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### **The European Commission to Improve how the European Social Fund Functions**

Several experts have looked at the way in which the European Social Fund (ESF) functioned in the 2007-2013 period, at the peak of the economic crisis. They outlined a number of ways for improving the way in which this fund functions for the post-2020 period by emphasising that procedures will have to be simplified and administrative costs reduced.

This report was published by the European Commission on 5 January (more information [here](#)). It was drafted by independent experts and takes the shape of a preparatory study together with five thematic studies carried out in the context of the ESF over the 2007-2013 period and specific reports for each member state. Overall the report is positive and highlights that for example: **(a)** by the end of 2014 at least 9.4 million European residents had found a job with the assistance of the ESF, **(b)** 8.7 million had obtained a qualification or diploma and **(3)** around 13.7 million people had mentioned other positive results, such as an improvement in their skill sets.

According to the experts, however, nothing seems to suggest that the ESF has contributed to the effective promotion of gender equality, even though more than 50 million women have benefited from it over the period analysed. A similar observation regarding the pledge to develop coherent action and synergies with other EU instruments.

The European Commission's assessment ultimately outlines possibilities for improving the current EFS implementation phase and the one launched for the post-2020 period. It suggests: **(1)** taking into account the so-called soft results during the impact assessments, **(2)** assessing in more details the macro-economic effects (impact of the ESF on the GDP is estimated to be around 0.25%) and the results from the capacity strengthening activities, **(3)** encouraging member states to reduce administration costs for beneficiaries, **(4)** improving and promoting the use of instruments relating to financial engineering and **(5)** promoting more take up of simplified cost options, such as flat rate financing, standard barometers of unit costs and flat rate amounts, in addition to simplifying audits.