

Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions on the ‘European Social Fund Plus’

(2019/C 86/07)

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Reference document:	Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)
	COM(2018) 382 final

I. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMENDMENTS

Amendment 1

Preamble, first citation

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 46(d), Article 149, Article 153(2)(a), Article 164, Article 168(5), Article 175(3) and Article 349 thereof,	Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 9 , Article 46(d), Article 149, Article 153(2)(a), Article 164, Article 168(5), Article 174 , Article 175(3) and Article 349 thereof,

Reason

Given the scope of the ESF+ it seems appropriate to mention Article 9 TFEU. More emphasis should be placed, moreover, on the regional policy objective, in line with Article 4(2) of the proposal for a Common Provisions Regulation, which states that the ESF+ will contribute to the EU's efforts to strengthen its economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Amendment 2

Preamble, Add new citation after the fifth citation

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
	<i>having regard to the Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights (2017/C 428/09),</i>

Amendment 3

Recital 1

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(1) On 17 November 2017, the European Pillar of Social Rights was jointly proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission as a response to social challenges in Europe. The twenty key principles of the pillar are structured around three categories: equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; social protection and inclusion. The twenty principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights should guide the actions under the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). In order to contribute to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights the ESF+ should support investments in people and systems in the policy areas of employment, education and social inclusion, thereby supporting economic, territorial and social cohesion in accordance with Article 174 TFEU.	(1) On 17 November 2017, the European Pillar of Social Rights was jointly proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission as a response to social challenges in Europe. The twenty key principles of the pillar are structured around three categories: equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; social protection and inclusion. The twenty principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights should guide the actions under the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). In order to contribute to and support economic, social and territorial cohesion, in accordance with Article 174 TFEU, and the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the ESF+ should support investments in people and systems in the policy areas of employment, education and social inclusion.

Reason

More emphasis needs to be placed on the regional policy objective, without undermining efforts to achieve the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Amendment 4

Recital 2

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(2) At Union level, the European Semester of economic policy coordination is the framework to identify national reform priorities and monitor their implementation. Member States develop their own national multiannual investment strategies in support of those reform priorities. Those strategies should be presented alongside the yearly National Reform Programmes as a way to outline and coordinate priority investment projects to be supported by national and/or Union funding. They should also serve to use Union funding in a coherent manner and to maximise the added value of the financial support to be received notably from the programmes supported by the Union under the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the European Investment Stabilisation Function and InvestEU, where relevant.	(2) At Union level, a long-term development strategy succeeding the Europe 2020 Strategy and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals is to provide a strategic framework for the new programming period starting in 2021. The European Semester of economic policy coordination is the framework to identify national reform priorities and monitor their implementation. Member States develop their own national multiannual investment strategies in support of those reform priorities. Those strategies should be developed by local, regional and national authorities working together and be presented alongside the yearly National Reform Programmes as a way to outline and coordinate priority investment projects to be supported by national and/or Union funding. They should also serve to use Union funding in a coherent manner and to maximise the added value of the financial support to be received notably from the programmes supported by the Union under the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the European Investment Stabilisation Function and InvestEU, where relevant.

Amendment 5

Recital 5

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(5) The Union is confronted with structural challenges arising from economic globalisation, the management of migration flows and the increased security threat, clean energy transition, technological change and an increasingly ageing workforce and growing skills and labour shortages in some sectors and regions, experienced especially by SMEs. Taking into account the changing realities of the world of work, the Union should be prepared for the current and future challenges by investing in relevant skills, making growth more inclusive and by improving employment and social policies, including in view of labour mobility.	(5) The Union is confronted with structural challenges arising from economic globalisation, the management of migration flows and the increased security threat, clean and just energy transition, technological change, including the digital transformation, the increasingly ageing European population, and growing skills and labour shortages in some sectors and regions, experienced especially by SMEs. Taking into account the changing realities of the world of work, the Union should be prepared for the current and future challenges by investing in relevant skills, making growth more inclusive, particularly at local and regional levels, and by improving education, training, employment and social policies, including in view of labour mobility.

Reason

It is important to use technology-neutral terminology that is already current.

Amendment 6

Recital 6

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(6) Regulation (EU) No [...] establishes the framework for action by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the Cohesion Fund, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), the Asylum and Migration Fund (AMIF), Internal Security Fund (ISF) and the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI) as a part of the Integrated Border Management Fund (IBMF), and lays down, in particular, the policy objectives and the rules concerning programming, monitoring and evaluation, management and control for Union funds implemented under shared management. It is therefore necessary to specify the general objectives of the ESF+, and to lay down specific provisions concerning the type of activities that may be financed by the ESF+.	(6) Regulation (EU) No [...] establishes the framework for action by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the Cohesion Fund, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), the Asylum and Migration Fund (AMIF), Internal Security Fund (ISF) and the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI) as a part of the Integrated Border Management Fund (IBMF), and lays down, in particular, the policy objectives and the rules concerning programming, monitoring and evaluation, management and control for Union funds implemented under shared management. It is therefore necessary to specify the general objectives of the ESF+ and how it ties in with the other funds , and to lay down specific provisions concerning the type of activities that may be financed by the ESF+.

Amendment 7

Recital 8

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(8) The types of financing and the methods of implementation under this Regulation should be chosen on the basis of their ability to achieve the specific objectives of the actions and to deliver results, taking into account, in particular, the costs of controls, the administrative burden, and the expected risk of non-compliance. For grants, this should include consideration of the use of lump sums, flat rates and unit costs, as well as financing not linked to costs as envisaged in Article 125(1) of the Financial Regulation. To implement measures linked to the socioeconomic integration of third country nationals, and in accordance with Article 88 of the Common Provisions Regulation, the Commission may reimburse Member States using simplified cost options including the use of lump sums.	(8) The types of financing and the methods of implementation under this Regulation should be chosen on the basis of their ability to achieve the specific objectives of the actions and to deliver results, taking into account, in particular, the costs of controls, the administrative burden, the characteristics of the actions and the expected risk of non-compliance. For grants, this should include consideration of the use of lump sums, flat rates and unit costs, as well as financing not linked to costs as envisaged in Article 125(1) of the Financial Regulation. To implement measures linked to the socioeconomic integration of third country nationals, and in accordance with Article 88 of the Common Provisions Regulation, the Commission may reimburse Member States using simplified cost options including the use of lump sums. <i>In view of this, it is important for simplification measures to be continued, in order to reduce the administrative burden and thus increase the added value, visibility and effectiveness of the funds by focusing effort and human resources on achieving political objectives as a priority.</i>

Reason

A reference to the 'characteristics of the actions' is included in order to increase requirements for simplification in the case of actions that affect the most deprived people. The simplification of procedures and costs reinforces the achievement of policy objectives as it focuses energy on the efficiency of measures, thus facilitating small beneficiaries' access to the funds.

Amendment 8

New recital after recital 8

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
	(8bis) Support under the investment priority 'community-led local development' can contribute to all the thematic objectives set out in this Regulation. The 'community-led local development' (CLLD) strategies supported by the ESF+ should be inclusive with regard to disadvantaged people living in the region, both in terms of the governance of the community development groups and in relation to the content of the strategy.

Reason

Given the need to raise awareness about the increasingly local and regional focus/approach of the ESF+ beyond 2020, a clear reference should be made to community-led local development.

Amendment 9

Recital 14

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(14) The ESF+ should provide support to improving the quality, effectiveness and labour market relevance of education and training systems in order to facilitate the acquisition of key competences notably as regards digital skills which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, employment, social inclusion and active citizenship. The ESF+ should help progression within education and training and transition to work, support lifelong learning and employability, and contribute to competitiveness and societal and economic innovation by supporting scalable and sustainable initiatives in these fields. This could be achieved for example through work-based learning and apprenticeships, lifelong guidance, skills anticipation in cooperation with industry, up-to-date training materials, forecasting and graduate tracking, training of educators, validation of learning outcomes and recognition of qualifications.	(14) As the EU's main instrument for investing in human capital and skills, the ESF+ is to play a key role in promoting social, economic and territorial cohesion. The ESF+ should provide support to improving the quality, effectiveness and labour market relevance of education and training systems in order to facilitate the acquisition of key competences notably as regards digital skills which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, employment, social inclusion and active citizenship. The ESF+ should help progression within education and training and transition to work, support lifelong learning and employability, and contribute to competitiveness and societal and economic innovation by supporting scalable and sustainable initiatives in these fields. This could be achieved for example through work-based learning and apprenticeships, lifelong guidance, skills anticipation in cooperation with industry, up-to-date training materials, forecasting and graduate tracking, training of educators, validation of learning outcomes and recognition of qualifications.

Reason

The territorial dimension of the ESF must be safeguarded.

Amendment 10

Recital 15

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
(15) Support through the ESF+ should be used to promote equal access for all, in particular for disadvantaged groups, to quality, non-segregated and inclusive education and training, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training and to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, thereby fostering permeability between education and training sectors, preventing early school leaving, improving health literacy, reinforcing links with non-formal and informal learning and facilitating learning mobility for all. Synergies with the Erasmus programme, notably to facilitate the participation of disadvantaged learners in learning mobility, should be supported within this context.	(15) Support through the ESF+ should be used to promote equal access for all to quality, non-segregated education and training that, inter alia, promotes social inclusion and takes account of disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care, paying special attention to children coming from a disadvantaged social background, such as children in institutional care and children experiencing homelessness, through general and vocational education and training and to tertiary level and re-integration into the education system, as well as adult education and learning, thereby preventing the transmission of poverty through generations, fostering permeability between education and training sectors, preventing early school leaving and social exclusion, improving health literacy, reinforcing links with non-formal and informal learning and facilitating learning mobility for all. Synergies with the Erasmus programme should be established in this context in order to properly and actively reach out and to prepare disadvantaged learners for mobility experiences abroad and increase their participation in cross-border learning mobility.

Reason

In accordance with Recital 1, the ESF+ should support investments in people and systems in the policy areas of employment, education and social inclusion — it is not necessary to make support in the area of education dependent on the issue of social inclusion.

Amendment 11

Recital 18

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
(18) The ESF+ should support Member States’ <i>efforts</i> to tackle poverty with a view to breaking the cycle of disadvantage across generations and promote social inclusion by ensuring equal opportunities for all, tackling discrimination and addressing health inequalities. This implies mobilising a range of policies targeting the most disadvantaged people regardless of their age, including children, marginalised communities such as the Roma, and the working poor. The ESF+ should promote the active inclusion of people far from the labour market with a view to ensuring their <i>socioeconomic</i> integration. The ESF+ should be also used to enhance timely and equal access to affordable, sustainable and high quality services such as healthcare and long-term care, in particular family and community-based care services. The ESF+ should contribute to the modernisation of social protection systems with a view in particular to promoting their accessibility.	(18) The ESF+ should support Member States’ efforts at all levels of government including at regional and local level to tackle poverty, including energy poverty as foreseen in the newly agreed rules on the Governance of the Energy Union, with a view to breaking the cycle of disadvantage across generations and promote social inclusion by ensuring equal opportunities for all, fighting discrimination and addressing social and health inequalities. This implies mobilising a range of pro-active and reactive policies targeting the most disadvantaged people regardless of their age, including children, in line with Principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, marginalised communities such as the Roma, persons with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, third-country nationals and the working poor. The ESF+ should promote the active inclusion of people far from the labour market with a view to ensuring their social and economic integration including through targeted support to the social and solidarity-based economy. The ESF+ should be also used to enhance timely and equal access to free or affordable, sustainable and high quality services such as healthcare and long-term care, in particular family and community-based care services and services guiding access to adequate social or affordable housing. The ESF+ should contribute to the modernisation of social protection systems with a view in particular to promoting their accessibility.

Reason

It is necessary to highlight the key role of local and regional authorities in contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Amendment 12

Recital 19

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
(19) The ESF+ should contribute to the reduction of poverty by supporting national schemes aiming to alleviate food and material deprivation and promote social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion and the most deprived. With a view that at Union level at least 4 % of the resources of the ESF+ strand under shared management supports the most deprived, Member States should allocate at least 2 % of their national resources of the ESF+ strand under shared management to address the forms of extreme poverty with the greatest social exclusion impact, such as homelessness, child poverty and food deprivation. Due to the nature of the operations and the type of end recipients, it is necessary that simpler rules apply to support which addresses material deprivation of the most deprived.	(19) The ESF+ should contribute to the reduction of poverty by supporting national and regional schemes aiming to alleviate food and material deprivation and promote social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion and the most deprived. With a view that at Union level at least 4 % of the resources of the ESF+ strand under shared management supports the most deprived, Member States should allocate at least 2 % of their national resources of the ESF+ strand under shared management to address the forms of extreme poverty with the greatest social exclusion impact, such as homelessness, child poverty and food deprivation. Due to the nature of the operations and the type of end recipients, it is necessary that simpler rules apply to support which addresses material deprivation of the most deprived.

Reason

It is necessary to highlight the key role of local and regional authorities in contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Amendment 13

Recital 20

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(20) In light of the persistent need to enhance efforts to address the management of the migration flows in the Union as a whole and in order to ensure a coherent, strong and consistent support to the solidarity and responsibility-sharing efforts, the ESF+ should provide support to promote the socioeconomic integration of third country nationals complementary to the actions financed under the Asylum and Migration Fund.	(20) In light of the persistent need to enhance efforts to address the management of the migration flows in the Union as a whole and in order to ensure a coherent, strong and consistent support to the solidarity and fair responsibility-sharing efforts, the ESF+ should provide support to promote the social and economic integration of third country nationals in a way that is both complementary to and coordinated with the actions financed under the Asylum and Migration Fund, the ERDF, and those funds which can have a positive effect on the inclusion of third-country nationals. Member States should allocate an appropriate amount of ESF+ resources to local and regional authorities to meet the needs for third-country nationals' integration at the local level.

Reason

It is necessary to avoid any kind of overlap between the ESF+ and the Asylum and Migration Fund so that the actions financed by them are not only complementary but also coordinated.

Amendment 14

Recital 21

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(21) The ESF+ should support policy and system reforms in the fields of employment, social inclusion, healthcare and long-term care, and education and training. <i>In order to strengthen alignment with the European Semester</i>, Member States <i>should</i> allocate an appropriate amount of their resources of the ESF+ strand under shared management to implement relevant country-specific recommendations <i>relating to structural challenges, which should be addressed through multiannual investments falling within the scope of the ESF+.</i> The Commission <i>and</i> the Member States should ensure coherence, co-ordination and complementarity between the shared-management and Health strands of ESF+ and the Reform Support Programme, <i>including the Reform Delivery Tool and the Technical Support Instrument.</i> In particular, the Commission and the Member State should ensure, in all stages of the process, effective coordination in order to safeguard the consistency, coherence, complementarity and synergy among sources of funding, including technical assistance thereof.	(21) The ESF+ should support policy and system reforms in the fields of employment, social inclusion, healthcare and long-term care, and education and training <i>linked to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and to the challenges identified by the social scoreboard in the European Semester and in national reports. These reports will be prepared in close consultation with local and regional authorities. On the basis of the specific characteristics of each region,</i> Member States <i>will</i> allocate an appropriate amount of their resources of the ESF+ strand under shared management to implement country-specific recommendations <i>that are relevant from the point of view of the scope and mission of the ESF+ in coordination with local and regional authorities, taking into account distribution of competences for managing the different policies and the funding that is needed for this.</i> The Commission, the Member States <i>and the local and regional authorities</i> should ensure coherence, coordination and complementarity between the shared-management and Health strands of ESF+ and the Reform Support Programme, <i>while also maintaining the autonomy of the ESF+ which will only be able to finance the challenges identified by the European Semester when the goals coincide with those of the ESF+, avoiding an improper use of the ESF+ beyond its objectives.</i> In particular, the Commission and the Member State should ensure, in all stages of the process, effective coordination in order to safeguard the consistency, coherence, complementarity and synergy among sources of funding, including technical assistance thereof.

Reason

The link between the ESF+ funding and the European Semester should take into account not only the social scoreboard, but also national reports that are prepared following close consultation between the Commission and the Member States, and which need to be prepared following consultation with local and regional authorities. Given the close link between the ESF+ and the patterns of employment included in the European Semester, the ESF+ can act as a financing instrument for the European Semester as regards those actions that fall within the scope of one of the fund's objectives.

Amendment 15

New Recital after Recital 22

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
	(22bis) <i>In light of the persistently high levels of child poverty and social exclusion in the EU (26,4 % in 2017), and the European Pillar of Social Rights which states that children have the right to protection from poverty, and children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the rights to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities, Member States should allocate adequate amount of ESF+ resources under shared management to a European Child Guarantee scheme for the eradication of child poverty and social exclusion. Investing early in children yields significant returns for children and society as a whole. Supporting children to develop skills and capabilities enables them to develop their full potential, become active members of society and increase their chances on the labour market as young people.</i>

Amendment 16

Recital 23

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(23) In the light of persistently high levels of youth unemployment and inactivity in a number of Member States and regions, in particular affecting young people who are neither in employment, nor in education or training, it is necessary that those Member States continue to invest sufficient resources of the ESF+ strand under shared management towards actions to promote youth employment including through the implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes. Building on the actions supported by the Youth Employment Initiative in the 2014-2020 programming period targeting individual persons, Member States should further promote employment and education reintegration pathways and outreach measures for young people by prioritising, where relevant, long-term unemployed, inactive and disadvantaged young people including through youth work. Member States should also invest in measures aimed at facilitating school-to-work transition as well as reforming and adapting employment services with a view to providing tailor-made support to young people. Member States concerned should therefore allocate at least 10 % of their national resources of the ESF+ strand under shared management to support youth employability.	(23) In the light of persistently high levels of youth unemployment and inactivity in a number of Member States and regions, in particular affecting young people who are neither in employment, nor in education or training, it is necessary that those Member States and regions continue to invest sufficient resources of the ESF+ strand under shared management towards actions to promote youth employment including through the implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes. Building on the actions supported by the Youth Employment Initiative in the 2014-2020 programming period targeting individual persons, Member States and regions should further promote employment and education reintegration pathways and outreach measures for young people by prioritising, where relevant, long-term unemployed, inactive and disadvantaged young people including through youth employment. Member States and regions should also invest in measures aimed at facilitating school-to-work transition as well as reforming and adapting employment services with a view to providing tailor-made support to young people. Member States that have regions with high youth unemployment and inactivity should therefore allocate at least 15 % of their national resources of the ESF+ strand under shared management to support youth employability in these regions.

Reason

It is necessary to highlight the key role of local and regional authorities in contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion. Furthermore, although various Member States are affected by high rates of youth unemployment and inactivity, rates at regional level may vary considerably within the same state. Calculations should therefore be made based on different regional situations and the allocation and implementation of resources should take place in the areas identified as being sensitive.

Amendment 17

Recital 24

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(24) Member States should ensure coordination and complementarity between the actions supported by these funds.	(24) Member States, while fully respecting the principles of partnership, subsidiarity and multi-level governance in accordance with Article 6 of the CPR , should ensure coordination and complementarity between the actions supported by these funds.

Reason

The territorial approach underlying the ESF+ should also ensure close interaction between all levels of government and other bodies as provided for in Article 6 of the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) in order to ensure coordination and complementarity.

Amendment 18

New Recital after Recital 25

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
	(25bis) Account should also be taken of the provisions of the third paragraph of Article 174 TFEU, which states that particular attention shall be paid to regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps, such as island, cross-border and mountain regions.

Amendment 19

Recital 26

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(26) Efficient and effective implementation of actions supported by the ESF+ depends on good governance and partnership between all actors at the relevant territorial levels and the socioeconomic actors, in particular the social partners and civil society. It is therefore essential that Member States encourage the participation of social partners and civil society in the implementation of the ESF+ under shared management.	(26) Efficient and effective implementation of actions supported by the ESF+ depends on good governance and partnership between all actors at the relevant territorial levels, particularly and specifically at local and regional levels , and the socioeconomic actors, in particular the social partners, civil society and non-governmental organisations . It is therefore essential that Member States and local and regional authorities encourage the participation of social partners and civil society in the implementation of the ESF+ under shared management.

Reason

It is necessary to highlight the key role of local and regional authorities in contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Amendment 20

Recital 28

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(28) The Member States and the Commission should ensure that ESF+ contributes to the promotion of equality between women and men in accordance with Article 8 TFEU to foster equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men in all areas, including regarding participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment and career progression. They should also ensure that the ESF+ promotes equal opportunities for all, without discrimination in accordance with Article 10 TFEU and promotes the inclusion in society of persons with disabilities on equal basis with others and contributes to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. These principles should be taken into account in all dimensions and in all stages of the preparation, monitoring, implementation and evaluation of programmes, in a timely and consistent manner while ensuring that specific actions are taken to promote gender equality and equal opportunities. The ESF+ should also promote the transition from residential/institutional care to family and community-based care, in particular for those who face multiple discrimination. The ESF+ should not support any action that contributes to segregation or to social exclusion. Regulation (EU) No [future CPR] provides that rules on eligibility of expenditure are to be established at national level, with certain exceptions for which it is necessary to lay down specific provisions with regard to the ESF+ strand under shared management.	(28) <i>The Managing Authorities of the Member States at local and regional levels</i>, and the Commission should ensure that ESF+ contributes to the promotion of equality between women and men in accordance with Article 8 TFEU to foster equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men in all areas, including regarding participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment and career progression. They should also ensure that the ESF+ promotes equal opportunities for all, without discrimination in accordance with Article 10 TFEU and promotes the inclusion in society of persons with disabilities on equal basis with others and contributes to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. These principles should be taken into account in all dimensions and in all stages of the preparation, monitoring, implementation and evaluation of programmes, in a timely and consistent manner while ensuring that specific actions are taken to promote gender equality and equal opportunities. The ESF+ should also promote the transition from residential/institutional care to family and community-based care, in particular for those who face multiple discrimination. The ESF+ should not support any action that contributes to segregation or to social exclusion. Regulation (EU) No [future CPR] provides that rules on eligibility of expenditure are to be established at national level, with certain exceptions for which it is necessary to lay down specific provisions with regard to the ESF+ strand under shared management.

Reason

It is necessary to highlight the key role of local and regional authorities in contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Amendment 21

Recital 30

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(30) With regard to the processing of personal data within the framework of this Regulation, national data controllers should carry out their tasks for the purposes of this Regulation in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council.	(30) With regard to the processing of personal data within the framework of this Regulation, national and regional data controllers should carry out their tasks for the purposes of this Regulation in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council. In addition, Member States and regions must ensure access to this data through means that allow compliance with the transmission deadlines for the established indicators.

Amendment 22

Recital 31

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(31) Social experimentation is a small-scale project testing which allows gathering evidence on the feasibility of social innovations. It should be possible for feasible ideas to be pursued on a wider scale or in other contexts with financial support from the ESF+, as well as from other sources.	(31) Social experimentation is a small-scale, project testing which allows gathering evidence on the feasibility of social innovations. It should be possible to evaluate the quality and encourage the pursuit of feasible ideas on a wider scale or in other contexts in different regions or Member States with financial support from the ESF+ or in combination with other sources.

Reason

In order to help spread ideas that are feasible, transnational cooperation should not be confined to innovations improved by Member States; rather, it should be extended to trial runs of proven innovations in different cities.

Amendment 23

Add new Recital after Recital 31

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
	(31bis) The ESF+ covers cross-border partnerships between regional public employment services and social partners and their activities to promote voluntary and fair mobility, as well as transparency and integration of cross-border labour markets through information, advice and placement. In many border regions they play an important role in the development of a genuine European labour market.

Amendment 24

Recital 32

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(32) ESF+ lays down provisions intended to achieve freedom of movement for workers on a non-discriminatory basis by ensuring the close cooperation of the central employment services of Member States with one another and with the Commission. The European network of employment services should promote a better functioning of the labour markets by facilitating the cross-border mobility of workers and a greater transparency of information on the labour markets. The ESF+ scope also includes developing and supporting targeted mobility schemes with a view to filling vacancies where labour market shortcomings have been identified.	(32) ESF+ lays down provisions intended to achieve freedom of movement for workers on a non-discriminatory basis by ensuring the close cooperation of the central and regional employment services of Member States with one another and with the Commission. The European network of employment services should promote a better functioning of the labour markets by facilitating the cross-border mobility of workers and a greater transparency of information on the labour markets. The ESF+ scope also includes developing and supporting targeted mobility schemes with a view to filling vacancies where labour market shortcomings have been identified.

Reason

It is necessary to highlight the key role of local and regional authorities in contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Amendment 25

Recital 36

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(36) Keeping people healthy and active longer and empowering them to take an active role in managing their health will have positive effects on health, health inequalities, quality of life, productivity, competitiveness and inclusiveness, while reducing pressures on national budgets. The Commission has been committed to help Member States to reach their sustainable development goals (SDG), in particular SDG 3 'Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages'.	(36) Keeping people healthy and active longer and empowering them to take an active role in managing their health will have positive effects particularly as regards reducing inequalities, in terms of access to healthcare, including preventive care , quality of life, productivity, competitiveness and inclusiveness, while reducing pressures on national budgets. The Commission has been committed to help Member States and regions to reach their sustainable development goals (SDG), in particular SDG 3 'Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages'.

Amendment 26

Recital 46

Text proposed by the Commission	CoR amendment
(46) Reflecting the importance of tackling climate change in line with the Union's commitments to implement the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, this Regulation will contribute to mainstream climate action in the Union's policies and to the achievement of an overall target of 25 % of the EU budget expenditures supporting climate objectives. Relevant actions will be identified during the preparation and implementation, and reassessed in the context of the mid-term evaluation.	(46) Reflecting the importance of tackling climate change in line with the Union's commitments to implement the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, this Regulation will contribute to mainstream climate action to ensure a socially acceptable and fair transition to a sustainable low carbon economy in the Union's policies and to the achievement of an overall target that can exceed 30 % of the EU budget expenditures supporting climate objectives. Relevant actions will be identified during the preparation and implementation, and reassessed in the context of the mid-term evaluation.

Reason

Consistency with the opinion 2389/2018 on the Multiannual Financial Framework package for the years 2021-2027.

Amendment 27

Article 2(1) point (3)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(3) 'basic material assistance' means goods which fulfil the basic needs of a person for a life with dignity, such as clothing, hygiene goods and school material;	(3) 'basic material assistance' means goods which fulfil the basic needs of a person for a life with dignity, such as clothing, hygiene goods and school material, adequate nutrition, decent housing and healthcare;

Amendment 28

Article 2(1)

Add new point after point (7)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
	'cross-border partnerships' in the employment and social innovation strand, means structures of cooperation between public employment services and social partners in border areas of at least two countries;

Amendment 29

Article 2(1)(10)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(10) 'legal entity' means any natural person, or any legal person created and recognised as such under national law, Union law or international law, which has a legal personality and which may, acting in its own name, exercise rights and be subject to obligations;	(10) 'legal entity' means any natural person, or any legal person created and recognised as such under national law, Union law or international law, which has a legal personality and which may, acting in its own name, exercise rights and be subject to obligations;

Reason

Amendment of translation only affects the Spanish version of the text. It is considered more appropriate in the Spanish version to replace '*entidad jurídica*' with '*sujeto de derecho*' since from the legal point of view it seems contradictory to refer to a natural person as a legal entity.

Amendment 30

Article 2(1)(16)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(16) 'social innovations' mean activities that are social both as to their ends and their means and in particular those which relate to the development and implementation of new ideas (concerning products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations, thereby benefiting society and boosting its capacity to act;	(16) 'social innovations' mean collective activities that are social both as to their ends and their means and in particular those which relate to the development testing, validation, implementation and scaling of new (combinations of) products, services, models or practices that meet social needs and resolve societal challenges, and simultaneously create new social relationships or collaborations between public, private and third sector organisations, thereby empowering civil society actors and boosting their capacity to act;

Amendment 31

Article 2(1)(17)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(17) 'social experimentations' mean policy interventions that offer an innovative response to social needs, implemented on a small scale and in conditions that enable their impact to be measured, prior to being implemented in other contexts or on a larger scale, if the results prove convincing ;	(17) 'social experimentations' mean the test and the comparative assessment of the innovative response to social needs, implemented on a small scale and in conditions that enable their impact to be measured, prior to being implemented in other geographical or sectoral contexts or on a larger scale, if the results prove advantageous over current practice ;

Amendment 32

Article 3, first paragraph

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
The ESF+ aims to support Member States to achieve high employment levels, fair social protection and a skilled and resilient workforce ready for the future world of work, in line with the principles set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 17 November 2017.	The ESF+ aims to support Member States, at their different central, regional and local levels , to achieve high employment levels, fair social protection and a skilled and resilient workforce ready for the future world of work, in line with the cohesion policy principles of reducing disparities and increasing economic, social and territorial cohesion as set out in Article 174 TFEU , with the principles set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 17 November 2017, and with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, taking into account the need to develop integrated measures reflecting specific subnational situations.

Reason

It is necessary to highlight the key role of local and regional authorities in contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Amendment 33

Article 3, second paragraph

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
The ESF+ shall support, complement and add value to the policies of the Member States to ensure equal opportunities, access to the labour market, fair working conditions, social protection and inclusion, and a high level of human health protection.	The ESF+ shall support, complement and add value to the policies of the Member States and their subnational authorities to ensure equal opportunities, access to the labour market, fair working conditions, social protection and inclusion, and a high level of human health protection.

Reason

It is necessary to highlight the key role of local and regional authorities in contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Amendment 34

Article 4(1) point (i)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(i) improving access to employment of all jobseekers, in particular youth and long-term unemployed, and of inactive people, promoting self-employment and the social economy;	(i) improving access to employment of all jobseekers, in particular youth and long-term unemployed, inactive people and people with disabilities , promoting self-employment and increasing employment in businesses and social economy entities and supporting cross-border labour mobility;

Reason

A specific reference should be made to people with disabilities as well as to the encouragement of cross-border labour mobility, given the importance of these aspects for a more cohesive Europe from an economic, social and territorial point of view. Boosting employment should apply to all economic operators.

Amendment 35

Article 4(1) point (ii)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(ii) modernising labour market institutions and services to assess and anticipate skills needs and ensure timely and tailor-made assistance and support to labour market matching, transitions and mobility;	(ii) modernising labour market institutions and services to assess and anticipate skills needs and ensure timely and tailor-made assistance and support to labour market matching, transitions and mobility, and improve the quality of all aspects of work;

Reason

A specific reference should be made to improving the quality of all aspects of work, given its importance in achieving a more inclusive and cohesive Europe from an economic, social and territorial point of view.

Amendment 36

Article 4(1) point (iv)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(iv) improving the quality, effectiveness and labour market relevance of education and training systems, to support acquisition of key competences including digital skills;	(iv) improving the quality, effectiveness and labour market relevance of education and training systems, including higher education systems , to support acquisition of key competences including digital skills;

Reason

It must remain possible to promote education and training opportunities to increase the innovative potential of a region and to improve job opportunities in science and industry. Funding for higher education is particularly important in achieving this.

Amendment 37

Article 4(1) point (v)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(v) promoting equal access to and completion of, quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, and to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all;	(v) promoting equal access to and completion of, quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, and to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning and higher education , including facilitating learning mobility for all;

Reason

It must remain possible to promote education and training opportunities to increase the innovative potential of a region and to improve job opportunities in science and industry. Funding for higher education is particularly important in achieving this.

Amendment 38

Add new point after Article 4(1) point (xi)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
	(xii) strengthening the institutional capacity of the authorities and stakeholders and contributing to efficient public administration.

Reason

The aim is to bring back thematic objective 11 of the current ESIF programming period for the post-2020 period, given the delay in strengthening institutional capacities and local administrations.

Amendment 39

Article 4(2)(1)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
1. a smarter Europe through the development of skills for smart specialisation, skills for key enabling technologies, industrial transition, sectorial cooperation on skills and entrepreneurship, the training of researchers, networking activities and partnerships between higher education institutions, vocational and educational training (VET) institutions, research and technological centres and enterprises and clusters, support to micro, small and medium sized enterprises and the social economy;	1. a smarter Europe through the development of skills for smart specialisation, skills for key enabling technologies, industrial transition, sectorial cooperation on skills and entrepreneurship, the training of researchers and trainers , networking activities and partnerships between higher education institutions, vocational and educational training (VET) institutions, research and technological centres and enterprises and clusters, support to micro, small and medium sized enterprises and the social economy;

Reason

Training for unemployed people is key in enabling them to find employment, and trainers should therefore be specialised if they are to achieve success.

Amendment 40

Article 5(2)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
2. The part of the financial envelope for the ESF+ strand under shared management under the Investment for Jobs and Growth goal shall be EUR 100 000 000 000 in current prices or EUR 88 646 194 590 in 2018 prices of which EUR 200 000 000 in current prices or EUR 175 000 000 in 2018 prices shall be allocated for transnational cooperation supporting innovative solutions as referred to in Article 23 (i) and EUR 400 000 000 in current prices or EUR 376 928 934 in 2018 prices as additional funding to the outermost regions identified in Article 349 TFEU and the NUTS level 2 regions fulfilling the criteria laid down in Article 2 of Protocol No 6 to the 1994 Act of Accession.	2. The part of the financial envelope for the ESF+ strand under shared management under the Investment for Jobs and Growth goal shall be EUR 100 000 000 000 in current prices or EUR 88 646 194 590 in 2018 prices of which EUR 200 000 000 in current prices or EUR 175 000 000 in 2018 prices shall be allocated for transnational cooperation supporting innovative solutions as referred to in Article 23 (i). Particular attention shall be paid to less-developed regions and other regions mentioned in the third paragraph of Article 174 TFEU when allocating funding, with the aim of contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion. In addition, EUR 400 000 000 in current prices or EUR 376 928 934 in 2018 prices shall be earmarked as additional funding to the outermost regions identified in Article 349 TFEU and the NUTS level 2 regions fulfilling the criteria laid down in Article 2 of Protocol No 6 to the 1994 Act of Accession.

Reason

As the ESF+ will contribute to EU action to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion, in accordance with Article 174 TFEU, particular attention should be paid to less-developed regions and other regions mentioned in the third paragraph of Article 174 TFEU when allocating funding, with the aim of contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Amendment 41

Article 5(5)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
5. The amounts referred to in paragraphs 3 and 4 may also be used for technical and administrative assistance for the implementation of the programmes, such as preparatory, monitoring, control, audit and evaluation activities including corporate information technology systems.	5. The amounts referred to in paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 may also be used for technical and administrative assistance for the implementation of the programmes, such as preparatory, monitoring, control, audit and evaluation activities including corporate information technology systems.

Reason

The shared management funds covered by paragraph 2 should be used to provide technical assistance.

Amendment 42

Article 7(1), first subparagraph

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
1. Member States shall concentrate the ESF+ resources under shared management on interventions that address the challenges identified in their national reform programmes, in the European Semester as well as in the relevant country-specific recommendations adopted in accordance with Article 121(2) TFEU and Article 148(4) TFEU, and take into account principles and rights set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights.	1. <i>The Managing Authorities in the</i> Member States, <i>at national and regional level,</i> shall — <i>while taking account of the specific features of each region — allocate a sufficient amount of their</i> ESF+ resources under shared management <i>to</i> interventions that <i>promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and the rights established by the European Pillar of Social Rights and that</i> address the challenges identified in their national reform programmes, in the European Semester as well as in the <i>country reports and</i> country-specific <i>social</i> recommendations adopted in accordance with Article 121(2) TFEU and Article 148(4) TFEU <i>as well as and in line with the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Member States may only create additional obligations on beneficiaries where these are justified to deliver towards the objectives of the ESF+ and their implementation.</i>

Reason

It is necessary to highlight the key role of local and regional authorities in contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Amendment 43

Article 7(1), second subparagraph

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
Member States and, where appropriate the Commission, shall foster synergies and ensure coordination, complementarity and coherence between the ESF+ and other Union funds, programmes and instruments such as Erasmus, the Asylum and Migration Fund and the Reform Support Programme, <i>including the Reform Delivery Tool and the Technical Support Instrument,</i> both in the planning phase and during implementation. Member States and, where appropriate the Commission, shall optimise mechanisms for coordination to avoid duplication of effort and ensure close cooperation between those responsible for implementation to deliver coherent and streamlined support actions.	<i>Managing Authorities in the</i> Member States <i>at national and regional level,</i> and, where appropriate the Commission, shall foster synergies and ensure coordination, complementarity and coherence between the ESF+ and other funds, <i>in particular the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, as well as</i> Union programmes and instruments such as Erasmus, the Asylum and Migration Fund and the Reform Support Programme, both in the planning phase and during implementation, <i>without prejudice to the objectives set in Articles 3 and 4 of the Sustainable Development Strategy.</i> Member States and, where appropriate the Commission, shall optimise mechanisms for coordination to avoid duplication of effort and ensure close cooperation between those responsible for implementation to deliver coherent and streamlined support actions.

Reason

It is necessary to highlight the key role of local and regional authorities in contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion. On the other hand, it is not necessary to include a reference to coordination with these new instruments: the Reform Delivery Tool and the Technical Support Instrument. Coordination with the EFSI is needed and should be included in the text, taking into account the main objective of the ESF+. Moreover, a clear reference to the Sustainable Development Strategy is needed.

Amendment 44

Article 7(2)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
2. Member States shall allocate an appropriate amount of their ESF+ resources under shared management to address challenges identified in relevant country-specific recommendations adopted in accordance with Article 121 (2) TFEU and Article 148(4) TFEU and in the European Semester falling within the scope of the ESF+ as set out in Article 4.	2. Member States, in coordination with the regions and taking into account the distribution of competences for managing the different policies and funding needed , shall allocate an appropriate amount of their ESF+ resources under shared management to address challenges identified in relevant country-specific recommendations — while factoring in specific regional characteristics — that have been adopted in accordance with Article 121(2) TFEU and Article 148(4) TFEU and in the European Semester falling within the scope of the ESF+ as set out in Article 4. The principles and rights established in the European Pillar of Social Rights and the objective of economic, social and territorial cohesion should also be taken into consideration.

Reason

Meeting these requirements can only lead to greater economic and social cohesion for the European Union. Therefore, when dividing up the amounts to be allocated, respect should be ensured for regional and local **authorities'** management capacities and areas of competence, with regard to the challenges that fall under their remit.

Amendment 45

Article 7(5)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
5. Member States having a rate of young people aged 15 to 29 not in employment, education or training above the Union average in 2019 on the basis of Eurostat data, shall allocate at least 10 % of their ESF+ resources under shared management for the years 2021 to 2025 to targeted actions and structural reforms to support youth employment and school-to-work transition, pathways to reintegrate into education or training and second chance education, in particular in the context of implementing Youth Guarantee schemes.	5. Member States having regions with a rate of young people aged 15 to 29 not in employment, education or training above the Union average in 2019 on the basis of Eurostat data, shall allocate at least 15 % of their ESF+ resources under shared management for the years 2021 to 2025 to targeted actions and structural reforms to support youth employment and school-to-work transition, pathways to reintegrate into education or training and second chance education, in particular in the context of implementing Youth Guarantee schemes at local and regional level.

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
When programming the ESF+ resources under shared management for 2026 and 2027 at mid-term in accordance with Article [14] of [the future CPR], Member States having a rate of young people aged 15 to 29 not in employment, education or training above the Union average in 2024 on the basis of Eurostat data, shall allocate at least 10 % of their ESF+ resources under shared management for the years 2026 to 2027 to these actions. Outermost regions meeting the conditions set out in the first and second subparagraphs shall allocate at least 15 % of the ESF+ resources under shared management in their programmes to the targeted actions set out in the first subparagraph. This allocation shall be taken into account for verifying compliance with the minimum percentage at national level set out in the first and second subparagraphs. When implementing such actions, Member States shall give priority to inactive and long-term unemployed young people and put in place targeted outreach measures.	When programming the ESF+ resources under shared management for 2026 and 2027 at mid-term in accordance with Article [14] of [the future CPR], Member States having a rate of young people aged 15 to 29 not in employment, education or training above the Union average in 2024 on the basis of Eurostat data, shall allocate at least 10 % of their ESF+ resources under shared management for the years 2026 to 2027 to these actions. Outermost regions meeting the conditions set out in the first and second subparagraphs shall allocate at least 15 % of the ESF+ resources under shared management in their programmes to the targeted actions set out in the first subparagraph. This allocation shall be taken into account for verifying compliance with the minimum percentage at national level set out in the first and second subparagraphs. When implementing such actions, Member States shall give priority to inactive and long-term unemployed young people and put in place targeted outreach measures. Member States shall allocate an adequate amount of their ESF+ resources under shared management to implement the European Child Guarantee in order to ensure children's equal access to free healthcare, free education, free childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition.

Reason

Various Member States are affected by high rates of youth unemployment and inactivity, although rates at regional level may vary considerably within the same state. Calculations should therefore be made based on different regional situations and the allocation and implementation of resources should take place in the areas identified as being sensitive. Supporting youth employment should be one of the main challenges to be tackled by the ESF+, especially in those states with regions where unemployment rates are higher than average, and it must be ensured that this support is sufficient by means of an allocation of at least 15 %.

Amendment 46

Article 8(1)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
1. Each Member State shall ensure adequate participation of social partners and civil society organisations in the delivery of employment, education and social inclusion policies supported by the ESF+ strand under shared management.	1. Managing Authorities in the Member States at national and regional level, shall ensure adequate participation of social partners and civil society organisations in the delivery of employment, education and social inclusion policies supported by the ESF+ strand under shared management, in line with the European Code of Conduct on Partnership and multi-level governance.

Reason

It is necessary to highlight the key role of local and regional authorities in contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Amendment 47

Article 11

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
The actions addressing the challenges identified in relevant country-specific recommendations and in the European Semester as referred to in Article 7(2) shall be programmed under one or more dedicated priorities.	The actions addressing the challenges identified in relevant country-specific recommendations and in the European Semester as referred to in Article 7(2) shall be programmed under one or more priorities. <i>Adequate flexibility shall be guaranteed at the level of the Managing Authority, in order to identify the priorities and areas for ESF+ investments, depending on specific local and regional challenges.</i>

Reason

Actions linked to country-specific recommendations (concerning various thematic areas and included under various specific objectives) should not be incorporated into one or more dedicated priorities. Actions linked to country-specific recommendations should be part of one or more priorities in accordance with the relevant thematic area.

Amendment 48

Article 13(1)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
1. Member States shall support actions of social innovation and social experimentations, or strengthen bottom-up approaches based on partnerships involving public authorities, the private sector, and civil society such as the Local Action Groups designing and implementing community-led local development strategies.	1. Member States shall support actions of social innovation and social experimentations <i>and/or</i> strengthen bottom-up approaches based on partnerships involving public authorities, <i>at national, regional and local level,</i> the private sector, <i>social partners</i> and civil society such as the Local Action Groups designing and implementing community-led local development strategies.

Reason

Rural development groups and community-led local development strategies should be seen in the ESF+ as a general instrument for strengthening its territory-based approach. For this reason, their role must be extended and become a tool for innovative actions.

Amendment 49

Article 13(4)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
4. Each Member State shall dedicate at least one priority to the implementation of paragraphs 1 or 2 or to both. The maximum co-financing rate for these priorities may be increased to 95 % for the allocation of maximum 5 % of the national ESF+ allocation under shared management to such priorities.	4. Each Member State shall dedicate at least one priority to the implementation of paragraphs 1 or 2 or to both. The maximum co-financing rate for these priorities may be increased to 95 % for the allocation of maximum 5 % of the national ESF+ allocation under shared management to such priorities. <i>A minimum proportion of the national ESF+ allocation under shared management should be earmarked for supporting social innovation and social experimentation actions. Audit rules for such actions should be sufficiently flexible to allow risk-taking and creativity. There will be support for transnational cooperation, in order to transfer proven innovations to other contexts at local, regional or national level.</i>

Reason

Evidence from the 2014-2017 period shows that the ESF can act as a catalyst for social innovation at local level, but the audit regime, which is too strict, stifles its potential. It is also important that the rules are sufficiently flexible to allow risk-taking and thinking on one's feet. In order to help spread social innovations that are successful, transnational cooperation should not be confined to innovations improved by Member States; rather, it should be extended to trial runs of proven innovations in different cities.

Amendment 50

Article 14(1)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
1. In addition to the costs referred to in Article [58] of [the future CPR], the following costs are not eligible under the general support of the ESF+ strand under shared management: (a) the purchase of land and real estate, and the provision of infrastructure; and <i>(b) the purchase of furniture, equipment and vehicles except where the purchase is necessary for achieving the objective of the operation, or these items are fully depreciated, or the purchase of these items is the most economic option.</i>	1. In addition to the costs referred to in Article [58] of [the future CPR], the following costs are not eligible under the general support of the ESF+ strand under shared management: (a) the purchase of land and real estate, and the provision of infrastructure; and

Reason

Subparagraph (b) restricts expenditure unnecessarily and should therefore be deleted.

Amendment 51

Article 15(5)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
5. Member States shall, when data are available in registers or equivalent sources, enable the Managing Authorities and other bodies entrusted with data collection necessary for the monitoring and the evaluation of the general support of the ESF+ strand under shared management to obtain those data from data registers or equivalent sources, in accordance with points (c) and (e) of Article 6(1) of Regulation (EU) 2016/679.	5. Member States shall, when data are available in registers or equivalent sources, enable the Managing Authorities and other bodies entrusted with data collection necessary for the monitoring and the evaluation of the general support of the ESF+ strand under shared management to obtain those data from data registers or equivalent sources, in accordance with points (c) and (e) of Article 6(1) of Regulation (EU) 2016/679. <i>In addition, Member States shall guarantee access to this data through means that allow compliance with the transmission deadlines for the established indicators.</i>

Reason

The mere authorisation to obtain data from administrative records does not ensure compliance with the aim of Article 15, which is to obtain the individual data of the participants without having to collect it from them directly, and then to transmit the values of the indicators calculated on the basis of them ahead of the set deadlines. This requires permanent and flexible channels for cross-checking the information.

Amendment 52

Article 21(4)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
4. The Commission shall adopt an implementing act establishing the model to be used for the structured survey of end recipients in accordance with the advisory procedure referred to in Article 39(2) in order to ensure uniform conditions for the implementation of this Article.	4. The Commission shall adopt an implementing act establishing the model to be used for the structured survey of end recipients in accordance with the advisory procedure referred to in Article 39(2) in order to ensure uniform conditions for the implementation of this Article. <i>The information requested in the survey shall be limited to key variables for monitoring and evaluating the progress made by ESF+ support and tackling material deprivation.</i>

Reason

Preparing surveys aimed at households is expensive and may be an annoying burden to citizens, contrary to Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics, which lays down the principle of 'cost-effectiveness'. The information requested in the survey should be limited, with a view to avoiding including variables that are not really necessary or are disproportionately difficult to obtain in comparison to the benefits that they would bring if available.

Amendment 53

Article 23 point (h)

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
(h) to provide guidance for the development of social infrastructure (including housing, child care and education and training, health care and long-term care) needed for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights;	(h) to provide guidance for the development of social infrastructure (including housing, child care and education and training, health care and long-term care and community-led development strategies) needed for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals ;

Amendment 54

Annex II, point 2 — Common result indicators

Text proposed by the European Commission	CoR amendment
Number of the end recipients receiving food support	Number of the end recipients receiving food support
— Number of children below 18 years of age	— Number of children below 18 years of age,

Reason

The Spanish name of this indicator refers to an age group (0-18 years of age), the upper limit of which overlaps with the group that the following indicator on the list refers to: 'Number of youths aged 18-29 years'. [Translator's note: This amendment does not apply to the English version.] This creates confusion as 18-year-olds would be included in both groups.

II. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Role of the European Social Fund

1. highlights that the European Social Fund has become the main instrument for investing in people, promoting equality between men and women and improving the lives of millions of European citizens, and appreciates the positive effects of the European Social Fund in the period 2007-2013;

2. welcomes the fact that new objectives in areas such as youth employment and the further promotion of social inclusion, health and poverty reduction have been added to the traditional objectives of European Social Fund — i.e. improving the effectiveness of the operation of labour markets and promoting access to quality jobs, improving access to education and training;

3. considers it necessary for the European Social Fund to be able to become an instrument that allows greater GDP and productivity growth and addresses the challenges of access to decent, quality jobs, by helping to speed up the process of economic and social convergence in the EU, which was damaged by the crisis and poor economic and social recovery. This will ensure that it remains an essential pillar of cohesion policy and long-term growth, focusing efforts on improving the EU's human capital, improving conditions of access and progress to more and better jobs and protecting persons and sectors that have been hardest hit by the economic crisis and have not yet fully recovered;

4. is of the view that good design and implementation of the ESF+ can contribute to increasing positive perception of the European Union among citizens, raising the profile of the EU's efforts to support the most deprived;

Cohesion policy

5. welcomes the links that the proposal for an ESF+ regulation makes to the European Pillar of Social Rights, although it lacks a clearer link to the objective of economic, social and territorial cohesion, insofar as the two elements are complementary and interrelated.
6. considers it necessary to recognise the ESF+ as a fundamental component of cohesion policy in the proposal for a regulation and to avoid transforming it into a sectoral European policy instrument;
7. emphasises that the added value of the ESF+, in comparison to action taken by Member States, is linked to territorial needs and integration with other cohesion policy funds for the purposes of carrying out coherent and comprehensive initiatives at local level. Regrets, therefore, that the ESF+ has been separated financially from the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund, which may lead to a possible break-up of cohesion policy in the post-2027 MFF, as happened recently with the EAFRD;

Decentralisation, shared management and co-financing

8. rejects the low profile of regional local authorities in the proposal for a regulation and reminds the Commission of the importance of these authorities in managing the Fund, supported by their extensive experience;
9. rejects the key role given to the national authorities of the Member States at the expense of local and regional authorities, since it considers that this centralisation may only be granted by the institutional framework of the Member State concerned;
10. notes that it has been proven that decentralisation has led to better implementation of place-based approach and more effective distribution of funding and therefore calls for the proposal for a regulation to give greater clout in managing and distributing the fund to local authorities in those Member States with high degrees of political and administrative decentralisation, so that the fund's management structure can be adjusted to the Member States' organisational structure — particularly in those countries with greater degrees of decentralisation;
11. believes that the commitment made by the proposal for a regulation to introduce an — albeit modest — direct management model sets a precedent for future frameworks, which should be limited to actions that are relevant to the scope and aim of the ESF+;
12. takes a very negative view of the return to the N+2 rule, the reduction in the co-financing rate and the amounts of pre-financing put forward in the CPR proposal, which, combined with a possible reduction in resources for the required national counterpart as a result of fiscal consolidation policies, will have a highly detrimental impact on the fund's management, impeding achievement of the expected results. The Committee therefore calls for an increase in the co-financing levels for the 2007/2013 and 2014/2020 programming periods, or at least for these levels to be maintained, to ensure that the commitment to social inclusion and the Pillar for Social Rights is not undermined by reduced financial support from the European Union. It notes that the fulfilment of certain conditionalities does not fall within the remit of local and regional authorities, and therefore proposes that a penalty be applied only if local and regional authorities have been involved in negotiating them and have thereby taken some form of responsibility;

Budget

13. takes a very positive view of the transparency exercise carried out for the first time by the Commission when allocating an exact financial envelope to the ESF+ for the period 2021-2027, as the Commission proposal has taken into account previous CoR opinions and proposed also using social indicators other than GDP when distributing resources between Member States. At the same time, the Committee encourages the Commission to take into account in future an indicator relating to the integration of third-country nationals going beyond a simple calculation of the net migration balance;
14. regrets the deletion of the 23,1 % minimum share of cohesion policy that should be allocated to the ESF+, as well as the reduction resulting from the Commission proposal on cohesion policy with regard to the ESF. This reduction will lead not only to a cut in the total resources earmarked for employment and social inclusion but also to a smaller role for local and regional authorities in programming and managing the ESF+;
15. expresses concern at the reduction in the financial envelope in a proposal which includes new additional objectives for the ESF+, as this will mean less resources being allocated to meet more objectives;

16. stresses that the ESF's specific role is to support those projects that make it easier to adapt local and regional potential based on human capital to labour market needs. This is the only way to limit the costs associated with migration of human capital and thus the loss of its value (including as a result of 'brain drain'). It is therefore important to support measures linking the provision of education with labour market trends so that talent can be attracted and retained in the territory while at the same time creating jobs;

17. urges the Commission, when distributing resources between the Member States, to factor in the individual characteristics of the regions especially less-developed regions. At the same time, account shall be taken of the specific circumstances of the outermost regions and the NUTS 2 level regions, which meet the criteria set out in Article 2 of Protocol No 6 to the 1994 Act of Accession and of those regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps, in accordance with the explicit mandate of Article 174 TFEU;

Simplification

18. welcomes the commitment to greater simplification, which is apparent from the proposal. The CoR urges the Commission to adopt additional simplification measures both for Managing Authorities and for beneficiaries within the instruments to be adopted in the regulation, as the removal of barriers, costly requirements and red tape from the start of the operations selection process is key;

19. welcomes the extension of 'payment by results' based instruments, as well as the joint action plans and the simplified costs options in the Common provisions regulation, and trusts that Member States will not add additional rules to those set out by the European Commission;

20. notes that the process of developing of indicators to measure implementation and results requires time and effort and therefore considers that, in order to avoid an excessive workload and jeopardising the viability and quality of the system of indicators, the submission of data should be twice a year, including preparations for the annual discussion of the managing authorities with the Commission and not bi-monthly as the proposal states;

Coordination with other strategies

21. warmly welcomes those provisions in the proposal for a regulation which help to consolidate principles of gender equality and equal opportunities by strengthening their cross-cutting nature, as they must be taken into account at all stages of the programmes;

22. takes a positive view of the continuation, restructuring and broadening of the fundamental objectives of ESF+ interventions, but points out that it is essential to allow more generic, flexible and open interventions than those that could be applied during the current programming period, in order to facilitate social inclusion and enable attention to be directed towards the most deprived persons;

23. deems the opening up of the ESF+ to the area of social innovation as a promising step, but believes that there is a need to put in place tools and mechanisms to strengthen the capacities of key players when designing, implementing and evaluating this type of programme. The Commission should dedicate some of its efforts to building up a support network for awareness-raising, training and assistance in the planning and implementation of social innovation initiatives, in coordination with the InvestEU initiative;

24. points out that the ESF+ can and should actively contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as it has a direct impact on many of them and an indirect impact on almost all of them;

25. maintains that the ESF+ should improve coordination and promote synergies with adaptation initiatives and improve responses to the challenges of the digital revolution;

26. maintains that the ESF+ must improve coordination and promote synergies with initiatives linked to aspects of health, both from the perspective of prevention and care;

27. believes that the ESF+ should help to create a more equal society, adopting a people-centred approach. The Committee therefore welcomes the link between the ESF+ objectives and the European Pillar of Social Rights. The CoR remains however cautious about the link between the ESF+ and the country-specific recommendations adopted in the context of the European Semester. In this regard, it considers that the ESF+ should coordinate properly with the European economic governance process while preserving its autonomy and ensuring that it does not become subordinate to this process. Moreover, the CoR stresses the need to integrate the ESF+ investment priorities into a new long-term EU Strategy implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, recognising that the Commission's proposal complies with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality;

28. believes it is not an appropriate solution for measures linked to the implementation of the country-specific recommendations (CSR), which usually concern very different thematic areas (education, activation, creation of childcare places and many others) and at the same time are included under various specific objectives in the EFS regulation, to be incorporated artificially into one or more dedicated priorities. The most appropriate course of action is to ensure that measures linked to implementation of the CSR form part of one or more priorities in accordance with the relevant thematic areas (employment, education, social inclusion). Attention should also be paid to the fact that CSR should be linked to the priorities planned for the long-term financial perspective;

29. regrets the lack of precision with regard to the percentage of resources that Member States are to allocate to tackling the challenges identified in the European Semester for economic policy coordination, the national reform programmes and country-specific recommendations. The CoR calls on the European institutions to define the links with the European Semester with greater clarity without altering the fund's governance and management model. In particular, this should not mean a cut in resources managed by regional authorities in highly-decentralised Member States;

30. welcomes the fact that the socioeconomic integration of immigrants has been included under the strategic area of social inclusion, as part of Europe's response to this issue. This response should be orderly, comprehensive, responsible, respectful of the people's dignity and unyielding in the face of discrimination;

31. notes that empirical evidence shows that the gradual integration of the working immigrant population can be an important opportunity in terms of economic dynamism and increased employment. This effect is maximised when immigrants offer qualified labour;

32. calls for recognition for the important work carried out by local and regional authorities in relation to the socioeconomic integration of immigrants, especially unaccompanied minors and young people, and particularly those LRAs in areas with external borders. It stresses the need to seek greater complementarity with the Asylum and Migration Fund, thereby avoiding an overlap between the two instruments and improving coherence between policies for supporting and integrating migrants and for promoting social and labour market integration, catering for the regions with greater needs through specific additional funding;

33. calls for the necessary mechanisms to be adopted to ensure that at least 10 % of the resources received from the ESF+ are used for measures to support youth employment in order to ensure their effectiveness and efficiency and to prevent the marginalisation of youth employment guarantee schemes in the new ESF+. The CoR also calls for these measures to take into account regional and local disparities which may exist within the same Member State. It considers it essential, therefore, that the level of young people aged 15-29 not in employment, education or training above the Union average in 2019 be calculated using regional rather than national Eurostat data.

Brussels, 5 December 2018.

*The President
of the European Committee of the Regions*
Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ
