renforcer la recherche, le développement technologique et l'innovation	OT 7. Promouvoir le transport durable et supprimer les goulets d'étranglement dans le réseau principal d'infrastructures
OT 2. Améliorer l'accès, l'utilisation et la qualité des technologies de l'information et de la communication	OT 8. Promouvoir l'emploi et soutenir la mobilité du travail
OT 3. Renforcer la compétitivité des petites et moyennes entreprises	OT 9. Promouvoir l'inclusion sociale et combattre la pauvreté
OT 4. Soutenir la mutation vers une économie à faible teneur en carbone dans tous les secteurs	OT 10. Investir dans l'éducation, les compétences et la formation tout au long de la vie
OT 5. Promouvoir l'adaptation au changement climatique et la prévention des risques	OT 11. Renforcer la capacité institutionnelle et une administration publique efficace
OT 6. Protéger l'environnement et promouvoir un usage durable des ressources	

For most of the social partners, TOs 8, 9, 10 and also 4 are priorities in the current context of a severe employment and social cohesion crisis.

The national reform programme (NRP) is the strategic reference document for the implementation of all national and European policies in each Member State. This programme enables France to highlight the structural reforms (such as the legislation adopted in June 2013 on applying the interprofessional agreement on French-style flexicurity) which the country has decided to implement in order to achieve the objectives of this new strategy.

There is also a complementary regional approach, with measures to ensure a coordinated approach to use of the Funds in various regions: urban, rural, coastal and fishing regions, regions suffering from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps, outermost regions, and border regions.

7. Greece

7.1 The 2007-2013 multiannual strategic framework of the European funds in support of economic and social cohesion policy in Greece.

7.1.1 Funds allocated to Greece for the 2007-2013 period (EUR billion), and financial breakdown by intervention priorities

EUR 20.4 billion of European funding has been allocated for economic and social cohesion policy in Greece.

Nearly all of this funding is concentrated in the area of convergence policy (EUR 19.6 billion); two-thirds comes from the ERDF, the remainder from the ESF and the Cohesion Fund, which Greece is eligible for.

Objectif	Fonds	Financement communautaire en €	Financement public national en €	Financement privé national en €	TOTAL en €
Convergence*	FC	3 697 160 864	1 153 680 864	0	4 850 841 728
	FEDER	11 642 000 000	2 874 728 067	0	14 516 728 067
	FSE	4 235 800 402	1 225 232 818	0	5 461 033 220
Total pour l'objectif de convergence		19 574 961 266			
Compétitivité régionale et emploi (CRE)	FEDER	507 300 178	297 700 000	0	805 000 178
	FSE	128 000 001	137 033 982	0	265 033 983
Total pour l'objectif CRE		635 300 179			
Coopération territoriale européenne	FEDER	209 515 579		0	209 515 579
Total FC		3 697 160 864			
Total FEDER		12 358 815 757			
Total FSE		4 363 800 403			
TOTAL		20 419 777 024	5 688 375 731	0	26 108 152 755

* The convergence objective applies to regions with low rates of GDP and employment, and with a per capita GDP below 75% of the EU average during the 2000-2002 period. This objective concerns 100 regions representing roughly 35% of the EU-27 population, and is intended to promote conditions which are conducive to growth and real-time convergence in the least developed Member States and regions. The regional competitiveness and employment objective applies to the rest of the EU, i.e. 168 regions representing around 65% of the EU-27 population. It is intended to make regions more competitive and attractive while raising their employment rates.

7.1.2 Breakdown of the operational programme by priority axis for the entire 2007-2013 period:

For the 2007-2013 period, the Greek public authorities established a national operational programme for the European funds, in line with the EU regulations of 2006 and the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF). This programme sets out the country's strategic approaches to economic and social cohesion policy.

With Greece implementing the Troika's (EU, ECB and IMF) harsh adjustment programme, the European Commission has decided to accelerate the country's absorption of EU structural funding. Before the 2008 crisis, per capita GDP in Greece was estimated at 83% of the European average (in 2006), whereas the employment rate (61%) for the same year was well below European targets, particularly for women and older workers.

For the 2007-2013 programming period, negotiations between the Commission and the Greek authorities led to an improved and simplified system for implementing the Structural

Funds in Greece, focusing higher expenditure on fewer priorities compared to the previous programming periods. The number of programmes was cut from 25 to 14, with expenditure focused on five thematic priorities in line with the Lisbon agenda: investment in the production sector; a knowledge and innovation society; employment and social cohesion; attractiveness of Greece and its regions as places to invest, work and live; and improving the institutional framework.

Strategic planning in Greece for the 2007-2013 period will be implemented through eight thematic operational programmes and five regional operational programmes (funded by the ESF, the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund).

7.1.3 ESF priorities for the 2007-2013 period

The main objective is to help employees and companies become more adaptable, by anticipating and managing economic change more effectively. To this end, the ESF provides support in the following areas:

- Strengthening institutional capacity and enhancing efficiency in administration and public services at national, regional and local level.

One of the priorities set by the ESF is to develop public employment services in Greece as a means of facilitating integration into labour markets. Among other things, this involves creating 12 new public employment services, resulting in a total number of 121 centres at national level.

7.1.4 Reducing regional disparities: a challenge for economic and social cohesion policy

There are serious regional disparities in Greece in terms of income distribution and economic and social structures.

The Greek programmes for the 2007-2013 period take into account specific regions, with Structural Fund investments of EUR 649 million for the islands, EUR 833 million for mountainous areas, EUR 271 million for sparsely populated areas, and EUR 815 million for rural areas.

7.1.5 Implementing the Lisbon programme:

For the 2007-2013 period, the Greek National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) allocates significant resources to the following policy areas: R&D and innovation, modernising public administration, active labour market policies, education and training.

Under the convergence objective, at least 62% of the EU's contribution will be allocated to the Lisbon priorities (EUR 12 billion out of a total of EUR 19.4 billion), whereas under the regional competitiveness and employment objective, at least 67% of Community funding will be allocated to these objectives (EUR 430 million, out of a total of EUR 635 million). The allocation objective has increased from 62% to 68% in convergence regions, and from 67% to 73% in competitiveness and employment regions.

Support for more adaptable human resources and businesses will increase to EUR 587 million (3% of the total allocated from the Structural Funds). This will involve development of continuous vocational training for employees and employers, especially in SMEs, and also for the self-employed. It was envisaged that the Greek social partners would participate in programming and implementing projects.

Investment in human capital will amount to EUR 1.6 billion (8% of the total financial envelope). This funding will be used to improve the quality of education, promote social inclusion of young people and women, modernise existing initial vocational training and vocational education, align education with the labour market, stimulate lifelong learning and strengthen human resources, with a view to promoting R&D and innovation.

Social inclusion measures will receive very modest support of EUR 397 million (2% of the financial envelope).

7.1.6 Meeting the challenges of the sustainable development, climate change and energy component of the Lisbon strategy in Greece:

Improving the environment, promoting sustainable growth and combating climate change are key strategic priorities for Greece during the 2007-2013 period. The country is planning to invest EUR 5.5 billion from the Structural Funds (27% of total EU funding) in this field. The aim is to make Greek regions a more attractive place to live, and to stem the rural exodus to large cities while supporting tourist services. Major investments in renewable energies should create new high added-value jobs outside large cities.

7.1.7 Strengthening governance, institutional capacity and partnership at multiple levels:

In Greece the Structural Fund management system is relatively centralised, with the Economic and Finance Ministry acting as the sole managing authority, at the same time as coordinating the five regional operational programmes.

Compared to the 2000-2006 period, the "administrative burden" of programming has been lightened, with radical cuts in the number of operational programmes and final beneficiaries

thanks to a procedure "certifying" their management capacity. In addition, bodies and departments have been put in charge of implementing or coordinating measures from a given thematic area in the various programmes.

The 2007-2013 period will see a strengthening of the partnership principle during all stages of programming, particularly with regard to its regional dimension. There will be systematic consultation of social partners and civil society stakeholders at all levels.

Institutional and administrative capacity building in line with the specific political commitments set out in the NRP will be mainly covered by the "administrative reform" operational programme, with financial support of EUR 116 million, mostly coming from technical assistance grants.

During the 2007-2013 programming period, the EQUAL Community initiative and its objectives (labour market access and re-employment, combating all forms of discrimination and inequality on labour markets) will be prioritised and integrated into all strategic levels of the three programmes funded by the ESF.

This initiative has been implemented through development partnerships, involving key stakeholders such as local and regional authorities, social partners, public employment services, NGOs and the private sector.

7.2 2007-2013 financial framework monitoring mechanism; monitoring and programming authorities.

Improvements to the implementation of economic and social cohesion policy objectives in Greece have resulted in the development of a monitoring system at national level. However, we do not have sufficient information from the Greek social partners to analyse and evaluate arrangements for consulting social partners at national and regional levels and involving them in defining, programming, monitoring and evaluating economic and social cohesion projects in Greece as supported by European funds for the 2007-2013 period.

However, according to numerous evaluation studies, the European EQUAL programme (action plans to combat discrimination in the workplace and professional inequality) implemented in Greece is an example of best practice, both in terms of implementation and of involving trade union organisations in defining, programming, monitoring and evaluating projects.

7.3 The 2014-2020 programming period of the European Funds in support of economic and social cohesion policy in Greece. What are the implications of a partnership agreement involving Greek trade unions and social partners?

The current 2007-2013 programming period is drawing to an end. At the same time, a possible Greek partnership agreement approved by the European Commission pursuant to articles 13-15 of the draft General Regulation is to define the strategic guidelines for implementing the European Funds during the 2014-2020 period, inspired by the "Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth".

In this connection, the European Commission has defined the following strategic objectives for the the Greek government authorities:

Europe 2020 headline Targets	Current situation in Greece end 2011	National 2020 target in the NRP
R&D	0,6% (2007)	2% GDP
Employment	59,9% (2011)	70%
Early school leaving	13,1% (2011)	9,7%
Tertiary education	28,9% (2011)	32%
Poverty	619 000	reduction by 450 000 in the number of people at-risk of poverty or social exclusion by 2020
Energy efficiency	n/a (the Commission is not yet able to provide this overview)	2,7 Mtoe
Renewable Energy	Starting from 5,8% in 2005, the share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption has been increased to 8,2% (in 2011).	18% of gross final energy consumption from renewable sources

We do not have sufficient information from the Greek social partners to analyse and evaluate dialogue and consultation processes at national and regional levels relating to the conclusion of a partnership agreement on defining, programming and monitoring economic and social cohesion projects in Greece as supported by European funds for the 2014-2020 period.

8. Hungary

8.1 Programming in Hungary for the 2007-2013 period

For the 2007-2013 period, a total EUR 25.3 billion of EU cohesion policy funding has been allocated to Hungary, including EUR 22.9 billion for convergence objectives and EUR 2 billion for the "regional competitiveness and employment" objective. Of the 7 Hungarian and regions, only Central Hungary is eligible for objective 2 ("phasing-in") funding.

The objectives of the new Hungarian National Development Plan were approved by the European Commission in May 2007 and translated into six priorities: economic development,

development of transport, social renewal, the environment and energy issues, regional development, and State reform.

To achieve these objectives, 15 operational programmes have been established, two financed by the European Social Fund, and 13 by the ERDF. 7 of these 15 programmes are regional and 8 are sectoral in nature.

8.2 Structural and Cohesion Fund administrative procedures

In Hungary the system for implementing cohesion policy is centralised and hierarchical. The National Development Council plays a dominant role in defining and implementing the objectives of the new national development plan. The National Development Agency acts as a managing authority, with different departments supervising the various operational programmes, in liaison with the relevant monitoring committees.

a. The National Development Council

The National Development Council (NDC) is responsible for supervising and evaluating the country's development policy as defined by the government. It acts as an advisory body to the government. Within the NDC, the Development Policy Steering Committee (DPSC) plays a key role. Tasks of the DPSC include preparing decisions, drafting proposals, and generally coordinating tasks relating to the new national development plan, the national action plan, the sustainable development strategy, and the new Hungarian rural development strategy. It also reports to the government on implementation of the development strategy. Finally, it issues opinions on the priorities and implementation of operational programmes, on action plans, on methodology, and on the most important projects (major investments of particular significance in terms of absorbing European funding).

Chaired by the Prime Minister, the National Development Council comprises representatives of regional development councils, delegates from the Economic and Social Council (an advisory body on macro-economic and social issues, comprising 43 members, including six representatives of trade union organisations and 20 representatives of industrial and employers' associations), and as well as experts and DPSC members. The latter have State Secretary status in the Prime Minister's private office. They are also responsible for chairing the various monitoring committees for operational programmes.

b. The National Development Agency

The National Development Agency (NDA) is, in cooperation with the relevant ministers and regional bodies, responsible for programming the new Hungarian National Development Plan in its entirety, as well as its institutional, financial and procedural implementation. It also acts

as managing authority for all operational programmes. At the same time, it is responsible for monitoring and evaluating implementation of the plan. In this capacity, it can propose to revise the plan. Finally, it is responsible for coordinating management of the Structural and Cohesion Funds across the various operational programmes, at the same time as ensuring consistency with measures taken under the EAFRD or financed by the EIB. Representatives of the various ministries concerned by the operational programmes participate in the NDA's activities, and can put forward proposals on the programmes' content.

National Development Agency departments are responsible for independently coordinating the programming and implementation of the various operational programmes (see table below). This decentralisation is intended to achieve more efficient implementation of OPs, together with greater transparency and rationalisation of operational tasks.

Managing Authorities	Operational programme
1. NDA - economic development programmes department	Economic Development OP
2. NDA - transport programmes department	Transport OP
3. NDA - HR programmes department	Social Renewal OP Social infrastructure OP
4. NDA - environmental programmes department	Environment and Energy OP
5. NDA - regional development programmes department	Regional OPs
6. NDA - government reform programmes department	State Reform OP Electronic Administration OP
7. NDA - coordination department	Implementation OP

c. The monitoring committees

The monitoring committees are the final link in the Structural Funds management chain. Basically their role is to define criteria for selecting measures eligible for financing, and to monitor implementation of objectives for each priority axis. They can also put forward suggestions for improving OPs in order to manage them more effectively or achieve particular objectives. As a rule, monitoring committees comprise representatives of the managing authority, ministries concerned, regional development councils, social partners, NGOs, and potentially affected government organisations.

8.3 Partnership practices in Hungary

In Hungary, cohesion policy programming, implementing, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms do not envisage any special role for representatives of trade unions. The political situation

Like other stakeholders, trade union organisations are represented on the monitoring committees of the various operational programmes. Moreover, Hungarian law requires at least 50% of these committees' members to be representatives of NGOs and to have voting rights.

In any case, trade union organisations and other stakeholders were consulted and given an opportunity to comment on the drafting and implementation of the plan, by means of a public debate process launched by the authorities. Indeed, a broad-ranging public debate on the New Hungarian Development Plan was launched in autumn 2005. This debate was conducted in three stages, with an initial consultation on the main objectives of the plan (autumn 2005), a second consultation on a preliminary version of the plan, and a third consultation on the final version.

During the first stage, which lasted nearly 2 months, about 400 organisations responded with their proposals. All of these proposals were published on a dedicated web page. In parallel with this, 13 workshops involving representatives of various organisations and 19 regional level meetings were held.

During the second stage, which lasted from February to April 2008, 4900 organisations were asked to express their views on an initial version of the plan. At the same time, the plan was published online, and was downloaded over 30 000 times, with 470 responses to the public consultation. Finally, ten public debates were held, attended by the main interest groups. A few months later, a similar procedure was applied to a final version of the plan (which was also referred to the Parliament and the Economic and Social Council).

Generally speaking, each programming document (operational programmes, action plans, calls for proposals) is put online for consultation at least two weeks before approval. All concerned (individuals, organisations) have an opportunity to send their comments before approval. For operational programmes, the main partners are directly contacted. It should be emphasised that the managing authority responds to all opinions and questions it receives.

9. Ireland

9.1 Programming in Ireland for the 2007-2013 period

In 2007 Ireland launched a huge programme with EUR 184 billion of funding to modernise its economy. This National Development Plan (NDP) was scheduled to run from 2007 to 2013.

Among other things, its aim was to make the Irish economy more competitive through a series of major investments in economic and social infrastructure, business, research and development, agriculture, as well as education, training and skills development.

In addition, a national reform programme was also launched during the same period (in line with the Lisbon strategy), with a strategy for science, technology and innovation. A national action plan to combat social exclusion was also launched for the period 2007-2016.

With regard to Structural Funds, Ireland was allocated EUR 750 million (divided equally between the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund) for the 2017-2013 programming period - significantly less than for the previous period due to the fact that the Irish economy had improved relative to the EU average.

Given the low funding levels relative to the NDP, the government decided that the investments envisaged by the National Strategic Reference Framework would be focused on niche areas, and implemented in such a way as to complement measures under the National Development Plan. As a result, three operational programmes were launched, focusing mainly on innovation, the environment and transport, but also on developing skills and combating social exclusion:

- a programme targeted at regions in the north of Ireland (Border, Midlands and Western regions), with EUR 228 million of ERDF funding (specifically due to these regions' "phasing-in" status);
- a second ERDF programme targeted at the southern and eastern regions;
- an ESF operational programme with EUR 375 million of funding.

Fonds européen de Développement Régional (16 programmes régionaux)	
Ventilation par objectif	
Énergie	4%
Protection de l'environnement et prévention des risques	15,8%
Société de l'information	6,7%
R&D, innovation et entrepreneuriat	41,7%
Assistance technique	2,4%
Transport	7%
Regénération urbaine et rurale	22,6%

Fonds social européen - Ventilation par objectif	
Amélioration de l'accès à l'emploi et insertion durable	6,3%
Amélioration du capital humain	56,6%
Amélioration de l'intégration sociale des personnes défavorisées	28,6%
Accroissement de la capacité d'adaptation des travailleurs et des entreprises	7,6%
Assistance technique	0,8%

9.2 Administrative procedures and consultation of social partners on Structural Fund management in Ireland

a. Monitoring and evaluation procedures

The Irish government's Department of Finance acts as managing authority for the Structural Funds in Ireland, besides monitoring implementation of the National Strategic Reference Framework. Responsibility for the operational programmes is shared as follows:

Operational programme	Managing authority	Certifying authority	Supervisory authority
BMW OP	BMW regional assembly	Department of Finance	Department of Finance - ERDF financial control unit
S&E OP	S&E regional assembly	Department of Finance	Department of Finance - ERDF financial control unit
ESF OP	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment - ESF financial control unit

Of course, the social partners - including trade union organisations - are involved in monitoring and evaluation procedures. They are also represented on the national NSRF monitoring committee, and involved in the work of the monitoring committees for the various ESF and ERDF operational programmes.

However, it is the involvement of trade union organisations in the drafting of the NSRF which should be emphasised most strongly. These organisations are actively involved in defining the objectives of the Strategic Framework, through the conclusion of a long-term partnership agreement between the government, the social partners, and a broad range of organisations representing civil society.

b. Involvement of trade union organisations in the programming process

In Ireland, the objectives of the National Strategic Reference Framework should be seen in the broader context. They have been defined in order to complement the major national development plan launched in 2006. Trade union organisations were consulted in advance of the plan through the negotiation of a long-term partnership agreement; they were also consulted on the drafting and the implementation of the plan. This framework document was signed in 2006 by the government and the social partners, entitled "Towards 2016 - Ten-year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006 – 2015". It was intended firstly to establish a shared long-term vision of the country's future - economic, social and in terms of social dialogue; and secondly to lay the foundations of future sectoral salary negotiations. The document therefore sets out a series of commitments, in areas such as macro-economic policy, the business world, innovation, sectoral measures, public sector reform, as well as rural development, environmental protection and combating social exclusion.

The document was based on the strategy defined by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), and on consultation with a large number of organisations representing employees (ICTU), employers (IBEC, CIF, SFA, IEA, ITIC, etc.), rural interests (IFA, ICMSA) and associations (INOUE, NYCI, ICSH). It was planned to implement the agreement through the above-mentioned national development plan for 2007-2013 (NDP), the objectives of which were also referred to the social partners for consultation, as well as through the establishment of a spatial planning strategy, a national plan to combat social exclusion, and a national reform plan.

Consultation mechanisms were built into the entire process of developing the Strategy and National Development Plan. For example, the National Partnership Agreement provided for the establishment of a steering committee, with members from government and each of the four "pillars" of the social partnership, whose role was to monitor the implementation of the agreement by assessing the progress made on the various instruments (NDP, NSS, NRP). For the National Development Plan, the steering committee comprises representatives from the Department of Finance, the "4 pillars" of the social partnership and the 8 regional administrative authorities and 2 provincial parliaments. This committee meets twice a year to assess the progress that has been achieved. It is also responsible for monitoring the achievement of the plan's horizontal objective of ensuring balanced, sustainable and environmentally sensitive development. Its assessments are based on detailed analysis of the projected impacts of current and future projects.

For Ireland's National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), the objectives and related operational programmes derived directly from the discussions connected with the NDP and National Partnership Agreement. In addition, the social partners, the competent authorities (i.e. the Department of Finance, for the ERDF and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, for the ESF), and representatives of regional authorities and NGOs were also consulted during the preparation of the NSRF (for instance at regional seminars).

So, although there has been a considerable deterioration in the quality of social dialogue in Ireland since the onset of the economic crisis, the partnership agreement signed in 2006 remains an example of good practice. It has led, in particular, to cooperation between trade union organisations (and the other partners) at an early stage in the preparations, which has enabled them to have a genuine impact on the policies that have been introduced whilst also helping to ensure greater support for these policies.

10. Italy

10.1 The 2007-2013 Multi-Annual Financial Framework

After Poland and Spain, Italy is the 3rd largest beneficiary of the European Union's cohesion policy. During the 2007-2013 programming period, the total funding to be set aside for the convergence, regional competitiveness and jobs, and European territorial cohesion objectives was EUR 28.8 billion.

Under the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), Italy's main priorities have been improving productivity, competitiveness and innovation, particularly for small and medium enterprises, which are one of the cornerstones of the Italian economy. However, it has also focused on poverty reduction (in particular through ESF-funded activation policies aimed at young people, women and older people) and inequality. Here, reducing the gaps between the North and South of Italy is a strategic priority. The convergence objective applies to five southern regions (Campania, Puglia, Calabria, Sicily and Basilicata), whilst the competitiveness and jobs objective applies to sixteen others in the Centre and North of the country. Accordingly, Italy's cohesion policy has a strong regional dimension. Of the 52 operational programmes scheduled under the NSRF for 2007-2013 under the convergence and regional competitiveness and employment objectives, 42 were managed at regional level and 10 at national level.

However, this complex management structure for the cohesion policy in Italy is not an obstacle to broad consultation of the social partners, which are consulted at both national and regional levels. In Italy, the consultations on the programming of the 2007-2013 Multiannual Financial Framework began in 2005. At national level they took the form of 10 themed sessions focusing on the 10 cohesion priorities established in order to achieve the NSRF priorities. As a result, the social partners were able to make their voices heard at these meetings. They also presented a common position on how the partners should be involved, drawn up by the CGIL, the CISL, the UIL and Confindustria, in consultation with the other organisations representing the social partners. Although the consultations took different forms in the various different regions, they were coordinated with the national

consultations. Naturally, in addition, the social partners are also closely involved in monitoring and assessing the use of the Structural Funds. However, although they do have the right to vote on ESF committees, they do not have the same right on ERDF committees.

10.2 Examples of good practice in partnership

The procedure for upstream consultation of the social partners is an illustration of the relatively high quality of the dialogue in Italy in relation to the management of the European Funds. Indeed, the importance accorded to partnership is stressed in the National Strategic Reference Framework which refers, in particular, to the obligation not only to systematise and rationalise the procedures and increase transparency (by extending the range of potential partners) but also to provide the partners with the tools to make better and more effective choices (capacity building). Interestingly, the document also draws attention to the need to disseminate the "culture of dialogue", not just to organisations that might be potential partners, but also and above all within the administration itself.

Although Italy has a number of good practices in the area of partnership, this document will look more closely at two of them, which are directly linked with the issues described above:

- firstly, the Speslab project, whose objective is to strengthen the partners' capacity by putting at their disposal a database of material on the various topics connected with the European Social Fund;
- secondly, the seminar organised by the social partners in 2012, which led to the Structural Funds being partially reoriented towards targets they had identified. This did not result from a mechanism connected with the management of the Structural Funds. However, it does illustrate the impact that social dialogue can have in terms of ensuring that the available resources are managed more effectively.

a. The Speslab project

The aim of the Speslab project, launched under the aegis of the Ministry of Labour in 2012, is to build the capacity of the economic and social partners by providing them with technical assistance. This assistance takes the form of improving their access to information and raising their awareness on various topics connected with the labour market. The objective is to strengthen partnership and the social partners' involvement in the management of the Funds, both for the 2007-2013 programming period and, in particular, the 2014-2020 period.

The intended target group for the Speslab project is representatives of the organisations involved in the management of the ESF. These include the trade union organisations (CGIL;

CISL, UGL, UIL), employers' organisations (Confindustria), business associations (Confartigianato, Confcommercio), associations representing various agricultural sectors (Coldiretti, Confagricoltura), banking (ABI) and insurance (ANIA) and an environmental protection organisation (Legambiente).

Capacity building takes the form of providing a specific internet site for the partners, with a database broken down into 6 thematic areas closely connected with Italy's ESF objectives and priorities. The themes are:

- young people and the labour market;
- competitiveness, local development and human resources;
- active and passive labour market policies;
- economic scenarios;
- balancing work and family life; and
- non-declared work and safety at work.

A number of articles and studies are included for each thematic area, with the aim of ensuring that the partners have all the information they need to get a full and complete understanding of the subjects concerned. For example, the material included under the youth unemployment theme gives an overview of the situation in Italy and includes, amongst other things, analyses of the statistical data and an analysis of the demographic situation and the relationship between training policies and access to the labour market. In addition to these 6 themes, there is also material on the social dialogue in Italy and Europe. This includes, in particular, material on the practices and instruments used in social dialogue and explanations on the role of the social partners in the governance of the ESF and on the monitoring committees.

In addition to the technical elements described above, the project also involves the organisation of round tables at national level, workshops at regional level and, lastly, four study visits in Italy and Europe.

The round tables organised at national level are open meetings for all stakeholders in the social dialogue and anyone concerned with policies relating to employment and training. Their aim is to encourage exchanges between the various stakeholders, for example through mini round tables on specific topics, so as to identify improvements and innovations and potential areas for coordinating the implementation of the above-mentioned policies. A first round table, focusing on youth employment, was held in April 2013. The main theme of the event, which was attended by representatives of the economic and social partners, academia and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Economic Development, was ESF programming and resource allocation in support of youth employment initiatives. The

action taken both at national and EU level was reviewed. The meeting also provided an opportunity to present the situation in the Emilia-Romagna region.

These national level meetings are complemented by the workshops organised at regional level and the study visits. The objective of the regional workshops is to exchange experience and good practice. These are closed meetings for the economic and social partners represented on the monitoring committees for the various operational programmes and representatives from industry. For their part, the four planned study visits (in Italy and abroad) are oriented towards the exchange of good practice. The first such visit was to Hamburg in Germany in November 2012, and looked at the dual training system introduced in the region.

b. The seminar on 17 July 2012

On 17 July 2012, a policy seminar was held at the initiative of the CGIL, the CISL, the UIL and Confindustria, to examine ways of combating the impact of the economic crisis in the regions in the South of Italy. Starting from the principle that the situation required rapid intervention and a reorientation of EU funding, the partners listed above drew up a programme document entitled, "Work and enterprise", intended to influence the re-programming of the convergence policy. After a debate with the Ministry of Cohesion, representatives from the Department for Economic Development and representatives of the eight regions concerned (Calabria, Campania, Apulia, Sicily, Sardinia, Basilicata, Abruzzo and Molise), the discussions led to the organisation of a discussion panel with representatives of the Ministries of Education, Development, Labour and Territorial Cohesion and subsequently to the reallocation of around EUR 3 billion to objectives suggested by the partners. The initiative, launched by the four organisations mentioned above, was then extended to other organisations (in particular the UGL, Confcommercio, three organisations representing craft industries and Confagricoltura) who were then able to make comments and observations at the following meetings. The partners' proposals focused primarily on support for businesses, employment and social policy. The meetings between the social partners and the four ministries produced a number of results, in particular measures to help micro and small enterprises (targeted at pre-identified urban areas), a stronger tax credit, active labour market policies (focusing specifically on training), support for innovative enterprises (particularly start-ups), investment aid, the promotion of tourism, measures aimed at re-industrialising areas affected by the economic crisis and support for the most disadvantaged population groups. In addition, the partners have also been involved in implementing some measures, through their participation in the meetings with the competent authorities.

10.3 Programming for 2014 – 2020

In connection with the Multi-Annual Financial Framework for 2014-2020, consultations with the partners began in 2012. However, the particularity of the work currently being conducted in Italy is that, as well as identifying the results expected from the forthcoming programming period, considerable efforts have also been put into establishing the methodology to be used.

One of the main aims of the current negotiations is to improve the quality not only of the programming itself but also of its implementation and hence its effectiveness overall. To achieve this goal, a document has been drawn up on "Methods and objectives for making effective use of EU funding for 2014-2020". This document, based on the strong and weak points of the previous programming period, focuses on seven key issues. One of the priorities is ensuring that the objectives to be attained when using European funds are defined more clearly (specifying the expected results, for example by developing quality indicators). Other aims include ensuring that initiatives are defined in a more concrete way and targeted more effectively, increasing transparency, better management of time frames, improving the evaluation process, supporting regional administrations (particularly where competences are concerned) and developing a strong and active partnership.

On this last point, the aim is to ensure that the partners are involved as early as possible in the decision-making process. In this regard, as for the objectives in the forthcoming programming period, discussions are also held in the context of the activities and workshops organised by Speslab.

11. Poland

11.1 Methodology

For the purposes of this study, we have analysed personal accounts and documents gathered from the officials responsible for European programmes in Poland's two largest trade unions, Solidarnosc and OPZZ.

We have also analysed the documentation available on the subject, including the joint publications issued by the social partners and the NGOs on partnership in the management of the European Funds in Poland.

11.2 The 2007 - 2013 programming period in Poland

11.2.1 Financial breakdown by objective

Poland is the largest beneficiary of the Community Economic and Cohesion Policy, with receipts totalling EUR 67.3 billion over the 2007-2013 period. If we add to this the CAP (the Rural Development Fund and the Fisheries Fund: EUR 14 billion), and the country's own national public contribution (estimated at EUR 11.9 billion) and private contribution (EUR 6.4 billion), the total amount of European funding available is EUR 85.6 billion.

Of these 85.6 billion Euros, 66.6 billion are allocated under the convergence objective and 731 million under the European territorial cooperation objective. Over 16.5 billion Euros are earmarked for Poland's regions, under sixteen operational programmes:

Poland: National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013	
Operational programmes	Amount (€)
16 regional OPs	16 555 614 188
Development of Eastern Poland OP ERDF	2 273 793 750
Infrastructure and Environment OP	27 913 683 774
Innovative Economy OP ERDF	8 254 885 280
Technical Assistance OP ERDF	516 700 000
Human Capital OP ESF	9 707 176 000
Performance reserve	1 331 304 099
Convergence objective - all funds (ERDF, ESF, CF), of which:	66 553 157 091
ERDF	33 338 323 218
ESF	9 707 176 000
CF	22 176 353 774
Performance reserve ERDF, ESF	1 331 304 099
European Territorial Cooperation Objective ERDF	731 092 675

The priorities set out in the National Strategic Reference Framework are divided into 21 operational programmes: five national programmes (under the responsibility of central government and its respective ministries) and sixteen regional programmes, one for each of Poland's sixteen regions. In Poland, responsibility for the Cohesion Policy lies with the Ministry of Regional Development.

European Regional Development Fund (16 regional programmes) Breakdown by objective	
Culture 1.8 %	1.8%
Energy 4.0%	4.0%
Environmental protection and risk prevention 15.8 %	15.8%
Information Society 6.7 %	6.7%
Investment in social infrastructure 4.9 %	4.9 %

European Social Fund Breakdown by objective	
Improving access to employment and sustainability	25.8%
Improving human capital	36.8%
Improving the social inclusion of less-favoured persons	11.2%
Increasing the adaptability of workers and firms, enterprises and entrepreneurs	16.1%
Mobilisation for reforms in the fields of employment and inclusion	0.7%
Strengthening institutional capacity at national, regional and local level	5.3%

Mobilisation for reforms in the fields of employment and inclusion 0.0 %	0.0%
Research and technological development (R&TD), innovation and entrepreneurship 18.8 %	18.8%
Strengthening institutional capacity at national, regional and local level 0.1 %	0.1%
Technical assistance	3.5%
Tourism	1.8%
Transport	40.9%
Urban & Rural Regeneration	1.7%

11.2.2 Partnership in the management of Community funds

11.2.2.1 The socio-economic partners as members of consultative bodies:

Application of the partnership principle in managing the Operational Programmes is an integral part of the strategy set out in the National Strategic Reference Framework (Narodowe Strategiczne Ramy Odniesienia, NSRO).

The socio-economic partners are involved in the management of the Structural Funds as members of the following consultative bodies:

At national level:

- ⇒ the group responsible for questions relating to the Structural Funds (*Zespół ds funduszy strukturalnych*) under the Tripartite Committee
- ⇒ the NSRF coordination committee (*Komitet koordynacyjny NSRO*)
- ⇒ 8 national monitoring committees for the OPs (*Komitety monitorujące programy operacyjne*).

At regional level:

- ⇒ monitoring committees for the regional operational programmes (in the 16 Polish voivodeships)
- ⇒ 'thematic networks' involved in setting up RTD/innovation projects and, since 2010, ascertaining that partnership principles are respected.

In terms of the membership of the national monitoring committees, from 2007-2013, the committee with the greatest parity has been the national monitoring committee for the

Human Capital Operational Programme: 32% of its members are from central government, 38% from local authorities and 30% from the socio-economic partners.

In the 16 regional monitoring committees, the membership can be broken down as follows: around 20% of the members are from central government, with around 40% from local authorities and around 40% from the social partners.

11.2.3 The socio-economic partners as beneficiaries of the Structural Funds (ERDF, ESF)

The budget lines accessible to the social partners (ESF, Human Capital OP) concern two main lines of action:

- Effective anticipation and management of change;
- Improving quality and productivity at work.

The socio-economic partners have been beneficiaries of projects or have implemented projects themselves in the following areas:

- building employees' capacity for change, focusing on training and life-long learning; corporate social responsibility; anticipation and positive management of change, including economic restructuring; promoting and disseminating innovative, adaptable forms of work organisation to improve the quality of work and boost productivity; supporting social partnership organisations, for example, by building the capacity of employer and trade union organisations (organisational, financial and personal capacities of trade unions and employers organisations, strengthening their contribution at national and regional level).

11.3 Good examples of joint action

Some examples of good practice in terms of partnership within the monitoring committees are:

Dolnośląskie Region (Lower Silesia): consultation of the socio-economic partners during the assessment procedure for funding applications. Pomorskie Region (Pomerania): setting up expert groups ('strategy groups') appointed by the members of the monitoring committees for the Operational Programmes. Kujawsko-Pomorskie Region: the creation of bodies comprising representatives of the socio-economic partners under the main monitoring committee for the regional Operational Programme (ERDF).

11.4 Bad practice

The Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP) is responsible for managing the Structural Funds destined for the development of SMEs, through, amongst other means, the projects implemented by the trade union and employers organisations. PARP's Supervisory Board has 11 members, who include representatives of the government and employer and entrepreneur organisations, but no trade union representatives. For this reason, in January 2013, the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (the OPZZ, one of the three trade union organisations in Poland) wrote to the Prime Minister asking for a change in the membership of PARP's Supervisory Board to guarantee representation for the trade unions¹.

The OPZZ has also criticised the trade unions' particularly limited access to the Structural Funds in Poland, citing as examples, the contrasting good practice in this area in Germany, Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands².

11.5 Preparations for 2014-2020

11.5.1 The lessons of 2007-2013

The issue of partnership is still the subject of widespread criticism on the part of the socio-economic partners, although "the Polish government (...) *has continued to improve the application of the partnership principle (...) for instance through the broad consultation process begun before the 2007-2013 programming period, the creation of a coordination committee for the NSRF and the initiative launched by the working group on civil society in 2010 on monitoring the partnership principle via the thematic regional networks*" (ESF support for the social partners during the 2007-2013 programming period)

In the document, "Common position of the social partners on partnership in the Financial Framework for the years 2007-2013 - proposals for the Financial Framework for 2014-2020", drawn up at the request of the public authorities, the social partners (including the employers' organisations the Confederation of Polish Employers, the Polish Confederation of Private Employers and the Polish Craft Association, the trade union organisations Solidarność, the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions and the Trade Unions Forum and NGOs) criticised several aspects of the partnership the government had set up for the management of the Structural Funds for 2007-2013, including:

¹ According to the OPZZ, the Polish government, by establishing the PARP Supervisory Board in its current form, has failed to comply with Article 5.2 of the Regulation of 5 July 2006 on the ESF ("The Member States shall ensure the involvement of the social partners and adequate consultation and participation of other stakeholders, at the appropriate territorial level, in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of ESF support. ")

² In Germany, the social partners play an important role in lifelong learning (around 8% of the overall ESF budget). In Spain, almost 80% of lifelong learning activities co-financed by the ESF are managed by the social partners, representing around 14% of ESF support. In Belgium, the social partners are heavily involved in implementing three priorities which represent around 45% of the overall ESF budget in Flanders: entrepreneurship, reinforcing equal opportunities policies, flexibility of companies and their employees. In the Netherlands, the main projects carried out by the social partners centring on employee training represent 13% of the ESF budget.

The lack of a coherent concept and clear rules for implementing the partnership and its objectives, the absence of criteria for selecting the main partners on the basis of the characteristics and implementation stage of the Operational Programmes concerned, the failure to consult the relevant long-standing and well established consultative bodies, particularly regional and local level bodies, such as the regional and local employment and social dialogue committees, the failure to delegate specific tasks to the socio-economic partners during the process of deciding on and drafting documents and the purely formal nature of the consultations, and the fact that there was no schedule or tools for evaluating the partnerships.

11.5.2 Recommendations from the socio-economic partners

Referring to the government documents on the new programming period, the socio-economic partners draw attention to the lack of clarity concerning the partnership (*The organisation of the work on the programme documents connected with the EU Financial Perspective for 2014-2020. Information for the Council of Ministers of 4/4/2012: consultations with the partners are scheduled at a relatively late stage in the drafting of the programme documents, i.e. during the first half of 2013*).

With regard to the 2014-2020 Financial Framework, the social partners also suggest:

- ⇒ avoiding the creation of ad hoc partnerships and beginning by identifying the needs of the administration and the possible key areas for involving the partners;
- ⇒ determining the conditions for designating partners, so that they can contribute relevant arguments to the discussion and proposals for solutions and fill in the gaps in the knowledge possessed by the public administration;
- ⇒ drawing up a timetable to give the partners the time to get involved in the consultations, become familiar with and analyse the proposed documents and issue reasoned opinions;
- ⇒ It is also stressed that the administration cannot be the only party able to initiate, set up and manage the partnership. At all these stages - programming, implementation, follow-up and assessment of the Operational Programmes and provision of the requisite financial resources - some tasks should be transferred to the partners.
- ⇒ Consultations should take the form of standing groups, with systematic participation by the partners. To this end, during the 2014-2020 programming period, it would be desirable for the government to involve, in the monitoring of the Structural Funds, the existing social dialogue institutions (such as the Tripartite Committee, the regional social dialogue committees and the employment committees) whose potential has not yet been utilised and which

could play a role in organising the initial phase of the programming work, draw up concrete proposals in their particular areas of competence and, in their capacity as standing evaluation groups, assess the programmes financed by the Structural Funds. The results of these institutions' work could be used by the Monitoring Committees as a departure point for their decisions³.

³

To prepare the new Framework, the Polish National Federation of NGOs has set up a secretariat with responsibility for monitoring the 2014-2020 programming. Its role is to inform the NGOs and other social partners on the progress made in planning the new Financial Framework and to support the partners in connection with the social consultations on the new Financial Perspective.



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