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The *ex post* evaluation of the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) including the final evaluation of the European Progress Microfinance Facility (EPMF)

Accompanying the document

REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

The *ex post* evaluation of the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) including the final evaluation of the European Progress Microfinance Facility (EPMF)

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Staff Working Document (SWD) presents the results of the *ex post* evaluation of the Employment and Social Innovation Programme (EaSI) including the final evaluation of the European Progress Microfinance Facility (EPMF). The evaluation is subject to a Report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions.

1.1 Purpose and scope of the evaluation

EaSI (2014 - 2020)[1] was built on and provided for the continuation of activities carried out by three previously existing instruments: the Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (PROGRESS)[2], the network of European Employment Services (EURES)[3] and the European Progress Microfinance Facility (EPMF). EaSI was implemented by the Commission[4] in the EU Member States, EFTA/EEA[5], EU candidate and potential candidate countries alongside three axes:

- The PROGRESS axis supported policymaking and implementation by producing policy evidence, organising information sharing and mutual learning activities, creating better conditions for social policy innovations in particular through calls for proposals for social experimentation and helping to build capacity for EU and national organisations.
- The EURES axis facilitated workers' free movement in the EU by making recruitment information more transparent and accessible (particularly through the EURES Portal), and by responding to jobseekers' and employers' requests for information, assistance and guidance (by providing jobseekers placement services through cross-border partnerships and targeted mibility schemes).
- The Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis[6] contributed to improve access to finance for vulnerable people (i.e. those at risk of social or financial exclusion), microenterprises and social enterprises through providing funding and capacity building to financial intermediaries.

Horizontal principles - such as gender equality, non-discrimination, and combating poverty and social exclusion - were supported in each axis of the programme.

EPMF (2010 - 2016) - the second programme evaluated - was launched by the Commission with the aim of extending the outreach of microfinance to particular groups at-risk and to

[1]In the programming period 2021 - 2027, EaSI became an integrated part of a consolidated single fund, the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). Many of the former stand-alone programme EaSI provisions were preserved, providing continuity of its objectives, while accentuating their social dimension in the context of supporting the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). The financial instruments for microfinance and social enterprises implemented under the former EaSI were deployed in 2021 – 2027 under the InvestEU Fund, while the EURES network coordination office function was transferred to the European Labour Authority (ELA) established in 2019.

[2]The EU Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (PROGRESS; 2007 - 2013) financed three main types of actions: analytical activities; mutual learning, awareness, and dissemination activities; support for main actors.

[3]Launched in 1994, the EURES network is a cooperation network between the European Commission and the Public Employment Services of the EEA Member States and other partner organisations. The EURES network regroups the EU Member States, Norway, Lichtenstein, and Iceland. Switzerland cooperates with the network. EURES network members and partners include Public Employment Services (PES) at national and regional level (142), but also other private employment services, social partners, universities, or other organizations that have undergone an admission procedure, a total of 23 members and 54 partners (cf. EURES Regulation *ex post* evaluation, 2021, page 9).

[4]The EaSI budget was managed mostly directly by DG EMPL based on calls for proposals and tenders. The financial instruments implemented under the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis were implemented indirectly (the Commission entrusted their management to the EIF as previously done for EPMF).

[5]Iceland participated in all three axes, Norway participated only in PROGRESS and EURES, Lichtenstein did not participate in EaSI at all, and Switzerland participated only in EURES and only at its own expense. All candidate countries were associated in the second semester of 2015 to EaSI, while the pre-candidate countries (at that time Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina) did not participate in the programme.

[6]Also referred as 'EaSI third axis' in this Staff Working Document.

micro-enterprises. Its goals were to increase access to microcredit for those who have lost their job or who are at risk of losing their job, and for other disadvantaged people (including young people) who want to start or further develop their own microenterprise, including self-employment. The EPMF, implemented by the European Investment Fund (EIF) through the indirect management mode[7], was followed up by a new generation of financial instruments under the EaSI third axis[8]. In line with the general objectives of the PROGRESS programme[9], the EPMF was also expected to actively promote equal opportunities for men and women.

Considering their legal bases requirements and the links between the two programmes[10], the Commission carried out a joint EaSI/EPMF *ex post* evaluation. In terms of scope, this evaluation covers all EaSI and EPMF stakeholders and activities carried out in the participating countries from their start (January 2014 for EaSI, March 2010 for EPMF) until the end of December 2020[11]. Backward-looking, the evaluation assesses to what extent the respective activities and expected outcomes achieved the programmes' objectives. In a forward looking perspective, the evaluation aims to confirm the choices made in the ESF+ impact assessment[12]. It also provides lessons learned for the implementation of the 2021 - 2027 follow-up programmes, notably the EaSI strand of the ESF+, as well as for future funds.

1.2 Methodological framework and data limitations

This evaluation - supported by an external study (hereafter the 'supporting study')[13] - combines and triangulates qualitative and quantitative data sources and methods[14]. EIF representatives were closely involved in this exercise, providing data and expertise on EPMF and EaSI third axis. The evaluation also uses the results of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) contribution summarised in an EESC information report.

The evaluation takes stock as well of the EaSI preceding *ex ante* and *ex post* evaluations, and acknowledges the EaSI mid-term (2017) and EPMF interim (2014) evaluations. Due account is taken as well of the results of the EURES Regulation *ex post* evaluation (2021)[15] to inform

[7]The EPMF participating countries are limited to the EU Member States according to Article 4 of the Commission Decision 2009/340.

[8]See Section 3.2 and Annex II.6.

[9]Defined in the Strategic Framework for the implementation of the PROGRESS programme (2007 - 2013).

[10]EaSI and EPMF legal bases both display evaluation requirements. The Article 38(1) of the EaSI Regulation 1296/2013 states that the EaSI programme *ex post* evaluation provided for in Article 13(4) of the Regulation shall include the final evaluation provided for in Article 9 of the EPMF Decision 283/2010. Two EaSI third axis' financial instruments (*Guarantee Instrument* and *Funded Instrument)* - built on the success of the instruments implemented under the EPMF - combined the benefits of the experience with the EPMF with an enlarged scope and support for social enterprises (see Annex II.6). The evaluation framework was therefore conceived to allow complementary analysis and results for both instruments, as well as economies of scale in terms of process, letting EPMF final evaluation fertilizing the EaSI *ex post* evaluation (evaluation roadmap: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/11969-Employment-and-social-innovation-programme-2014-20-final-evaluation_en).

[11]Under both EPMF instruments, EIF was allowed to sign guarantee agreements with financial intermediaries until 7th April 2016, while the end-date of the implementation period was set on 31st December 2020 for the Guarantee Instrument and on 30th April 2020 for the Funded Instrument. Therefore, the end-date of the implementation period of the EPMF was considered by 31st December 2020 as for the EaSI programme, which is the cut-off date considered in this evaluation (see Annex II.6).

[12]The ESF+ impact assessment found that the best way to maximise the support provided at EU level and to improve synergies between different instruments is to merge the ESF, Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) and EaSI programme into one fund (ESF+) with a single Regulation, but two separate management strands: shared management (covering the former ESF, YEI and FEAD) and direct management (covering EaSI). Link to SWD/2018/289 final: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018SC0289.

[13]The term 'evaluation' refers to the Commission Staff Working Document, while the term 'supporting study' refers to the study carried out by external experts to support the evaluation. The supporting study was carried out by Ramboll Management Consulting, SEOR and Tetra Tech (hereinafter 'the Contractor') and was coordinated by the Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Inclusion and Social Affairs, with the support of an Inter Services Steering Group (ISSG) including a range of Commission Directorates-General.

[14]The overall approach is detailed in Annex II.

[15]The EURES Regulation *ex post* evaluation was carried out according to the EURES Regulation (2016/589). Its scope included four clusters of activities implemented: services to jobseekers and employers, the EURES Portal, targeted mobility schemes and cross-border partnerships. Link to SWD(2021) 217 final: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021SC0217&rid=6). Link to Regulation (EU) 2016/589: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2016.107.01.0001.01.ENG.

the EURES axis findings and of the INOVA+ study[16] on social experimentation projects to inform the PROGRESS axis findings.

A wide range of stakeholders was consulted, including national authorities, programmes' beneficiaries, private organisations, social enterprises, financial intermediaries, civil society organisations and citizens. Overall, more than 400 stakeholders provided feedback during the entire consultation process[17]. Depending on the identified stakeholder group, dedicated methods and tools were used to conduct the consultations: questionnaire-based online public consultation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and targeted surveys. They complemented data and information collected through other methods, such as the desk research and case studies.

Four main data quality challenges were identified and mitigated:

- **Limited EaSI financial data comparability.** Identified caveats in the EaSI financial data datasets for 2014 - 2017 - due to start-up problems and successive adjustments of the DG EMPL application for financial programming and monitoring (FINAP) - were mitigated to allow comparability of evidence throughout the overall programme implementation[18].
- **Changes in method to count visitors to the EURES Portal**. Changes in methodology to count the number of visitors to the EURES Portal affected the comparability of this indicators across 2014 - 2020 (see discussion and mitigation measures in Section 4.1.5). Additionally, before the entering into force of the harmonized EURES Performance Measurement System in 2018, the EURES network participating countries used their national monitoring systems for reporting, often on a voluntary basis. Moreover, many EURES network members consider data related to placements and performance as sensitive. Hence, EURES monitoring information on number of CVs, job vacancies and placements is not entirely comparable across the overall implementation period[19].
- **Incomplete social data for Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis and EPMF.** The information on gender, age, education level and employment status are based on data provided voluntarily by the EPMF and EaSI Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis final recipients - most of them being natural persons - to the financial intermediaries. While data available did not permit to obtain a complete picture of the groups monitored, it indicates the general direction of the programmes[20].
- **Limited stakeholders' participation in consultations.** The stakeholders' participation in the different consultations was relatively limited[21] (107 responses to the open public consultation and 102 responses to the EaSI beneficiaries' survey). For this reason, generalisations were avoided, and the public consultation and beneficiaries survey results were used in conjunction with other methods and/or as qualitative evidence. To prevent the 'stakeholders' fatigue', all consultation methods and activities were designed to be complementary. A final validation seminar allowed stakeholders consulted to provide feedbacks on the evaluation findings.

[16]https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6a3aa5b7-0254-11ed-acce-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-search.
[17]See the stakeholders' consultations synopsis report in Annex V.
[18]See discussion and mitigation measures in Annex II.3.
[19]See discussion and mitigation measures in Sections 4.1.5 and 4.1.10.
[20]See discussion and mitigation measures in Section 4.1.10.
[21]Attempts to involve EPMF and EaSI stakeholders in interviews and focus groups were even more difficult. The main reasons relate to their low availability since 2020 they were either in charge of other tasks or they had changed host organisations. See details in Annex V.

2. WHAT WAS THE EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THE INTERVENTION?

This chapter is organised in three parts. Section 2.1 describes the context and rationale for the two programmes at the time of their preparation, Section 2.2 depicts the intervention logic and Section 2.3 explains the approach to establish the points of comparison.

2.1 Programmes' rationale

In 2010, the European Council endorsed the Commission proposal for a Europe 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth[22] (hereafter 'EU2020 Strategy')[23]. The next year, the Commission Communication 'A budget for Europe 2020'[24] recommended to rationalise and simplify the existing EU funding instruments for more efficiency. In the social affairs field, it recommended to complement the European Social Fund (ESF) by instruments directly managed by the Commission[25]. Subsequently, two preparatory documents – the ESF impact assessment (2011)[26] and the PSCI/EaSI *ex ante* evaluation[27] (2011; hereafter 'EaSI *ex ante* evaluation') - discussed the different possible articulations between the ESF and the other funds available to the DG EMPL. The option retained in 2011 - both in the ESF impact assessment and the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation - was a new integrated programme merging three DG EMPL (in)direct management funds pursuing common objectives[28]. This new 'umbrella' fund was expected to enable the Commission to bring efficiency gains thanks to the rationalisation of instruments, and to the streamlining of management rules and procedures. It was also expected to ensure more flexibility in allocating resources to policy priorities. Against this backdrop, EaSI was set up in 2014 as a programme to support the implementation of the EU policy priorities in social field first under the Europe 2020 strategy[29], and since 2017 under the European Pillar of Social Rights[30]. With a budget of EUR 919 469 000 (in 2013 prices), EaSI was intended to support the modernisation of employment and social policies (PROGRESS axis); to facilitate job mobility and access to labour markets (EURES axis); and to increase access to micro-finance and social finance (Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis).

Back in 2008, the impact of the financial crisis revealed an urgent need for enhanced support to vulnerable groups in accessing employment and financial support. Subsequently, the Commission published the Communication 'A Shared Commitment for Employment'

[22]https://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf.

[23]The EU 2020 Strategy committed the EU and the Member States to deliver on: develop a smarter, greener and knowledge-based economy; growing fast and sustainably; and creating high-levels of employment and social progress.

[24]Link to COM/2011/0500 final: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=celex%3A52011DC0500.

[25]The Staff Working Document accompanying the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund; COM(2011)500 final (Section 5.2, pages 10 - 11).

[26]This impact assessment covered five financial instruments: European Social Fund (ESF), European Globalisation Fund (EGF), European Progress Microfinance Facility (EPMF), EU Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (PROGRESS) and EURES. Link to SEC(2011) 1131 final: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011SC1130&from=EN.

[27]The *ex ante* evaluation (2011) accompanying the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Union Programme for Social Change and Innovation (PSCI) covered three financial instruments: PROGRESS programme (2007-2013), EURES network and the European Progress Microfinance Facility. To note that 'Programme for Social Change and Innovation (PSCI)' was the initial name of EaSI programme. Link: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011SC1134&from=EN.

[28]PROGRESS (2007-2013), EURES network and EPMF. In parallel, the EPMF continued to provide funding under joint management with the European Investment Fund (EIF), with a last investment in 2016 without new extra resources.

[29]The relevant EU 2020 Strategy targets (horizon 2020) for EaSI are: 75% of the population aged 20 - 64 should be employed; and 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty.

[30]The Commission proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) in 2017 and adopted it in 2021. The EPSR relevant targets (horizon 2030) for EaSI are: more and better jobs (78% employment); and lifting 15 million people out of poverty. Link to EPSR: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/european-pillar-of-social-rights.html#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20the%20Commission%20adopted,in%20training%20every%20year%3B%20and.

(2009)[31]. Same year, the EPMF *ex ante* evaluation[32] underlined the following specific issues: Europe lacks the necessary intermediaries, capital and environment to unlock the potential of microcredit in the EU; the microfinance situation in Europe worsened by the 2008 financial crisis; some groups - particularly financially excluded people such women, unemployed persons, ethnic minorities and immigrants[33] - encounter difficulties in accessing finance. To address these needs, the European Commission launched the EPMF in 2010 with the aim of increasing access to microcredit of microenterprises and of people who had lost their job or at risk of losing their job, and of other disadvantaged groups (including women and young people who want to start or develop their own microenterprise). Dedicated financial instruments were expected to achieve the EPMF objectives by reducing risks and enabling microcredit providers to disburse more loans to the final recipients. The EPMF operated under a total financial input of EUR 203 million, of which EUR 103 million from the EU budget and EUR 100 million from the European Investment Bank (EIB).

2.2 Intervention logic

A combined EaSI/EPMF intervention logic (Figure 1)[34] was elaborated for the purpose of this evaluation. Below, the major items of the intervention logic are explained with a focus on the specific objectives and the related activities implemented (Table 1). The two programmes are evaluated according to the inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts which they intended to reach in order to meet the target groups' needs. These needs were considered in the light of the evolving policy and socio-economic context related employment and social challenges, including Brexit, refugee crisis, COVID-19 pandemic and the twin transitions.

The inputs refer to the expenditure committed to implement the activities and to produce the planned outputs. The outputs (activities) range from analytical outputs such as studies and databases, to funding the EURES network activities or to providing financial guarantees for microcredit providers[35].

The intervention logic is based on the EaSI Regulation 'expected effects approach'[36], meaning that the achievement of the specific objectives contributes to the achievement of the general objectives, while the achievement of the later subsequently contributes to the achievement of the ultimate outcome. The ultimate goal - defined very broadly by the legal basis - refers to the programmes' contribution to the implementation of the EU 2020 Strategy, the European Pillar of Social Rights and of the UN 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals. While the specific and general objectives were monitored during the overall programme's implementation period, assessing the achievement of the ultimate goal falls under the mandate of the *ex post* evaluation. The ultimate goal - defined very broadly by the legal basis - refers to the programmes' contribution to the implementation of the EU 2020 Strategy, the European Pillar of Social Rights and of the UN 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals. While the specific and general objectives were monitored during the overall programme's implementation period, assessing the achievement of the ultimate goal falls under the mandate of the *ex post* evaluation.

[31]This communication committed both the EU and the Member States to tackle employment/social bottlenecks and to deliver on the following goals: develop a smarter, greener and knowledge-based economy; growing fast and sustainably; and creating high-levels of employment and social progress (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0257:FIN:EN:HTML.

[32]Link to COM(2009) 333 final: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52009SC0907.

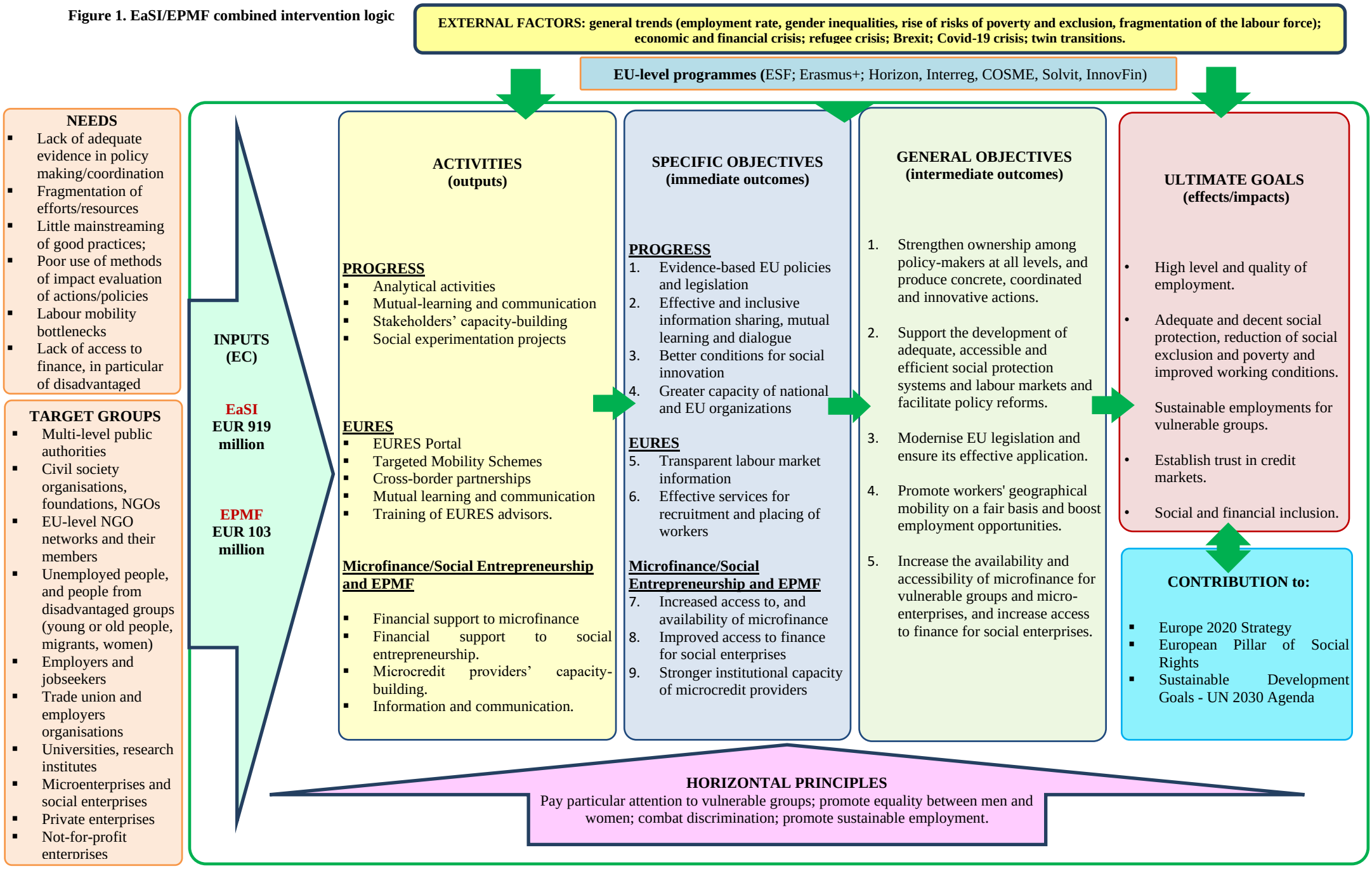
[33]Overview of the Microcredit sector in the European Union 2006-2007 (European Microfinance Network, 2009, page 5).

[34]The intervention logic builds on EaSI Regulation (2013), EPMF Decision (2010), PSCI/EaSI *ex ante* evaluation (2011), EPMF *ex ante* evaluation (2009) and the ESF impact assessment (2011). Based on their similarities and continuity, the EaSI third axis and the EPMF elements are integrated in the combined intervention logic. Complementary/detailed information is provided in Annex II.1.

[35]A classification of EaSI outputs is provided in the Annex II.1.2.

[36]Detailed in Annex II.1.4.

Figure 1. EaSI/EPMF combined intervention logic



Source: DG EMPL, based on EaSI and EPMF legal bases and on monitoring reports

Table 1. EaSI nine specific objectives and activities implemented to achieve them

No.	Specific objective	Explanatory	Activities
1	**Evidence-based EU policies and legislation**	EaSI supported the development/dissemination of comparative analytical knowledge to ensure that EU policies and legislation are based on evidence, and are relevant to the needs, challenges and conditions in participating countries.	Such evidence was either contracted directly by the Commission (procurement), funded through grants notably with international organisations carrying out research in the relevant fields (such as OECD and ILO), or developed by networks of independent experts (such as European Employment Policy Observatory and European Social Policy Network). Evidence-based EU policies and legislation contributed horizontally to achieving all general objectives.
2	**Effective and inclusive information sharing, mutual learning and dialogue**	EaSI facilitated information sharing, mutual learning and dialogue on EU social and labour market policies to help the participating countries in developping their policies and implement the EU law.	Information-sharing and mutual-learning activities were being produced in three major ways: direct funding by the Commission (procurement); events organised during projects' implementation; and events organised by the EU-level NGO networks supported through operating grants. Information sharing, mutual learning and dialogue contributed horizontally to achieving all general objectives.
3	**Better conditions for social policy innovation**	EaSI provided support to test social innovations and to build actors' capacity to design and implement social experimentations.	EaSI supported the preparation and implementation of social policy experimentation as a method for testing and evaluating innovative solutions with a view to up-scaling them. This was done through provision of funding for projects (action grants). EaSI also provided funding for building up the actors' capacity to design and implement social experimentation (methodological guides, events).
4	**Greater capacity of national and EU organisations**	EaSI provided EU and national organisations with financial support to increase their capacity to develop, promote and support the implementation of EU instruments, policies and EU law.	EaSI supported notably EU-level NGO networks (by financing fonctioning costs via operating grants) and other EU as well as national organisations (including national administrations) to participate in and influence policy-making and implementation at EU and national levels.
5	**Transparent labour market information**	EaSI facilitated labour market transparency for the jobseekers and the employers by making available job vacancies, information and advice, as well as information concerning living and working conditions.	A central instrument to achieve this objective was the maintenance, hosting, translation and help desk of the EURES Job Mobility Portal for the clearance of job vacancies and applications. Also, trainings on EURES services to be offered to both jobseekers and employers were being organised under EaSI for the EURES advisers.
6	**Effective provision of services for**	EaSI supported the provision of	Support for EURES services extended to various phases of placement, ranging from

No.	Specific objective	Explanatory	Activities
	recruitment and placing of workers	EURES services for recruitment and placing of workers in quality and sustainable employment through the clearance of job vacancies and applications.	pre-recruitment preparation to post-placement assistance with a view to the applicant's successful integration into the labour market. Two main instruments were used to deliver these services: cross-border partnerships aiming to facilitate labour mobility in cross-border regions; and targeted mobility schemes to fill job vacancies in a certain sector, occupation, country or a group of countries or for particular groups of workers, such as young people, with a propensity to be mobile.
7	**Better access to, and the availability of, microfinance**	EaSI and EPMF aimed to increase availability and access to finance for vulnerable people who wish develop a business as well as to microenterprises employing such vulnerable persons.	EaSI provided funding to microcredit providers through financial instruments, such as guarantees, counter-guarantees and funded instruments (debt instruments, equity investments or funded risk-sharing instruments). This reduced risks and enabled the microcredit providers to lend (more) money to final beneficiaries.
8	**Better access to finance for social enterprises**	EaSI funded actions aimed at increasing the availability and access to finance for social enterprises, and supported the development of the European social investment market.	EaSI provided financial support to investors in social enterprises through financial instruments, which may include guarantees, debt instruments, equity; and quasi-equity.
9	**Stronger institutional capacity of microcredit providers**	EaSI funded the capacity building of microcredit providers by offering technical assistance activities.	Previous experience with the EMPF demonstrated that in order to provide quality services to final beneficiaries, microcredit providers need to improve their institutional capacities. This in turn contributes to increasing access to finance for vulnerable people and micro-enterprises through, for instance, better-qualified staff (loan officers), ability to hire new people, and modernised internal working procedures (e.g. new IT system).

Source: DG EMPL, based on the EaSI monitoring reports.

Alongside the general and specific objectives, there are cross-cutting principles - i.e. paying attention to vulnerable groups, promoting equality between men and women, combating discrimination and promoting sustainable employment - which were incorporated into each programme's axis and action. In terms of synergies/complementarities, EaSI was first expected - in line with its legal basis - to be complementary with ESF, but its consistency with other EU programmes such as the Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, Interreg, COSME, InnovFin or Solvit was also explored.

2.3 Points of comparison

The evaluation used as points of comparison the values of the headline indicators estimated in 2014[37] for most activities, excepting for the support to social entrepreneurship (specific objective 8) and to build capacity of microcredit providers (specific objective 9). For these new activities initiated under EaSI - as well as for EPMF - there was initially no data to establish a point of comparison at their starting. To mitigate this caveat, the evaluation used the targets provided in the respective EPMF and EaSI *ex ante* evaluation. For the sake of consistency, the evaluation used the targets available from the respective EPMF and EaSI *ex ante* evaluations - to be reached by the end of the investment period - for all the related objectives (specific objectives 7, 8 and 9, and the general objective 5). As regards the general objective 5, the evaluation used the target included in the EaSI Performance Measurement System (i.e. '50% of beneficiaries supported by the EaSI financial instruments to be unemployed or belonging to vulnerable groups'). The value of this headline indicator was measured through monitoring the coverage of vulnerable groups by EU-enabled microcredits (see discussion of data limitations in Section 4.1.10).

This *ex post* evaluation used the headline indicators included in the EaSI Performance Measurement System as they offered the best capture of the performance throughout the programmes' lifetime[38]. Data to feed the headline indicators were collected during 2014 - 2020 through the bi-annual EaSI Stakeholders' Survey (the methodology is explained in Annex II.5), the EURES publicly available sources (Job Mobility Portal, EURES Advisors' Monthly Reports) and the annual implementation reports submitted by the EIF. Given the similarity and continuity between EPMF and the EaSI third axis, the indicators used for EPMF were the same as those selected for the EaSI microfinance related objectives. Do note that for EPMF, its *ex ante* evaluation did not provide indicators on which to judge the success of the programme, but indicated however a series of targets that helped to establish points of comparison.

For the biggest share of the programme (PROGRESS axis), the headline indicators were qualitative indicators converted in numerical indicators (based on stakeholders' satisfaction/awareness). As already observed in the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation - the PROGRESS axis four specific objectives are not genuinely measurable while they are specific, accepted, realistic and policy-responsive (for instance, the volume of knowledge generated depends on the needs of policy development). Given the intangible nature of

[37]The EaSI Performance Measurement System includes a baseline report providing points of comparison against which the performance of EaSI could be measured at the later stage of its implementation (end-2020). Based on data from the monitoring of the previous programmes (PROGRESS, EURES and EPMF) and a EaSI Stakeholders' Survey launched in 2014 (see Annex II.5), the EaSI baseline report estimated the values of the indicators established for each specific and general objectives as well as for the horizontal principles before the start of activities.

[38]The EaSI Performance Measurement System includes for each objective one headline indicator and two complementary indicators. The EaSI baseline report was updated three times, notably by removing some indicators revealed as not relevant. The headline indicators remained unchanged across the overall period.

the related activities (production of analytical knowledge, implementation of social experimentations, organisation of mutual learning events and stakeholders' capacity building), they were evaluable only by means of subjective variables, for instance the satisfaction with or the awareness among stakeholders, as well as the use or the intended use of results for policy making. For the remaining parts of the programme (EURES and Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship), headline indicators were quantitative. For the specific objective 5 ('transparent labour market information and advice') the headline indicator used was 'number of visits to the EURES Portal'. Given data robustness limitation faced by this headline indicator, one complementary indicator was used (see discussion in Section 4.1.5).

Table 31 (Annex II.4) presents the points of comparison for each EaSI (including for EPMF) specific/general objectives and the horizontal principles.

3. HOW HAS THE SITUATION EVOLVED OVER THE EVALUATION PERIOD?

This chapter presents the programmes' state of play in monetary/quantitative terms (Table 2) and from countries/beneficiaries' participation perspective.

Table 2: Monetary inputs and number of outputs per EaSI specific objective in 2014 - 2020

Specific objectives		Types of activities	Inputs (EUR million)	Outputs (number of activities)
PROGRESS axis (EUR 497 million)				
1	**Evidence-based EU policies**	Analytical activities	148	198
2	**Effective and inclusive information-sharing, mutual learning**	Mutual learning events	106	191
3	**Testing of social and labour market policy innovation**	Social innovation projects	89	23
4	**Greater capacity of national/EU organisations to promote EU policies**	Capacity building activities	154	72
EURES axis (EUR 165.6 million)				
5	**Transparent labour market information**	Labour market information	59.4	15
6	**Provision of services for the recruitment and placing of workers**	Jobseekers' placement services	106.2[39]	24
Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis (EUR 243 million)[40]				
7	**Better access to and availability of microfinance**	Guarantee Instrument • Funded Instrument • Capacity Building Instrument	166,9[41]	3
8	**Better access to finance for social enterprises**		76,1[42]	2
9	**Stronger institutional capacity of microcredit providers**		45[43]	5

Source: DG EMPL, based on the supporting study, the monitoring report 2019 - 2020 and FINAP/ABAC databases.

The EU total contribution for 2010 - 2020[44] for both EPMF instruments (guarantees and funded) - contributing to the specific objective 7 - amounted to EUR 103 million (the

[39]Of which EUR 88.2 million for the targeted mobility schemes and EUR 18 million for the cross-border partnerships.

[40]This amount represents the sum of EU contribution to each financial instrument (see details in Section 3.2.1 and Table 67 in Annex VI.5). It also includes the amount of EUR 69 million representing reflows from EPMF (the breakdown of these repayments per branch - microfinance and social entrepreneurship - is not available).

[41]Of which EUR 91 million from the *EaSI Guarantee Instrument*, EUR 46,9 million from the *EaSI Funded Instrument* and EUR 29 million from the *EaSI Capacity Building Instrument*. To note that EUR 1 million was earmarked for the implementation of the Business Development Services (BDS) Support pilot which is an additional component embedded in the *EaSI Guarantee instrument*. The purpose of BDS Support was to partially offset the costs incurred by financial intermediaries benefitting from an EaSI Microfinance Guarantee in view of offering Business Development Services to final recipients who qualify as refugees and/or migrants. Despite being considered as an ancillary service to the guarantee instrument, the BDS was funded under EaSI PROGRESS.

[42]Of which EUR 40 million from the *EaSI Guarantee Instrument*, EUR 20,1 million from the *EaSI Funded Instrument* and EUR 16 million from the *EaSI Capacity Building Instrument*.

[43]Of which EUR 29 million contributed to the financial intermediaries' capacity building in microfinance field and EUR 16 million in social entrepreneurship field. These amounts are already included in the amounts of EUR 165,9 million (total support to the microfinance branch) and EUR 76,1 million (total support to the social entrepreneurship branch).

initial contribution of EUR 100 million[45] plus an additional amount of EUR 3 million from the European Parliament Preparatory Action - EPPA).

Below, Section 3.1 presents the inputs, outputs and countries/stakeholders involvement in the EaSI implementation under the direct management mode. Section 3.2 focuses the financial instruments implemented indirectly under EaSI and EPMF.

3.1 EaSI implementation under direct management mode

The EaSI budget was managed mostly directly by DG EMPL based on calls for proposals and calls for tenders. Table 3 below shows the overall commitments per participating country where the beneficiaries have their legal address[46]. It is worth noticing that as a rule, the proposals were submitted by consortia and the grants were therefore awarded to only one (lead) applicant. Therefore, while showing the direction of the programme, no robust conclusion can be drawn from this funding distribution given that not all the monetary split between multiple beneficiaries is available.

Table 3 shows that EaSI financed activities in 42 countries, including EU Members States, EEA/EFTA, candidate and pre candidate countries, and other third countries. In terms of total commitments, EaSI was most commonly used by beneficiaries in Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom (UK) and Portugal. Considering grants only, the monetary trend is the same, excepting for UK and Luxembourg which beneffited to a lesser extent from grants. In particular for Luxembourg, only a small part of the total committments was covered by grants, while the highest share of the total commitments was related to service's contracts[47]. Belgium appears as being the first user of EaSI funding in 2014 - 2020 both in terms of total commitments and in terms of grants. This is explained by the fact that an important amount (see Table 4 below[48]) was used to support the EU-level NGO networks functioning under the Framework Partnership Agreements for operating grants[49], but also to finance studies that were carried out by organisations based in Brussels and events (conferences, seminars, experts' meetings) delivered by consultancy companies also located in Brussels. If most of the EU-Level NGO networks headquarters are located in Brussels, they cannot however be considered as Belgian organisations given their scope and coverage (EU-level advocacy with membership in several countries).

[44]The EPMF Decision did not specify until when the EIF was entitled to sign agreements with third parties, nor until when the loans provided would be covered. The overall timeline considered in the present report is then 2010 - 2020 given that 31 December 2020 was the final date until which the EU financial contribution could be used to implement the EPMF.

[45]Article 3 of the EPMF Decision.

[46]Table 3 is based on data from the EU FTS (EU Financial Transparency System). The estimated amount per country sums up the total amounts received by all the recipients residing in a particular country for which the information is publicly disclosed. Data for some recipients are unavailable and therefore not considered in the computation (https://ec.europa.eu/budget/financial-transparency-system/analysis.html).

[47]Examples include the establishment and management of a Social Policy Network; the management of the technical assistance, including for the development and production of health and safety at work statistics; translations for the EURES Portal; methodological work for the development of flash estimates, aiming at 'Nowcasting' income-based indicators (Eurostat).

[48]Tables 4 to Table 7 included in Chapter 3 are based on data from the DEFIS database which was in 2014 - 2020 the DG EMPL tool for the evaluation of the projects submitted by applicants to calls for proposals and for the management of the projects awarded. DEFIS was replaced in the current programming period with the EC corporate application eGrants.

[49]The Framework Partnership Agreements under EaSI were long-term cooperation instruments that served as umbrella for recurrent grants to EU-level NGO networks active in the employment and social inclusion fields. The specific operating grant agreements were then awarded on an annual basis following an invitation to submit a proposal addressed to the framework partners.

Table 3. Countries' participation in EaSI programme in 2014 - 2020 (EUR million)

No.	Participating country	Types of activities (grants and procurement)	Total commitments (EUR million)	Total grants (EUR million)
1	Albania	Action grants	5.01	5.01
2	Austria	Action grants, IT services, studies, conferences, external meetings, consultancy, evaluation services.	43.70	21.07
3	Belgium	Action grants, operating grants, IT services, studies, conferences and external meetings, consultancy, evaluation services, audit services, communication and publications, supply contracts including ICT equipment, translation and interpretation.	**312.55**	**154.18**
4	Bosnia-Herzegovina	IT services	0.30	0
5	British Virgin Islands	Translation and interpretation	**0.09**	0
6	Bulgaria	Action grants, IT services, studies, evaluation services, translation and interpretation	50.23	42.37
7	Croatia	Action grants, IT services, studies, translation and interpretation.	32.22	24.63
8	Cyprus	Action grants, IT services, studies	39.96	32.37
9	Czech Republic	Action grants, IT services, studies	21.56	13.08
10	Denmark	Action grants, IT services, studies, evaluation services, translation and interpretation, consultancy, administrative services.	33.21	21.34
11	Estonia	Action grants, IT services, studies, translation and interpretation.	20.48	12.51
12	Finland	Action grants, IT services, studies, translation and interpretation.	26.86	18.32
13	France	Action grants, operating grants, IT services, studies, conferences, external meetings and travel, consultancy, evaluation services, audit services, communication and publications, translation and interpretation.	**97.91**	**78.29**
14	Germany	Action and operating grants, IT services, studies, conferences, external meetings/travel, consultancy, evaluation services, audit services, communication and publications, supply contracts including ICT equipment, translation/interpretation.	**95.54**	**62.53**
15	Greece	Action grants, IT services, studies, evaluation services, translation and interpretation, consultancy, evaluation services.	43.28	33.80
16	Hungary	Action grants, IT services, studies, translation and interpretation, consultancy and evaluation services.	14.78	5.66
17	Iceland	Action grants, IT services, studies.	6.91	2.19
18	Ireland	Action grants, IT services, studies, supply of ICT equipment.	49.62	36.65
19	Italy	Action grants, IT services, studies, conferences, external meetings and travel, consultancy, evaluation services, audit services, communication and publications, translation and interpretation, training services.	**120.71**	**81.43**
20	Jordan	Translation and interpretation	**0.03**	0
21	Kosovo	IT services	**0.3**	0
22	Latvia	Action grants, IT services, studies, translation and interpretation	13.41	4.80
23	Liechtenstein	Action grants	**0.60**	0.60
24	Lithuania	Action grants, IT services, studies, translation and interpretation, evaluation services.	13.52	3.79
25	Luxembourg	Action/operating grants, IT services, studies, conferences, external meetings and travel, consultancy, evaluation services, communication and publications, translation/interpretation, training, supply contracts, services linked to buildings.	**197.63**	16.64
26	Malta	Action grants, IT services, studies, translation and interpretation	8.86	1.19
27	Montenegro	Action grants, IT services	4.89	4.56

No.	Participating country	Types of activities (grants and procurement)	Total commitments (EUR million)	Total grants (EUR million)
28	Netherlands	Action grants, operating grants, IT services, studies, conferences, external meetings and travel, consultancy, evaluation services, communication and publications, translation and interpretation, administrative services.	**70.78**	**52.29**
29	North Macedonia	Action grants, IT services	4.30	4.00
30	Norway	Action grants, IT services	13.05	8.74
31	Poland	Action grants, operating grants, IT services, studies, translation and interpretation, consultancy.	30.82	16.92
32	Portugal	Action grants, IT services, studies, evaluation services.	**67.97**	**59.42**
33	Romania	Action grants, IT services, studies, evaluation services, translation and interpretation	55.27	45.04
34	Serbia	Action grants, studies	10.09	10.70
35	Slovakia	Action grants, IT services, studies, translation and interpretation, evaluation services	25.44	16.66
36	Slovenia	Action grants, IT services, studies, translation and interpretation	38.58	30.52
37	Spain	Action grants, IT services, studies, evaluation services, translation and interpretation, consultancy, evaluation services.	**149.55**	**96.84**
38	Sweden	Action grants, studies, conferences, external meetings/travel, communication and publications, translation/interpretation.	36.25	27.37
39	Switzerland	Action grants, IT services	10.36	9.20
40	Türkiye	Action grants, IT services	5.68	5.31
41	United Kingdom	Action grants, operating grants, IT services, studies, conferences, external meetings and travel, consultancy, evaluation services, communication and publications, translation and interpretation, administrative services, legal and audit services.	**73.67**	22.56
38	United States	Action grants, supply of ICT equipment	2.68	1.08
TOTAL			**725.94**	**346.74**

Source: DG EMPL, based on the EU Financial Transparency System (EU FTS) for the total commitments per country and DEFIS database for data on grants (data collected on 20/06/2023)

Table 4. Total number of EaSI operating grants per country in 2014 - 2020

No.	Country	Applied	Awarded	Success rate	Committed (EUR million)
1	Belgium	133	126	95%	78.94
2	Spain	1	0	-	-
3	France	1	1	100%	0.48
4	Luxembourg	1	1	100%	0.43
5	Netherlands	12	11	92%	4.19
6	Poland	7	7	100%	1.82
7	UK	4	4	100%	3.69
TOTAL		**159**	**150**	**94%**	**89.55**

Source: DG EMPL, based on DEFIS database for the ratio applied/awarded and on EU FTS for the commitments

Overall, 55 calls for proposals were launched under EaSI in 2014 - 2020 in addition to calls for tenders. Table 5 indicates that in total, 1074 applications were submitted under these calls for proposals, resulting in 436 grants (including both action and operating grants) covering 35 participating countries. It also presents an overview of applications ("applied") and successful projects ("awarded") per main applicant/main beneficiairy country of residence. Table 5 shows that countries with the higher number of applications were - in order - Italy, Belgium, Turkyie, Spain and Germany. The countries with the higher number of awarded grants were Belgium, Italy, Germany, Spain, France, Netherlands and Poland. Overall, the chances of being successful were 40,60%. The higher success rates were registered for the latter countries but the order is slightly different, i.e. Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, France, Spain, Italy and Poland[50].

Other Member States but also countries from the EFTA/EEA and (pre)candidate groups (for instance Austria, Norway, Sweden, Ireland, Estonia, Slovenia, Croatia, Iceland, Serbia) were also successful considering their respective number of applications. Nevertheless, the 'success rate' indicator cannot be used to properly rank countries given that the application process is not centralised by the participating countries themselves but it is the result of organisations' decision to compete for an award.

These figures and results are also influenced by the participation in recurrent calls for EU-level NGO networks operating grants (notably Belgium) and EURES calls for cross-border partnerships and targeted mobility schemes (notably Germany). In practice, for the EU-level NGO networks that signed the Framework Partnership Agreements, their chances for obtaining an operating grant mainly depended on them submitting an annual proposal; therefore, their success rate was close to 100%. Similarly, the EURES calls for proposals are specific and targeted – resulting nearly in a 100% success rate of the applications submitted. Moreover, as operating grants are awarded to one entity only (no consortia as is the case of most of action grants), the weight of operating grants also explains why the number of grants and beneficiaries are very similar for Belgium as well as its high succes rate (82,35%).

Also, these figures are influenced by the fact that - in a context of economic recession - applicant consortias from countries most hit by the economic and financial crisis such as Italy and Spain sent an important number of applications (notably in 2014 and 2015). Applicants from Italy and Spain are also well represented in the calls for proposals launched under the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis[51].

[50]Some countries showing a high 'success rate', for instance Luxembourg, Austria, Estonia, Ireland, Norway, Slovenia or Sweden - are excluded from this ranking as the calculation of their 'success rates' are based on a limited number of applied/awarded projects.

[51]The Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis was mainly implemented under the indirect management mode by the European Investment Fund, but there was nevertheless one call for proposals for "Actions to boost the demand and supply side of the finance market for social enterprises" that falls in this axis.

Table 5. Applications compared with grants awarded under EaSI programme (2014 - 2020)

No.	Participating country	Applications	Awarded	Success rate (%)	Non-compliant applications	Non-compliant applications
1	Albania	5	1	20,00%	1	20,00%
2	Austria	8	7	87,50**%**	0	0,00%
3	Belgium	**187**	**154**	**82,35%**	1	0,53%
4	Bulgaria	11	4	36,36%	2	18,18%
5	Cyprus	8	2	25,00%	1	0%
6	Czech Republic	4	1	25,00%	0	0%
7	Germany	**51**	**35**	**68,63%**	2	3,92%
8	Denmark	7	4	57,14%	1	14,29%
9	Estonia	2	1	50,00%	0	0,00%
10	Greece	42	7	16,67%	6	14,29%
11	Spain	**85**	**31**	**36,47%**	**13**	15,29%
12	Finland	5	3	60,00%	1	20%
13	France	**49**	**24**	**48,98%**	8	16,33%
14	Croatia	16	5	31,25%	1	6,25%
15	Hungary	24	6	25,00%	8	33,33%
16	Iceland	13	6	46,15%	1	7,69%
17	Ireland	8	6	75,00%	1	12,50%
18	Italy	**196**	**46**	**23,47%**	**24**	12,24%
19	Lithuania	14	5	35,71%	1	7,14%
20	Luxembourg	1	1	100,00%	0	0%
21	Latvia	3	1	33,33%	1	33,33%
22	Montenegro	11	2	18,18%	3	27,27%
23	North Macedonia	0	**0**	0,00%	0	0%
24	Malta	1	**0**	0,00%	1	100%
25	Netherlands	**30**	**19**	**63,33%**	1	3,33%
26	Norway	7	6	85,71%	0	0,00%
27	Poland	**46**	**16**	**34,78%**	7	15,22%
28	Portugal	27	7	25,93%	4	14,81%
29	Romania	22	1	4,55%	6	27,27%
30	Serbia	21	6	28,57%	1	4,76%
31	Sweden	14	9	64,29%	1	7,14%
32	Slovenia	13	6	46,15%	0	0%
33	Slovakia	8	3	37,50%	1	12,50%
34	Türkiye	**104**	2	1,92%	43	41,35%
35	United Kingdom	31	9	29,03%	8	25,81%
TOTAL		**1074**	**436**	**40,60%**	**149**	**13,87%**

Source: DG EMPL, based on DEFIS database

The success rate is also strongly and negatively influenced by the share of non-compliant applications. The case of Türkiye - with 41,35% of non-compliant projects (Table 5 above) - illustrates this finding. Up to 2020, Turkish organisations submitted in total 104 applications under the EaSI calls for proposals (excepting those related to the the cross-border cooperation, Targeted Mobility Schemes and 'Your first Eures job', which were not open to candidate and potential candidate countries). Only two applications were successful giving Türkiye a low success rate of (1,92%), while 43 applications were not compliant for different reasons (out of scope, insuficient details on the proposed activities and their budget).

Table 6 below presents the participation of organisations as main beneficiary/coordinator and co-beneficiary/partner in EaSI grants (including operating grants)[52]. It also gives an overview of EaSI grants' (co)beneficiaries by type of organisation (public, trade union, employers' organisation, research institute/university, profit and non-profit enterprise, foundation, NGO).

The main beneficiary (coordinator) has a preeminent/pro-active role in the project (coordination and distribution of roles/funds; legal responsibility; monitoring; reporting), while the co-beneficiaries (co-partners) have specific operational roles during the implementation period (for instance, in case of social experimentation projects, one partner provides the methodological expertise). To ensure its tasks throughout the overall project's duration, the coordinator must have appropriate human resources/expertise and must also be able to find relevant partners for the project and to create/maintain the partnership.

Table 6 shows that a group of countries – in particular Estonia, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro and Romania - were never involved in EaSI grants as main beneficiaries; nevertheless, they were involved as co-beneficiary. It also indicates that governmental and public bodies (including ministries, labour offices, local and regional authorities and bodies) were the strongest represented group with 41,17%. The group covering civil society organisations took up to 17,57%. The group covering universities, higher education institutes and specific research organisations represents 7.09%. Trade unions and bodies owned by them are grouped in "Trade union organisations" (15.26%). The "Employers' organisations" group - covering 11.30% - includes business representative organisations, chambers of commerce and industry, and similar. Private consultancies as well as profit companies are gathered under "Private enterprises" (6.02%) next to the "Not-for-profit enterprises" (1.57%).

[52]Table 6 presents the total 'unique' beneficiaries, meaning that each organisation was included once in the calculation.

Table 6. Participation in EaSI grants per country and types of (co)beneficiairy *(Source: DG EMPL, based on DEFIS database)*

No.	Country	Total unique beneficiaries	Unique main beneficiaries	Unique co-beneficiaries	Public low body	Foundation /NGO	University-Research	Trade union organisation	Employers' organisations	Private enterprise	Not for profit	Success rate (%)
1	Albania	6	1	5	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	20,00%
2	Austria	23	4	19	4	10	2	1	4	1	**1**	87,50%
3	**Belgium**	**113**	**12**	**101**	**58**	**15**	4	**16**	**12**	7	**1**	**82,35%**
4	Bulgaria	23	4	19	6	2	0	10	4	1	0	36,36%
5	Cyprus	8	2	6	6	0	0	1	0	1	0	25,00%
6	Czech Republic	26	1	25	16	5	0	0	5	0	0	25,00%
7	**Germany**	**142**	**30**	**112**	**71**	**24**	**8**	**25**	**8**	6	0	**68,63%**
8	Denmark	13	4	9	12	1	0	0	0	0	0	57,14%
9	Estonia	7	0	7	4	0	0	2	1	0	0	50,00%
10	Greece	31	8	23	14	4	3	3	2	**5**	0	16,67%
11	**Spain**	**82**	**15**	**67**	**30**	**19**	**11**	7	7	**8**	0	**36,47%**
12	Finland	14	2	12	7	3	2	0	0	2	0	60,00%
13	France	**65**	**18**	**47**	22	**14**	3	5	**18**	3	0	**48,98%**
14	Croatia	17	4	13	8	1	2	4	0	2	0	31,25%
15	Hungary	16	5	11	2	3	0	4	1	3	**3**	25,00%
16	Iceland	9	6	3	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	46,15%
17	Ireland	26	3	23	16	1	1	1	7	0	0	75,00%
18	**Italy**	**166**	**38**	**128**	**52**	**37**	**13**	**26**	**10**	**14**	**14**	**23,47%**
19	Lithuania	27	3	24	4	7	1	9	6	0	0	35,71%
20	Luxembourg	13	0	13	7	1	0	0	5	0	0	0,00%
21	Latvia	13	1	12	8	1	0	4	0	0	0	33,33%
22	Montenegro	5	0	5	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	18,18%
23	North Macedonia	13	2	11	1	3	0	5	4	0	0	0,00%
24	Malta	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0,00%
25	**Netherlands**	**45**	8	**37**	**28**	**8**	2	0	1	**6**	0	**63,33%**
26	Norway	15	6	9	10	2	1	1	0	1	0	85,71%
27	**Poland**	**60**	14	**46**	10	14	5	**23**	6	2	0	34,78%
28	Portugal	**74**	6	**68**	**32**	6	**9**	4	**21**	**2**	**0**	25,93%
29	Romania	19	0	19	9	5	2	2	1	0	0	4,55%
30	Serbia	21	4	17	6	5	1	7	1	1	0	28,57%
31	Sweden	21	**8**	13	13	2	1	2	1	2	0	64,29%
32	Slovenia	**44**	6	**38**	10	6	7	**14**	**3**	**4**	**0**	**46,15%**
33	Slovakia	15	3	12	8	4	0	0	3	0	0	37,50%
34	Türkiye	10	2	8	4	3	2	0	0	1	0	1,92%
35	UK	29	4	25	7	3	5	7	6	1	0	29,03%
TOTAL		**1212**	**224**	**988**	**499**	**213**	**86**	**185**	**137**	**73**	**19**	**40,60%**

Finaly, Table 7 shows the (co)beneficiaries per country and institutional level. It indicates that 59,81% of (co)beneficiaries operate at national level, 22,44% at local level and 16,42% at regional level. Only 1,3% (16 beneficiaries) are international-level organisations and more than half of them (9) are based in Belgium (EU-level NGO networks and consultancies headquarters).

Table 7 also suggests that countries with the highest success rate, for instance Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain, France, Netherlands or Slovenia present a diversified pool of (co) beneficiaries. Italy shows the most balanced composition in terms of types of beneficiaries, involving by far the largest number of most non-profit organisations. Table 7 indicates as well that countries with a strong implication of regional level – like Germany, Belgium, Italy and Spain – present high success rates as well. Italy shows again the most balanced multi-level composition, followed by Germany and Belgium.

Table 7. Participation per institutional level

No.	Country	National level	Regional level	Local level	International	Total	Success rate
1	Albania	6	0	0	0	**6**	20,00%
2	Austria	14	3	3	**3**	**23**	87,50%
3	Belgium	**34**	**55**	**15**	**9**	**113**	**82,35%**
4	Bulgaria	**23**	0	0	0	**23**	36,36%
5	Cyprus	8	0	0	0	**8**	25,00%
6	Czech Republic	**15**	2	9	0	**26**	25,00%
7	Germany	**57**	**63**	**22**	0	**142**	**68,63%**
8	Denmark	8	0	5	0	**13**	57,14%
9	Estonia	7	0	0	0	**7**	50,00%
10	Greece	21	2	8	0	**31**	16,67%
11	Spain	**45**	**17**	**19**	**1**	**82**	**36,47%**
12	Finland	12	2	0	0	**14**	60,00%
13	France	**38**	5	**22**	0	**65**	48,98%
14	Croatia	17	0	0	0	**17**	31,25%
15	Hungary	11	0	5	0	**16**	25,00%
16	Iceland	9	0	0	0	**9**	46,15%
17	Ireland	18	0	8	0	**26**	75,00%
18	Italy	**90**	**30**	**45**	**1**	**166**	**23,47%**
19	Lithuania	**27**	0	0	0	**27**	35,71%
20	Luxembourg	12	0	0	1	**13**	0,00%
21	Latvia	10	0	3	0	**13**	33,33%
22	Montenegro	5	0	0	0	**5**	18,18%
23	North Macedonia	13	0	0	0	**13**	0,00%
24	Malta	1	0	0	0	**1**	0,00%
25	Netherlands	**29**	0	**16**	0	**45**	**63,33%**
26	Norway	13	0	2	0	**15**	85,71%
27	Poland	**33**	13	15	0	**60**	34,78%
28	Portugal	**34**	4	**36**	0	**74**	25,93%
29	Romania	19	0	0	0	**19**	4,55%
30	Serbia	17	0	4	0	**21**	28,57%
31	Sweden	13	1	7	0	**21**	64,29%
32	Slovenia	**31**	0	13	0	**44**	46,15%
33	Slovakia	12	1	0	**1**	**15**	37,50%
34	Türkiye	6	3	1	0	**10**	1,92%
35	UK	15	0	14	0	**29**	29,03%
TOTAL		**725**	**199**	**272**	**16**	**1212**	**40,60%**

Source: DG EMPL, based on DEFIS database.

The evidence presented in this section shows that - despite the variations - all eligible countries participated in the activities funded by EaSI. These variations have different reasons, for instance the absence - for some participating countries - of specific needs related to the call's topic, the lack of financial resources (to cover the 20% co-financing of the total project budget) and/or of human resources (to apply, implement or report). The lack of knowledge and/or experience with the project design and implementation and the lack or insufficient communication campaigns at national level on the funding opportunities offered by EU programmes also played a role.

3.2 EaSI and EPMF implementation under the indirect management mode

Out of the three instruments grouped under the EaSI third axis, the *Guarantee Instrument* and the *Capacity Building Investments Window* were implemented indirectly by the EIF while the *Funded Instrument* was implemented directly by the Commission[53]. Both EPMF financial instruments (*Guarantee Instrument* and *Funded Instrument*) were implemented by the EIF through the indirect management mode[54].

3.2.1 EaSI financial instruments

The EaSI support to microentreprises and social entreprises was delivered through three instruments.

EaSI Guarantee Instrument

This instrument became operational in 2015 with the end date of implementation set at 1st January 2024. By this date, the EIF can still sign guarantee agreements with financial intermediaries, while the financial intermediaries can include loans in their portfolio after this date at the latest by 31 December 2027. At the end of 2020, the cumulative value of guarantee agreements signed under the *EaSI Guarantee Instrument* with financial intermediaries in 31 countries[55] amounted to EUR 388 million[56] (Table 8).

Table 8. Outputs and leverage effect created by EaSI Guarantee Instrument

EaSI third axis strands	Number of final recipients	Volume of loans disbursed by FI[57] (EUR million)	Volume of operations with the FI[58] (EUR million)	Contribution from the EaSI budget (EUR million)	Leverage effect of the total investment[59]	Leverage effect of the initial investment by the EC
Microfinance	97 271	1 273	242	91	**5.3**	**13.9**
Social entrepreneurship	3 337	491	146	40	**3.4**	**12.3**
Total	**100 608**	**1 764**	**388**	**131**	**4.5**	**13.5**

Source: DG EMPL, based on data provided by the EIF on the EaSI Guarantee Instrument, 2020.

Microloans amounting to EUR 1.27 billion were provided to 97 271 final beneficiaries under the EaSI microfinance branch. With guarantees worth a total of EUR 242 million

[53]In accordance with Article 216 of the Financial Regulation.
[54]Operationally, there is no difference between the *EaSI Funded Instrument* and the *EPMF Funded Instrument*, meaning that they were both implemented by the EIF in the same way. Nevertheless, the EU Financial Regulation in force in 2010 did not contain any provisions on financial instruments (which were introduced only in the later revision of the Financial Regulation). The indirect management mode was then chosen for the *EPMF Funded Instrument* that was implemented by the EIF. The 2018 Financial Regulation, in force when the *EaSI Funded Instrument* was launched (2019), provides (under the Article 216) that the specialized investment vehicles fall under direct management. In practice, the EIF implemented the *EaSI Funded Instrument*, but the Commission keept however a direct responsibility on the management of the instrument. More information is provided in Annexes VI.1.
[55]These countries are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Türkiye and United Kingdom for microfinance; Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Serbia and the United Kingdom for social entrepreneurship (see evaluation supporting study, page 27).
[56]Representing only active contracts and including resources from EFSI.
[57]'FI' is the abbreviation of 'financial intermediaries'.
[58]Including resources from EFSI.
[59]Idem.

signed from 2014 to 2020, the leverage effect achieved in microfinance was 5.3[60]. Considering only the contribution of EUR 91 million from the EaSI budget, the leverage effect achieved in microfinance was 13.9. Microentreprises operating in the area of wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles received most of the funding.

A total of 3 337 social enterprises received funding from EaSI during its implementation period (see Table 8 above). The total funding amounted to more than EUR 491 million, with an average of EUR 147 135 per social enterprise. With guarantees worth a total of EUR 146 million signed from 2014 to 2020, the leverage effect achieved in the EaSI social entrepreneurship branch was 3.4. Considering only the contribution of EUR 40 million from the EaSI budget, the leverage effect achieved in the social entrepreneurship branch was 12.3. Most of the funding went to social enterprises operating in human health and social work activities.

EaSI Funded Instrument

This instrument became operational in September 2019 and its implementation period runs until 16 October 2023. By this date, the EIF can still provide loans to financial intermediaries. The financial intermediaries can include loans in their portfolio after this date, but the duration of the loans to final beneficiaries cannot go beyond 31 December 2031. A total amount of EUR 67 million was earmarked by the Commission from the EaSI programme for the implementation of the *EaSI Funded Instrument* (in addition to the EUR 133 million earmarked from the EIB), thus conducting to a total financial envelope of EUR 200 million. By the end of 2020, 3 agreements in the microfinance sector were signed in 3 countries: 2 of them were with financial intermediaries in Romania and 1 with a financial intermediary in Serbia.

EaSI Capacity Building Investments Window

Through this instrument launched in December 2016, EIF provided funding to financial intermediaries mainly through subordinated loans. The last agreements with financial intermediaries were signed in 2021; the overall budged was fully deployed by end of 2021. Up to the end of 2020, 14 capacity building contracts were signed, covering 9 countries, with a budget from EaSI of EUR 45 million. For microfinance, these countries are Belgium, Romania (3 intermediaries), Luxembourg, Italy, Spain, Lithuania, Netherlands and Serbia; and for social entrepreneurship, they are Belgium, France (2 intermediaries), Italy and Netherlands.

Globally, as for the regional distribution, France, Italy, Spain, Netherlands and Belgium emerged as most active countries in terms of accessing support from the EaSI third axis (see Table 64 in Annex VI.3).

3.2.2 EPMF financial instruments[61]

A total financial envelope of EUR 203 million was available for the EPMF implementation to enhance the capacity of microfinance financial intermediaries (banks and non-bank institutions) by providing micro-loans (up to EUR 25 000) to micro-borrowers and micro-enterprises. Of this amount, EUR 103 million came from the EU budget, including an amount of EUR 3 million from the European Parliament Preparatory Action (EPPA). An additional amount of EUR 100 million was made available by the

[60]The leverage effect describes the effect of debt on the return on equity. The higher the leverage, the bigger the return on initial investment is.

[61]More detailed facts and figures are presented in Annex VI.4.

EIB. Both financial instruments set up under EPMF[62] were implemented by the EIF through indirect management mode[63].

Under both EPMF instruments, EIF was allowed to sign guarantee agreements with financial intermediaries until 7th April 2016, while the end-date of the implementation period was set on 31st December 2020 for the *Guarantee Instrument* and on 30th April 2020 for the *Funded Instrument*. Table 9 provides the state of implementation of the EPMF as a whole by 31 December 2020. The EPMF totalled 86 agreements with 63 financial intermediaries across 22 countries, reaching a loan volume of EUR 516 million. In total, more than 60 000 microloans were disbursed to more than 55 000 final beneficiaries. On average, a microloan had a value of around EUR 8 500.

Table 9. Implementation of the EPMF (2010 - 2020)

Instrument	No. of agreements	No. of intermediaries	Countries covered	Volume of microloans (EUR million)	No. of microloans	No. of final beneficiaries	Average microloan (EUR) million
Guarantee	36	29	18	236	20 996	19 470	11 240
Funded	50	39	14	279	39 439	35 940	7 064
Total	**86**	**63***	**22****	**516**	**60 435**	**55 410**	**8 538**

Source: Supporting study, based on the EPMF annual implementation reports and annual impact reports.

Note: The table includes unique intermediaries/countries. There were 5 intermediaries with both a guarantee and a loan agreement.

Both sectoral and regional of microloans remained similar throughout the duration of the EPMF. Most of the companies receiving loans worked in agriculture and trade. Some other sectors (such as repair of motor vehicles and personal/household goods; storage and communication; manufacturing; construction; transporting and storage; accommodation and food services) also received a significant, although much smaller, share of funding. As for the regional distribution, France, Romania, Netherlands and Poland emerged as most active countries in terms of acquiring microloans. Below, details are provided per instrument.

EPMF Guarantee Instrument

This instrument, which became operational in 2010, guaranteed part of the financial intermediaries' portfolio against losses. Its aim was to provide additional security to financial intermediaries to increase access to, and availability of microfinance. A total financial envelope of EUR 23 million was made available by the Commission for its implementation2. By the end of 2020, a total of 36 agreements had been signed with financial intermediaries, across 18 countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom. In total, the EPMF Guarantee Instrument helped 19 470 final beneficiaries to access microfinance.

EPMF Funded Instrument

This instrument, which became operational at the end of 2010, was a joint initiative of the Commission and the EIB, which provided respectively an investment of EUR 80 million and of EUR 100 million, thus creating a total financial envelope of EUR 180 million[64]. It provided funded instruments for intermediaries (loans and equity investments) in the form of a 'Fonds Commun de Placement' (FCP) under Luxembourg law[65]. By the end of 2020, a total of 50 agreements (47 had been terminated and 3 were still running at that time) had been signed with financial intermediaries, across 16 countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania,

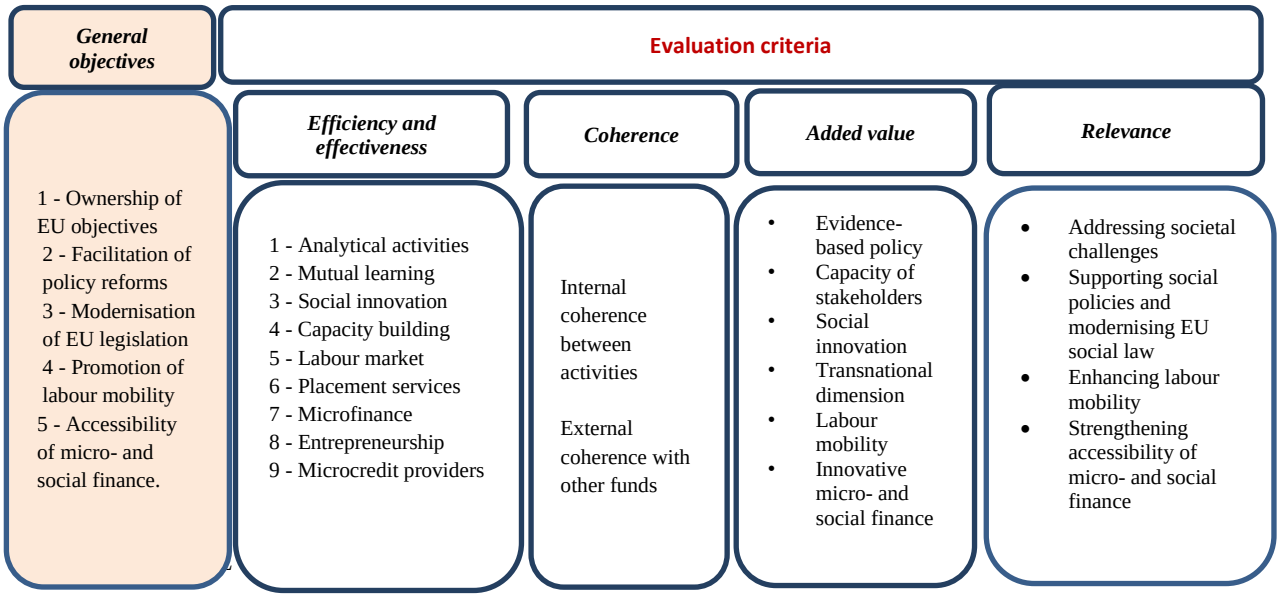
[62] They provided the same types of products as later under the EaSI microfinance window (see the previous section).
[63] More information on EPMF governance is provided in Annex VI.1.2.
[64] Implementation of the European Progress Microfinance Facility (COM(2011) 195 final).
[65] https://www.cssf.lu/wp-content/uploads/Brochure_FCP.pdf

Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom. The countries that received the largest commitments to financial intermediaries were Romania, Bulgaria, Spain and Italy. In total, the EPMF Funded Instrument helped 35 940 final beneficiaries to access microfinance.

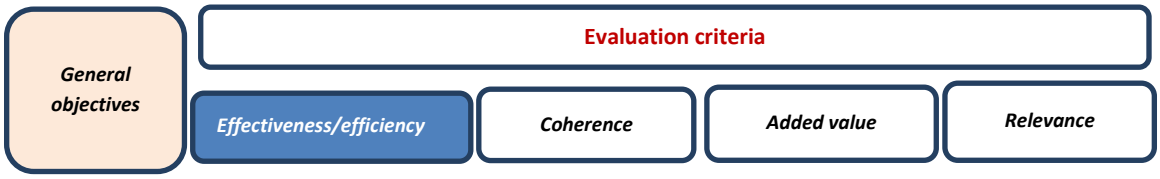
4. EVALUATION FINDINGS (ANALYTICAL PART)

This chapter is structured in three parts: Section 4.1 assesses the programmes' performance through their effectiveness and efficiency (Section 4.1.1)[66] and their internal coherence/external complementarities (Section 4.1.2); Section 4.2 identifies their EU-added value; and Section 4.3 analyses their relevance. Figure 2 below illustrates the approach.

Figure 2: Evaluation nut graph



4.1 Effectiveness and efficiency



4.1.1 Evidence-based EU policies and legislation

In 2014 - 2020, a total input of EUR 148 million was allocated to the implementation of activities to develop analytical knowledge, resulting in 198 analytical outputs[67]. The share of stakeholders acknowledging that EU social policy and legislation are based on evidence was 83% in 2020, representing an increase by 12 percentage points compared with its value in 2014 (Table 10).

These outputs were widely used by stakeholders at both national and EU-level when working on the implementation and enforcement of the EU legislation[68] as well as when

[66] An overview of costs/benefits and of the programmes' potential for savings is included in Annex IV.

[67] Some preeminent examples are provided in this section selected among the wide range of analytical outputs produced. Detailed examples of analytical outputs are available in the EaSI monitoring reports and in the evaluation supporting study.

[68] For instance the EU law on occupational safety and health (OSH) and the Posting of Workers Directive, EU Council recommendations on the integration of the long-term unemployed (LTU) into the labour market; the Youth Guarantee; Youth Employment Initiative, European Skills Agenda, the Quality Framework for Traineeships, the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, the Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions, Council Recommendation on access to

providing inputs for the European Semester and Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs)[69]. Notable examples include the multilingual classification of the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO); support to the work of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); the collection of statistics through the EU Labour Force Survey (LFS); funding the Mutual Information System on Social Protection (MISSOC) database; as well as a range of databases and studies in the field of working conditions, and health and safety at work.

The EaSI analytical outputs were also used for the development of other DG EMPL deliverables such as the Annual Growth Survey, the annual reviews of Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE), the Labour Market Developments in Europe reports and the Joint Employment reports. The consultations (notably online public consultation, focus groups and interviews)[70] conducted in the framework of this evaluation corroborates the usefulness of the analytical knowledge produced under EaSI.

To assess the efficiency of the analytical activities, the evaluation compares the monetary inputs committed alongside the corresponding share of stakeholders who agreed that EU employment and social policy and legislation were based on evidence (Table 10).

Table 10. Monetary inputs for analytical activities compared with share of stakeholders who agreed that EU employment and social policy, and legislation are based on evidence (2014 - 2020)

Years/items	Monetary input (EUR million)	Indicator (%)	Ratio (input/indicator)
2014	30	71%	0.422
2015	22	78%	0.282
2016	14	78%	0.179
2017	14	74%	0.189
2018	17	74%	0.229
2019	22	83%	0.265
2020	29	83%	0.469

Source: DG EMPL, based on EaSI monitoring reports and the supporting study.

A total budget of EUR 148 million was spent to implement analytical activities while an amount of EUR 156 million was planned[71]. The difference is due to the cancellation of a number of studies and events in the start-up year 2014 or converted in online format due to COVID-19 disruption in 2019 - 2020[72]. While admitting that the relationship between the two variables is likely not to be completely linear, it however represents a good indication (except for the two first two start-up years) that a higher monetary input corresponds to a higher share of stakeholders considering that these outputs were helpful for policymaking.

The EaSI *ex ante* evaluation[73] estimated that 25% of the EaSI PROGRESS axis budget should be dedicated to the development of new knowledge (ideas, concepts, approaches, models). The total input for analytical activities in 2014 - 2020 represents 29% of the

social protection for workers and the self-employed, Recommendation on 'Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage and other family policies', European Disability Strategy (see EaSI monitoring report 2019-2020, page 30).

[69]Notably conferences, peer reviews, and meetings of the Social Protection Committee (SPC). Concrete examples include: the conference "Labour economics after the crisis: what theoretical lessons to draw from policy experience?"; the peer review "Innovative practices with marginalised families at risk of having their children taken into care" (11 - 12 December 2014; Italy); the peer review "The political adequacy of quantitative impact assessment in the social field by means of micro-simulation models" (4 - 5 December 2014; Austria).

[70]In the online public consultation related to this evaluation, 36 respondents out of 72 agreed that policy making at EU-level was based on sound evidence provided through the analytical activities funded by EaSI. Former EaSI Committee members highlighted the usefulness of analytical outputs, noting that the data they produced was crucial for policy development in their respective Member States. Evidence collected within DG EMPL suggests that databases and statistics were useful for Member State policymaking and describing many of these outputs as 'a standard in the field'. It also shows that the implementation of the analytical activities under the direct management mode ensured that priority setting was top-down and policy-driven, thus enabling EaSI to swiftly adapt to new policy priorities. More details are available in the technical annexes of the supporting study.

[71]See Figure 20 and Figure 21 in Annex VI.3.1.

[72]As explained in the EaSI monitoring reports and the supporting study.

[73]This document did not describe the method used to establish how this estimate; an overestimation might be possible (EaSI ex ante evaluation (page 38).

PROGRESS axis consumed budget of EUR 505 million. The supporting study[74] estimated that around EUR 50 million was spent under this objective on support activities not directly generating entirely new knowledge (e.g. IT supporting projects, events, conferences, promotional material, audits, translations or capacity building activities). Considering common methodologies, data and statistics, databases, evaluations and impact assessments, networks of experts, reports, studies and working groups, these outputs made up to EUR 91 million (representing 18% of the PROGRESS budget) targeting the development of new knowledge.

However, the quantitative evidence presented above (notably the linear correlation between the inputs and the stakeholders' satisfaction) and the findings in relation to the effectiveness allow to conclude that EaSI was efficient in achieving this specific objective.

4.1.2 Effective information sharing, mutual learning and dialogue

In monetary terms, a total input of EUR 109 million was allocated to the implementation of this objective in 2014 - 2020. In quantitative terms, a total of 191 outputs related to information sharing and mutual learning were produced with this funding. The value of the indicator measuring the progress in achieving this objective decreased by 13 percentage points from 89% participants declaring that they used or intended to use the information acquired in 2014 (the point of comparison) to 76% in 2020 (see Table 11 on the next page). Moreover, the majority of respondents to the survey carried out by the EESC stated that there was no regular and structured dialogue on the implementation of the EaSI programme[75].

Despite the downward trend, there is evidence, although mainly qualitative, that these outputs were used to support information sharing, mutual learning and dialogue between stakeholders. The desk research of the EaSI monitoring reports shows that the stakeholders who participated in EaSI-funded events used the information gained in several ways, for instance to get information on strategic documents, legislation and advocacy material (national public authorities, EU-level NGO networks); on the design and implementation of programmes/projects (projects' beneficiaries/implementers); or for research and teaching purposes (researchers, academia). It also results from this overview that the preparation of country-specific recommendations (CSR) in the framework of the European Semester benefitted from the work done within peer reviews, thematic workshops and other activities of the PES Network. Similarly, meetings of the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC) were used for policy and legislative development in the field of health and safety at work. Activities such as peer reviews, mutual learning workshops or conferences also contributed to support the implementation of EU initiatives such as the Youth Guarantee. The EaSI monitoring reports also offer evidence that EaSI events contributed - via the expertise and information exchanged - to facilitate intra-EU mobility; for instance the seminars organised and the reports published by the PES Network and EAfA[76].

These findings are corroborated by the consultations conducted whitin this evaluation. For instance, the respondents to the online public consultation considered information-

[74]Supporting study (page 33).

[75]A share of 60% of respondents stated that there was no structured consultation on the EaSI programme and only 21% stated that they were consulted regularly. It should be noted, however, that there was some disparity in the organisations consulted by the EESC during the country visits and through the survey. This is because in some countries, national-level organisations with a cross-cutting approach to the use and objectives of EaSI were consulted. Elsewhere, particularly in France, Lithuania, and Austria, those consulted were mostly direct beneficiaries of EaSI with direct knowledge of the programme.

[76]Alliance Européenne pour l'Apprentissage.

sharing and mutual learning activities as one of the most useful EaSI activities[77]; notably the European (Online) Job Days organised within the EURES network were mentioned as being particularly useful both for jobseekers and employers. The focus groups with the EaSI committee members and the EU-level NGO networks show as well that EaSI events had a multiplier effect, the participants largely sharing the information acquired with other stakeholders within their organisations or in other institutions. While the EaSI Committee members[78] acknowledged that the information acquired during the events was useful for policymaking, they were also concerned with the limited visibility of EaSI, expecting that this aspect will improve through the implementation of the National Contact Points established in the participating countries under the ESF+/EaSI strand.

Quantitative and qualitative evidence presented above allow to conclude that EaSI support was moderately effective in facilitating knowledge sharing, mutual learning and dialogue among stakeholders. In addition to the downward trend in the declared use of the information acquired for policy making, the evaluation reveals concerns about limited awareness and visibility of the programme (notably in relation to the funding opportunities and results). The somewhat downward trend is even more marked in the two last years of implementation, this being explained by the cancellation of face-to-face events and/or their conversion to online format in the pandemic context.

To assess efficiency of the knowledge sharing, mutual learning and dialogue activities, the evaluation compares the inputs committed alongside the share of stakeholders who declared that they used or intended to use the information acquired during the events for policy making or advocacy.

Table 11. Monetary inputs for information sharing and mutual learning activities compared with share of stakeholders who declared the (intended) use of the information acquired through these activities (2014 - 2020)

Years/items	Monetary input (EUR million)	Indicator value (%)	Ratio (input/indicator value)
2014	**9**	89%	0.101
2015	**18**	85%	0.211
2016	**22**	85%	0.259
2017	**19**	86%	0.220
2018	**14**	86%	0.162
2019	**9**	76%	0.118
2020	**15**	76%	0.197

Source: DG EMPL, based on EaSI monitoring reports and the supporting study.

The cost-effectiveness ratio (Table 11) - showing a negative relationship between the two variables - suggests that an increased spending did not generate necessarily increased favorable returns. Notably, a significant decrease in stakeholders' satisfaction can be observed in 2019 - 2020 (impacted by Covid-19), despite the fact that committed inputs were in line with the planned budget. Drawing on the quantitative evidence presented above and on the findings in relation to the effectiveness, the evaluation concludes that the efficiency of EaSI events related to information sharing and mutual learning was moderate. Evidence from the case study on '*EaSI flexibility to adjust*'[79] confirms that - despite the fact that the Commission managed to cancel and/or to convert a number of planed mutual learning events in digital format – the pandemic context left less scope for genuine mutual learning and knowledge sharing, impacting the stakeholders' satisfaction.

4.1.3 Testing of social and labour market policy innovations

Achieving this specific objective implied developing social innovations (new products, services, models, instruments and resources) and testing them at small scale (social

[77]A total of 34 respondents agreed that EaSI had been successful in facilitating information-sharing, mutual learning, and dialogue; only 3 respondents disagreed and 35 did not know (technical annexes of the supporting study).
[78]A former EaSI Committee member from a candidate country equally mentioned that the involvement of candidate countries in EaSI events had been lacking during 2014 - 2020 but that this seemingly had already improved in the current programming period.
[79]Available in the evaluation supporting study annexes.

experimentation)[80]. EaSI has not foreseen in its legal basis a specific objective and instruments for upscaling/transfer of the social experimentations on a larger scale since this was defined as a ESF potential activity[81]

In monetary terms, a total input of EUR 89 million was allocated to the implementation of this objective in 2014 - 2020, resulting in 23 outputs. Among them, the 7 calls for proposals on social experimentation resulted in 44 projects amountig to EUR 57,7 million. The remainder of the funding was used for dissemination and capacity building activities, for instance to develop a practical guide on designing and implementing initiatives to develop social finance instruments and markets; awareness-raising activities on work-life balance, active inclusion and social innovation; or direct grants to the Council of Europe to build up capacity at the local level for the integration of Roma[82].

The value of the indicator selected to measure the progress in achieving this objective increased by 1 point between 2017[83] (73%) and 2020 (74%). Qualitative evidence[84] shows that most social experimentation projects were effective in achieving their short and medium-term objectives, i.e. develop innovative solutions relevant to the beneficiaries' needs, test social innovations at small scale, raising awareness about the social experimentation and social innovation concepts, and facilitated networking between social innovators and policymakers. The INOVA+ study[85] estimates that 90% of the finished social experimentation projects successfully achieved their short and medium-term goals. Qualitative and quantitative evidence presented above[86] as well as the information collected through the online public consultation[87], interviews and focus groups[88] corroborate the short and medium-term effectiveness of the EaSI-funded social experimentation projects. Additional secondary analysis[89] also indicates that most projects were targeted at disadvantaged groups (for instance homeless, unemployed, asylum seekers, people at risk of poverty or in situation of social exclusion). Moreover, a series of projects tested measures in relation to the principles of non-discrimination and of gender equality.

As regards their long-term policy impacts, the INOVA+ study estimates that 40% projects struggle to mainstream/upscale the social innovations, but only 3 projects finished their embedding process as of late 2021[90]. Desk research carried out during the evaluation supporting study corroborates the fact that the limited scaling up of social experimentation projects was one of the flaws of the EaSI programme. The reasons of this limited policy mainstreaming of the funded social experimentations - already

[80]Social innovations were defined in the EaSI Regulation as innovations 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 (on 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. Social innovations are tested through project-based social experimentations on a small scale, which allows policymakers and other relevant actors to gather evidence on their feasibility.

[81]Article 9 of the ESF Regulation. Link to Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013R1304.

[82]EaSI Performance Monitoring Report 2019 - 2020, pages 36 to 44.

[83]This headline indicator was introduced in 2017, therefore data is not available for the previous years.

[84]The EaSI *ex post* evaluation supporting study desk research and the case study on social innovation included in the annexes of the supporting study.

[85]This study consists in an in-depth evaluation of the EaSI social experimentation projects carried by the consortium INOVA+ at the request of DG EMPL. Hereafter referred to as INOVA+ study, this document was published in 2022.

[86]Additional examples of social experimentation projects are presented in Annex VI.3.1.

[87]The social experimentation activities emerged from the online public consultation as being the most successful category of actions implemented through the PROGRESS axis (39 respondents agreed that EaSI was successful in this respect and only 4 disagreed).

[88]The EC officials interviewed emphasised the positive engagement between stakeholders involved in social experimentation projects, while the EaSI Committee members who took part in the focus group highlighted the importance of this funding in covering a gap in available national funding for this type of projects (see details in the technical annexes of the supporting study).

[89]Analysis of 'Reports on projects and organisation' (EaSI monitoring), but also of individual project reports and websites.

[90]The INOVA+ study (p. 39) highlights however that the long-term policy impacts of the EaSI programme's investments into social innovation are unclear because the embedding process takes time and because many projects are still ongoing.

identified in the EaSI mid-term evaluation and in the ESF+ impact assessment - were confirmed by the INOVA+ study and the evaluation supporting study[91]. While there was a provision for scaling up to take place via the ESF (Article 9 of the ESF Regulation), in practice, the ESF Managing Authorities had limited awareness of the outputs of the EaSI programme[92]. Other factors include the lack of financial and human resources; the lack of knowledge among project implementers on how to inform the policy makers and to promote the scaling up once the project's lifecycle ends; absence of robust evidence on effectiveness and efficiency of projects; and the lack of commitment/interest at the policymakers' level. It also appears that the lack of a reliable presentation of the projects' quantitative/qualitative impacts and appropriate dissemination campaigns at national level decreased the chances of the projects to receive additional funding. This shortcoming has been consistently brought up in discussions during the events funded under EaSI in 2014 - 2020[93]. The EESC report found as well that local and national public authorities fail to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of EaSI-funded projects, even though the Commission has published evaluation reports.

The above allows to conclude that the contribution of social experimentation projects to policy change or the modernisation of EU law was limited.

To assess the efficiency of the social experimentation activities, the evaluation compares first the inputs to the share of stakeholders who declared that the Commission was an effective source of guidance and support for social policy innovations (Table 12). A total budget of EUR 89 million was spent to implement activities foreseen under this specific objective while an amount of EUR 88 million was planned. The budget spent to fund social innovation represents around 18% of the overall EaSI PROGRESS axis consumed budget of EUR 505 million. This percentage is within the targed of 15 - 20% which was the range originally defined in the legal basis[94].

Table 12. Monetary inputs for social experimentation compared with the share of stakeholders who see the Commission as an effective source of guidance and support for social policy innovations (2014 - 2020)

[91]They show that despite the popularity of the EaSI social experimentation calls for proposals among stakeholders/social innovation implementers, the upscaling of their results and subsequently their use for policymaking remain limited. INOVA+ study shows that despite the fact that the interest for this methodology is growing across EU Member States - being seen as a rigorous way to measure the impact of policy interventions before implementing them - with a few exceptions (e.g. France, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden), there are many factors that are currently hindering the development and mainstreaming of the social policy innovations in the EU, mainly the lack of skills, resources, incentives or enabling cultures.

[92]Notably interviews within DG EMPL and the case study on 'Past and future synergies' (see the supporting study annexes) and the INOVA+ study findings. While aacknowledging that the long-term policy impacts of EaSI investments into social innovation are unclear because the embedding process takes time and many projects are still ongoing, the identified/analysed projects with potential for scaling up (see Table 51 in Annex VI.3.1) as well as the reasons of their limited scaling up.

[93]At the 2021 EaSI conference, for example, it was felt that the dissemination of results of social experimentation projects and the replication, mainstreaming and/or scaling up of successful practices should be strengthened. Examples of how this could be done were the establishment of joint project databases, and more opportunities for networking between existing/prospective project partners and other stakeholders (e.g. through cooperative platforms and events). One respondent to the online survey launched within the EESC evaluation also mentioned the difficulty to finance the continuity or follow-up of EaSI projects once they have demonstrated their effectiveness. The respondent provided a concrete example, explaining that in France it was difficult to integrate the pursuit of the innovative projects into the ESF programme actions.

[94]The Article 14(2) of the EaSI Regulation set initially a target of 15 - 20% of the PROGRESS axis budget to be allocated to social experimentation. This provision was removed with the Omnibus Regulation amendment (2018) and replaced with a clause that required a 'significant share' to be allocated to social innovation.

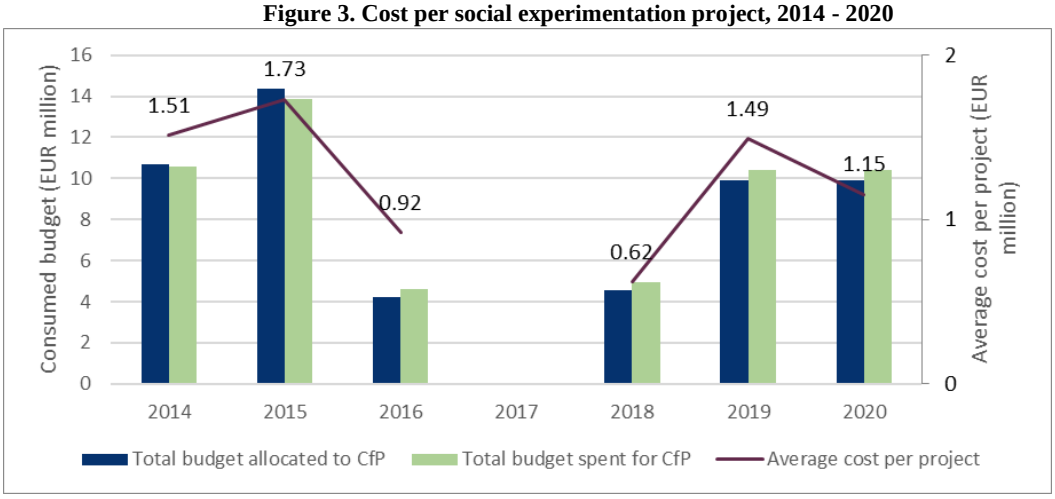
Years/ items	Monetary input (EUR million)	Indicator value (%)	Ratio (inputs/indicator value)	Cost per project (EUR million)
2014	11	-	-	1.51
2015	13	-	-	1.73
2016	14	-	-	0.92
2017	-	-	-	-
2018	24	73%	0.328	0.62
2019	15	74%	0.202	1.49
2020	12	74%	0.162	1.15

Source: DG EMPL, based on EaSI monitoring reports and the supporting study.

Note: There were no calls for proposals on social experimentation launched in 2017. The values for 2018 include both calls for proposals published this year.

However, the inverse correlation between the inputs and the values registered for the headline indicator (established in 2018 and covering therefore only 2018 - 2020 period)[95] does not allow to draw a robust finding, therefore, the evaluation also analyses the trends in costs per social experimentation. Figure 3 below shows that the average cost per project fluctuated over the years, therefore no clear trend can be observed in this indicator. The average cost per project was EUR 1.3 million (EUR 57.7 million total budget consumed divided by 44 projects), which is largely above the average cost per project funded under the PROGRESS programme (EUR 450 000)[96], but still lower than the average cost of EUR 2 million estimated in the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation[97] as being the average critical mass to ensure the expected impacts.

Figure 3. Cost per social experimentation project, 2014 - 2020



Source: Supporting study based on data provided by DG EMPL.

Note: There were no calls for proposal for social innovation in 2017. The values for 2018 include both calls for proposals launched this year.

From a qualitative perspective, the desk research shows that calls' topics were well connected to the Commission policy priorities/contextual challenges. Specifically, the 2014 and 2015 calls focused on integrated delivery of social services, the 2016 call reacted to the challenges of the European migration crisis balance strategies, while the

[95]Do note that the related headline indicator was introduced in 2017, therefore data is not available for the previous years.

[96]Between 2009 and 2013, under the PROGRESS programme, around EUR 20 million were allocated to carry out social experimentations resulting in 45 projects (the average cost per project funded was around EUR 450 000).

[97]The EaSI *ex ante* evaluation (p. 60) estimated an average cost of USD 2 - 3 million per social experimentation project, based on an assessment of costs of such experiments in the United States. This estimate was based on a study from 1999, at which time USD 1 was equal to EUR 1.0046 (exchange rate as at 30 December 1999; source: European Central Bank data), therefore this cost was extrapolated to EUR at a 1:1 ratio for simplicity. While it does not explain why the estimated price was effectuated in USD, the evaluation support study assumes that this was due to a lack of evidence related to the social experimentation topic at that time at EU level. However, this estimate - extracted from a 1999 study which could not have foreseen possible costs in 2014 - 2020, therefore it cannot be considered as an appropriate/unique point of comparison for the *ex post* evaluation.

2018 - 2020 calls were designed in in accordance with the key priorities of the European Pillar of Social Rights[98].

All these quantitative and qualitative elements allow to conclude that the social experimentation activities were moderately efficient.

4.1.4 Greater capacity of national and EU organisations

In monetary terms, a total input of EUR 154 million was allocated to the implementation of this objective in 2014 - 2020. In quantitative terms, a total of 96 outputs related to capacity building were produced. The largest share of the capacity building budget was allocated to fund the operational costs of key EU-level NGO networks (around EUR 90 million). A total of 23 recurrent network-funding activities were supported each year[99]. The remainder of the budget was used to support national administrations, social partners and civil society organisations capacity-building through calls for proposals on targeted topics, notably related to administrative coordination for the implementation of the 'Posting of Workers' Directive; awareness raising, dissemination and outreach activities on 'Youth Guarantee'; or the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation. Other support actions were related to the capacity building of microcredit providers under the EaSI Technical Assistance for microfinance and the EaSI Technical Assistance for social enterprise finance (analysed in Section 4.1.9, being related to the specific objective 9).

In 2020, 89% of stakeholders reported that their participation in EaSI-funded capacity building activities improved their competence to further develop, promote and support the implementation of EU employment and social policy and legislation. This value increased by 1 percentage point compared to the value estimated for 2014 (88%). Consultations carried out during this *ex post* evaluation (with EU-level NGO networks, former EaSI Committee members[100], online public consultation[101] and interviews inside DG EMPL[102]) and additional qualitative evidence[103] corroborate the findings above. In particular, the networks declared that the EaSI programme boosted their capacity to participate in and influence decision-making/policy implementation; however, they believe that increased effort would have been needed to help operationalising EU policies at national level[104]. The case study '*EaSI contribution to policy change*' provides additional insights into the way EaSI supported the capacity building of this specific target group. It shows notably that operational funding support over a long period (2014 - 2020) has allowed the EU-level NGO networks sufficient time to become visible as a source of expertise for national policymakers and EU institutions by developping evidence/comparative analysis that filled gaps at EU and national level. Additionally, the case study on '*EaSI flexibility to adapt*' shows that all funded networks successfully managed to pivot their activities online when necessary. The networks used the pandemic

[98]The 2018 call focused on access to social protection and national reform support, the 2019 topic was the long-term care and the 2020 focused on interventions targeting vulnerable situation.

[99]See Section 3.1 and Annex VI.3.1 for more details.

[100]One former EaSI Committee member who participated in the focus group highlighted notably that the EaSI-funded actions related to administrative cooperation on posting of workers created connections between different ministries representatives.

[101]Thirty-six (36) respondents to the public consultation out of 72 agreed that their capacity to develop and promote EU instruments increased through EaSI support to stakeholders' capacity building.

[102]They acknowledged a better understanding - observed among stakeholders - of policies related to social enterprise finance, notably through the support of EU-level NGO networks in this sector (see more details in the supporting study 'Technical annexes').

[103]There are indeed many examples of these networks having contributed to policy change/innovation at EU level, as reported in reports on projects and organisations funded by EaSI, notably in volume XII. The case study on '*EaSI contribution to policymaking*' provides as well an overview of the examples. Annex VI.3.1 compiles relevant qualitative evidence on how the evidence produced by EaSI-supported EU-level NGO networks contributed to the development of specific policy outputs.

[104]The EU-level NGO networks' representatives who took part in the focus group believed that EaSI funding had helped increasing their visibility and, in many cases, enabled them to grow their memberships. They also declared that EaSI funding had enabled them to have a greater impact on policies, especially at EU level. A few EU-level NGO networks' representatives indicated however that their work was mostly devoted to engaging with EU issues, often at the expense of effort devoted to national.

as an opportunity to shine a spotlight on their focal issues and target groups, notably on the need to improve their digital skills. Quantitative and qualitative evidence presented above allow to conclude that EaSI was effective in increasing stakeholders' capacity, notably of EU-level NGO networks that became visible both at national and EU level and increased their capacity to influence the policy debate.

To assess the efficiency of the EaSI capacity-building actions, the evaluation compares the annual monetary inputs to the declared effectiveness of capacity-building activities. Table 13 shows that the stakeholders opinions remained constant despite the fluctuations in amounts committed each year. One conclusion could be that EaSI offered an effective capacity-building support to the targeted stakeholders, matching their needs. This finding was confirmed by the EU-level NGO networks that took part in the focus group. They all agreed that the financial support from EaSI had enabled them to fulfil their goals[105]. The EaSI stable source of funding allowed them to expand their networks and to better support their national members (through mutual learning and knowledge exchange), and ultimately to have a larger impact on the policy landscape. There was a unanimous agreement among the participants to this focus group that they would not have been able to do this without financial support from EaSI (which also signifies high EU added value, see Section 4.2).

Table 13. Monetary inputs for capacity building compared with the share of stakeholders declaring an improved capacity to develop and promote EU social policies.

Years/items	Monetary input (EUR million)	Indicator value (%)	Ratio (inputs/indicator)
2014	16	88%	0.181
2015	19	84%	0.226
2016	20	84%	0.238
2017	18	88%	0.205
2018	30	88%	0.340
2019	29	88%	0.329
2020	22	89%	0.247

Source: DG EMPL, based on EaSI monitoring reports and EaSI Stakeholder Surveys (2014 - 2020)

The focus group with the EU-level NGO networks also flagged that there were some inefficiencies related to the support provided. The main drawback highlighted was the need to reapply every year (see discussion in Section 3.1) which generated a feeling of uncertainty among networks' representatives as it could potentially limit the continuity of their work. The networks also noted some delays in the Commission response to yearly grant applications which resulted in the need to rearrange or postpone some foreseen activities. The reporting requirements were also considered by the networks consulted as being an administrative burden. The EESC report findings suggest as well that, overall, the administrative procedures for accessing EaSI resources appear complex and bureaucratic to the stakeholders and only those familiar with the way European mechanisms work can readily access them. Additionally, the networks requested an amendment to reduce the co-financing rate (20% in 2014 - 2020) because they struggled to reach the necessary cash flow during the pandemic. While it was not possible to implement this measure for the 2019 - 2020 period - taking stock of the pandemic challenges - the Commission foreseen an EU contribution of 90% for the 2021 - 2027 selected operating grants. Stakeholders consulted in the EESC evaluation also highlight the lack of a structured information on the opportunities offered by the EaSI programme, which in some countries are familiar only to European experts and practitioners. They

[105]Seven (7) out of 10 networks participating in the focus group agreed to a large extent and 3 out of 10 to a certain extent. Similar results emerged from the online public consultation, where there was however a disagreement among networks as to whether the EaSI budget was sufficient: seven (7) believed it was too low, three (3) considered that it was sufficient, while 12 did not know (see the supporting study technical annexes).

believe that public authorities do not coordinate/promote sufficiently the ways of accessing financial resources, including as regards the capacity building through the technical assistance for microfinance and social entrepreneurship provided by EaSI.

Findings related to the effectiveness of the capacity-building activities corroborated with the evidence presented above suggest that the EaSI funding was effective. By covering the networks' operational costs and enabling them to hire more staff, it creates a multiplier effect, allowing them to expand their membership and to implement more ambitious work programmes. However, taking into account the weaknesses revealed by the evaluation (funding allocation based on reccurent/annual calls for proposals, delays in providing the results of the calls and heavy administrative tasks in application/reporting phases), the evaluation concludes that EaSI support to build national and EU stakeholders capacity was moderately efficient.

4.1.5 Transparent labour market information and advice[106]

In monetary terms, a total input of EUR 59,4 million was allocated to the implementation of this objective in 2014 – 2020. In quantitative terms, a total of 18 outputs related to ensuring transparency of the labour market were produced with this funding. The value of the headline indicator decreased by 23% from 509 544 visits[107] in 2014 (the point of comparison) to 393 750 visits in 2020 (Table 14). This downward trend could be explained by the positive trajectory of the employment rates in EU since 2013 leading to a declining number of jobseekers. It was also affected by the pandemic disruption in 2019 - 2020[108] with border closures, and therefore with very limited mobility opportunities that reduced interest and subsequently the number of visits to the Portal. Additionally, changes in the methodology to compute the number of visitors affected values's comparability across 2014 and 2020.

Table 14. Monthly visits to EURES Portal, 2014–- 2020

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Monthly visits	509 544	1 162 007	502 635	454 450	567 308	434 638	393 750
Maintenance costs (EUR)	2 251 748	5 176 040	4 208 096	3 720 214	6 613 584	6 742 802	8 065 930
Costs per visit (EUR)	4.42	4.45	8.37	8.19	11.66	15.51	20.48

Source: DG EMPL, based on EaSI updated baseline report (2021) for 2015 - 2018, EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020 for 2019 - 2020 and the evaluation supporting study/FINAP database for the Portal's maintenance costs.

While the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the number of jobeekers and employers in 2019 -2020, this tendency was reversed by end-2020 (see Table 15) with 1 189 798 jobseekers registered on the EURES Portal (representing more than 6 times the value in 2015) and 15 738 employers registered (representing 2,6 times the value in 2015).

Table 15. Number of jobseekers and employers registered on EURES Portal in 2015–- 2020

Indicator	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Jobseekers	190 000	250 000	295 836	293 169	566 045	1 189 798
Employers	6 000	6 800	10 388	13 231	15 263	15 738

Source: DG EMPL based EaSI updated baseline report (2021) for the 2015 - 2016 data and EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020 for the 2017 - 2020 data.

[106]The EaSI *ex ante* evaluation pointed to limited transparency of job vacancies and limited support to match CVs with job offers.

[107]Data on the number of visitors to the EURES Job Mobility Portal was collected by the European Coordination Office and made publicly available in the EU Single Market Scoreboard reports. This headline indicator reflects the number of visits to the Portal by jobseekers and employers. Changes in the number of visits allow measuring the demand for information on labour mobility. Datasets are however not completely comparable across the overall EaSI implementation period given that the new visitor tracking system installed in 2014 - 2015 experienced technical problems. Moreover, a change in 2017 in the web instrument and servers may also have led to distortions in the data. Given the data robustness limitation faced by this indicator, the evaluation uses a complementary indicator reflecting the demand of jobs, i.e. the number of jobseekers and the number of employers registered on the EURES Portal.

[108]Employment rate in the EU has been on a continuous positive trajectory since 2013, but it dropped down in 2020 notably due to the COVID-19 pandemic (see discussion in Section 4.4.1). This trend is also confirmed by the 2019 and 2020 annual editions of Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE) (see http://publications.europa.eu/publication/catalogue_number/KE-BD-19-001-EN-N and http://publications.europa.eu/publication/catalogue_number/KE-BD-20-001-EN-N).

These numbers only catch a part of the EURES users; in order to use EURES services there is no need to register on the Portal, basic EURES services are freely available for self-service. In addition, until 2019, not many participanting countries were completely familiar with the provisions of the EURES Regulation (2016)[109] related to the publication of CVs and job vacancies. It was only at the end of 2019[110] that national authorities started substantially transferring CVs and job vacancies to the EURES Portal, which explains the important increase of jobseekers registered on the Portal.

Additionally - as a support measure - a specific call for proposals was launched in 2019 to support Member States, EURES members and other partners to establish mapping tables allowing for matching job vacancies and CVs in the EURES Portal, and to increase the usage/dissemination of the European Classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO). By end-2020, a total of 20 countries[111] posted their available vacancies on the Portal. The occupations most often selected by the jobseekers were waiter, language teacher, hotel receptionist and administrative assistant.

Only half of stakeholders consulted whitin the online public consultation believe that the EURES Portal increased the quantity of available employment opportunities[112], while those consulted within the EURES Regulation *ex post* evaluation point additionally to some shortcomings, notably that the job vacancies and CVs were occasionally out-dated or incomplete (due to lack of mandatory fields in the Portal and/or to incomplete information provided by jobseekers or employers). Quantitative and qualitative evidence presented above allow to conclude that the EURES Portal was moderately effective in improving the transparency of information on job vacancies given notably the downward trend in the visitors' number as well the shortcomings highlighted by the users.

To assess the efficiency of this activity, the evaluation draws on the findings related to the effectiveness and considers the changes in costs over time compared to the number of visitors to the Portal. When looking at the costs associated with the maintenance and operation of the EURES Portal (see Table 14 on the previous page), it results that the cost per visit increased over time from EUR 4.42 EUR in 2014 to EUR 20.48 in 2020. Over the same period, the number of *unique* visitors to the Portal decreased. These findings suggest a decrease in efficiency of the EURES Portal over time. Evidence from the stakeholders' consultations also confirmed that improvements are needed, notably through a fully automatic matching function between vacancies and applications.

Quantitative and qualitative aspects above allow to conclude that the EaSI support to the EURES Portal was moderately effective. While the EURES Portal contributed to increase the jobseekers, employers and comuting workers access to job vacancies and CVs, its effectiveness - undermined by shortcomings indicated above - is expected to further increase once the fully automated matching will be available[113] and all national vacancies will be posted on the Portal.

[109]https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2016.107.01.0001.01.ENG.

[110]A case study carried out within the EURES Regulation *ex post* evaluation shows that some national coordinators experienced delays in the of CVs and vacancies on the single coordinated channel to the EURES Portal launched in 2018 due to privacy and data protection issues or to the impact of COVID-19 on the national priorities of PES.

[111]Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Sweden (Source: Single Market Scoreboard).

[112]Thirty-six (36) respondents think that EaSI was effective in making information on labour market available and transparent, while 31 were unable to answer and only 4 people disagreed.

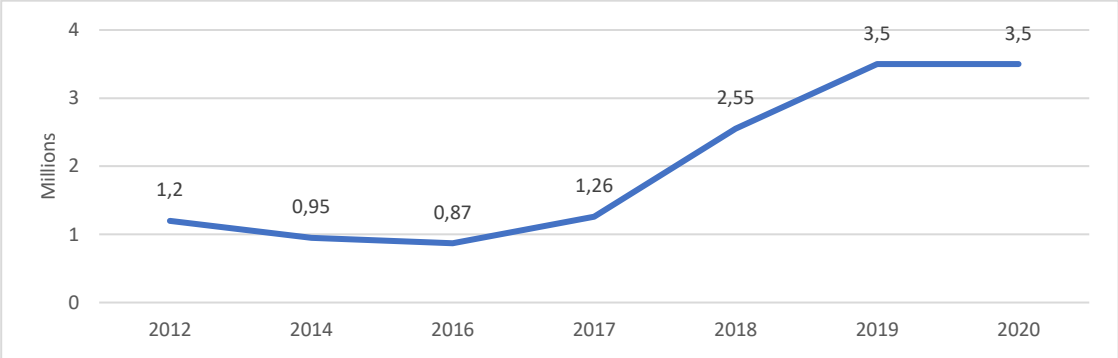
[113]EURES participating countries were due to complete the mapping of their national classifications systems to the ESCO classification by 7 August 2021 according to Article 19(3) of the EURES Regulation EURES Regulation *ex post* evaluation, page 37).

4.1.6 Effective provision of services for recruitment and placement[114]

Both cross-border partnerships and mobility schemes[115] had the objective of filling job vacancies in a certain sector, occupation, country, group of countries or for specific groups of workers (such as young people, with a propensity to be mobile), where a clear economic need has been identified. In monetary terms, EUR 106.2 million were allocated to the implementation of this objective in 2014 - 2020, of which EUR 88.2 million for the mobility schemes and EUR 18 million for the cross-border partnerships. In quantitative terms, a total of 24 outputs related to the provision of services for recruitment and placement were produced with this funding.

From its point of comparison of 947 480 in 2014, the number of individual personal contacts of EURES advisers with jobseekers, job changers and employers made via the cross-border partnerships and the EURES mobility schemes (the headline indicator) increased to 3.5 million in 2020, and even more significantly between 2017 and 2020 (Figure 4). This is due partially to the fact that reporting on the number of contacts via the EaSI performance monitoring system became mandatory after 2016 when the EURES Regulation[116] entered into force.

Figure 4. Total number of contacts of EURES advisers with jobseekers, job changers and employers.



Source: EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020 (page 88), based on EURES Advisors monthly reports; EURES Performance Measurement System and Single Market Scoreboard.

Results from the consultations point to a stakeholders' satisfaction with the EaSI support through these activities[117]. However, the EURES Regulation *ex post* evaluation concludes that EURES is not visible enough among labour market participants, which reduces its effectiveness.

Evidence presented above allows to conclude that - despite the increasing number of contacts between EURES advisers and the users - the services provided via the targeted mobility schemes and cross-border partnerships were moderately effective given notably their lack of visibility among employers.

[114]The *EaSI ex ante* evaluation found that EURES needed to focus more on tangible outcomes and results in terms of outgoing and incoming placements and recruitment, for example by helping young people and employers to fill open bottleneck vacancies, in light of imbalances of EU labour markets which affected certain groups (e.g. young persons) more than others. It also identified a need to promote partnerships between and among services (public, private and third sector employment services), education and training providers, NGOs, and welfare institutions.

[115]Three main EURES target mobility schemes (*Your First EURES Job*, *Reactivate*, and *Targeted Mobility Scheme*) aim at reaching specific groups of jobseekers (aged 18 - 35 years or 35 and older) and at helping companies to fill vacancies in sectors with skills needs. In addition, information, placement, and recruitment services tailored to frontier workers and employers in cross-border regions were implemented within the EURES cross-border partnerships. See complementary information in Annex VI.3.2.

[116]https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2016.107.01.0001.01.ENG.

[117]In the online public consultation, almost all respondents familiar with the EURES axis thought that EaSI had successfully supported the provision of EURES services for the recruitment and placement of workers. Nineteen (19) strongly agreed, 15 agreed and only 3 disagreed. Similarly, in the focus group with former EaSI Committee members, the member having experience with the EURES targeted mobility schemes estimated that 3 000 workers from his country found a job abroad due to the financial support provided by EaSI.

To evaluate the efficiency with which this objective was achieved, the evaluation considers the cost per placement facilitated by the targeted mobility schemes (focusing on the 'Your first EURES job' specifically) and compared it to the expectation. The EaSI *ex ante* evaluation estimated indeed that the cost per placement of targeted mobility schemes would be of approximately EUR 1 800.

Do note that no similar estimate was outlined for the cross-border partnerships in the *ex ante* evaluation; the conclusion on the efficiency of the related outcome should thus be considered as partial. Table 16 below indicates that the cost per placement stayed roughly constant over time, with an average cost per placement of EUR 2 150 over the period 2015 - 2018, exceeding the target of EUR 1 800 estimated by the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation. This result reflects slight inefficiencies in the schemes' implementation, unless it had been underestimated in the *ex ante* evaluation.

Table 16. Cost per placement 'Your first EURES Job'

Items/years	2015	2015 - 2016	2015 - 2017	2015 - 2018
Cost (EUR)	1 701 000	5 463 939	8 756 355	11 749 750
Number of placements	810	2 487	4 261	5 465
Cost per placement (EUR)	2 100	2 197	2 055	2 150

Source: Contractor based on 'Your first EURES Job' monitoring reports 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018.
Note: The figures provided in columns represent cumulated values.

The findings related to the effectiveness and the evidence presented above allow to conclude that the EaSI support to this specific objective was moderately efficient, being undermined notably by the lack of visibility of the placements services among the employers and by the cost per placement (above those estimated in the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation).

4.1.7 Better access to and availability of microfinance[118]

To measure the effectiveness of EaSI and EPMF in achieving this objective, the evaluation considers the budget committed, the number and the volume of microloans provided to the final beneficiaries, and the leverage effect created through the financial instruments[119].

In 2014 - 2020, a total amount of EUR 166,9 million was allocated from the EaSI budget to improve the access and availability of microfinance for vulnerable groups, of which EUR 91 million from the *EaSI Guarantee Instrument*, EUR 46,9 million from the *EaSI Funded Instrument* and EUR 29 million from the *EaSI Capacity Building Instrument* (see Table 2 in Chapter 3). The EU total contribution for 2010 - 2020 for the *EPMF Guarantee Instrument* and the *EPMF Funded Instrument* was EUR 103 million.

The number of microloans provided by the financial intermediaries to the final beneficiaries under EPMF was 60 435 in 2020 (Table 9 in Section 3.2.2). The EPMF *ex ante* evaluation estimated that the new programme will generate approximatively 45 000 microloans over its overall implementation period (the point of comparison); therefore, this target was exceeded by end of 2020. Accordingly, the volume of microloans provided through EPMF was EUR 516 million in 2020, exceeding the target of EUR 500 million fixed in its *ex ante* evaluation.

For EaSI, the number of microloans provided was 97 271 in 2020 (Table 8 in Section 3.2.1). This value significantly exceeded the target of 50 000 microloans estimated by the

[118]The EaSI *ex ante* evaluation pointed to a lack of access to finance as one of the major obstacles to the business creation. Therefore, building on the positive experience of the predecessor programme EPMF, EaSI sought to increase access to and availability of microfinance, notably for vulnerable persons.

[119]The leverage effect represents the value of the microcredits disbursed for each EUR invested by the Commission, being calculated only with data from the *Guarantee Instrument*. The *EaSI Funded Instrument* was launched at the end of the 2019 and the uptake was slow in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore there were no significant data at the cut-off date of the evaluation. As regards the *Capacity Building Instrument*, it didn't have a leverage effect as the loans provided to the financial intermediaries could not finance their portfolio.

EaSI *ex ante* evaluation to be reached by the end of the programme, especially considering that the EaSI financial instruments implementation period is still ongoing[120]. By the end of 2020, the volume of microloans provided through EaSI was EUR 1.3 billion, largely exceeding the target of EUR 500 million estimated in the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation. Moreover, the average microloan provided under EaSI was EUR 13 090 compared to the average microloan of 8 800 EUR under EPMF. Feedbacks from stakeholders' consultations also suggest that the support provided under EaSI and EPMF helped the financial intermediaries to reach out much more final beneficiaries than planned[121].

Evidence presented above - notably the significant number and volume of microloans disbursed to the final beneficiaries compared to the targets fixed in the respective *ex ante* evaluations - allow to conclude that EPMF and EaSI effectiveness was high.

To evaluate the efficiency of the EaSI support, the evaluation draws on the findings related to effectiveness of the financial instruments and considers the leverage effects created compared to the expectations in the respective *ex ante* evaluations. The amount of EUR 103 million - representing the EC contribution to EPMF - generated a total of EUR 516 million in microcredits, giving a leverage effect of 5[122] (Table 9 in Section 3.2.2), thus reaching the maximum target set out in the EPMF ex ante evaluation), which indicates a high cost-effectiveness of EPMF. Similarly, the total investment of EUR 91 million by the Commission in the *EaSI Guarantee Instrumen*t leveraged a total of EUR 1.3 billion in microcredits, thus giving a leverage effect of 13.9 (Table 8 in Section 3.2.1). This is more than two times the leverage effect of 5 that was expected in the EaSI ex ante evaluation to be reached and it is likely to continue to grow given that the implementation period of the EaSI financial instruments is still ongoing. There was an increase in the number of countries covered as well, reaching a total of 27 by end of 2020 under EaSI[123], compared to 16 in 2013 through the EPMF[124].

Quantitative evidence provided above on the leverrage effects created indicates a high cost-effectiveness of EaSI and EPMF instruments in facilitating a better access and availability of microfinance at EU level.

4.1.8 Better access to and availability of social finance

To measure the effectiveness of the programme in achieving this objective, the evaluation considers the number of social enterprises financed and the volume of the support provided under EaSI.

A total amount of EUR 76,1 million was provided to enhance the access to finance for social enterprises, of which EUR 40 million from the *EaSI Guarantee Instrument*, EUR 20,1 million from the *EaSI Funded Instrument* and EUR 16 million from the *EaSI Capacity Building Instrument*. The number of social enterprises financed increased significantly over time, from 63 in 2016 to 3 337 at the end of 2020, while the amount of funding provided to final beneficiaries in 2020 was EUR 491 million, with a single average support of EUR 147 135 per social enterprise (see Table 8 in Section 3.2.1).

[120]See Annex II.5 and Annex VI.3.3.

[121]For instance, all 37 respondents to the survey targeted at EaSI and EPMF financial intermediaries believed that the two programmes contributed to increase the lending to final beneficiaries. From interviews within DG EMPL it results that these interventions were able to support many more beneficiaries than initially planned and that there was much more demand than foreseen initially (see details in the supporting study technical annexes).

[122]The leverage effect is calculated by dividing the volume of funding leveraged (EUR 516 million) by the investments made by the Commission (EUR 103 million).

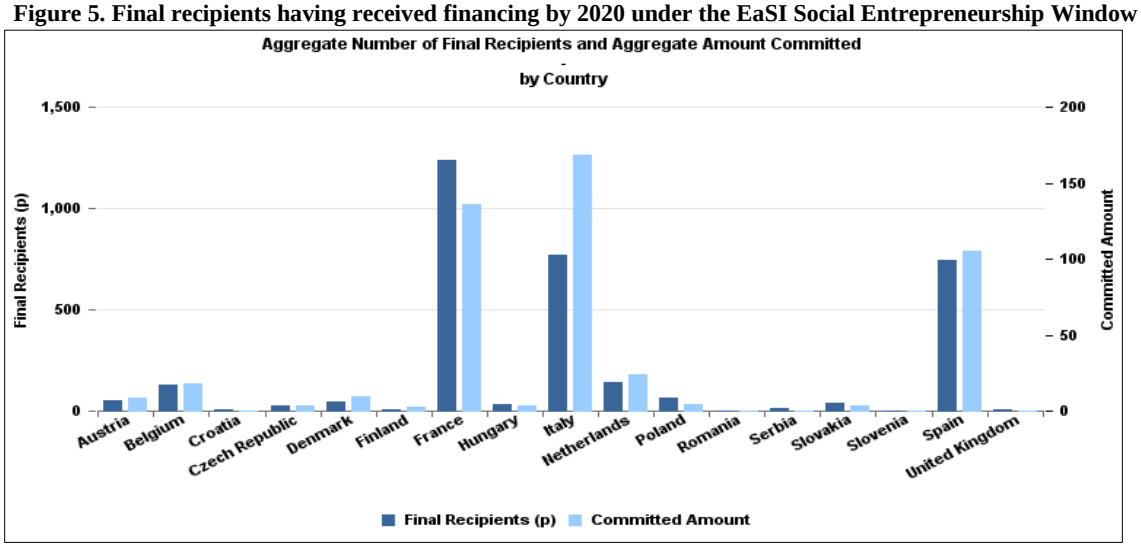
[123]Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Türkiye, and the United Kingdom (see Section 3.1 and Annex VI.3.3).

[124]Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom. Under EPMF, the total number of countries covered by the end of 2020 was 22.

Thus, the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation target of 900 social enterprises corresponding to a volume of EUR 270 million was largely exceeded. Most of the funding went to social enterprises operating in the area of human health and social work activities.

Regarding the geographical distribution, Figure 5 below shows that among the 17 countries that benefitted from this new instrument, France, Italy and Spain were the main beneficiaries.

Figure 5. Final recipients having received financing by 2020 under the EaSI Social Entrepreneurship Window



Source: EIF semi-annual operational report 2020

Evidence from the case study on '*EaSI social entrepreneurship*'[125] shows that the EaSI support to social enterprises was perceived by stakeholders as being effective. For instance, financial intermediaries interviewed and/or who took part in the targeted survey quoted among the main effects an improvement of their institutional capacity, as well as a wider outreach to more vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups, and reduced levels of risks for the financial intermediairies. The social enterprises representatives consulted whitin this case study confirmed that EaSI support facilitated their access to finance and subsequently to hire more staff (particularly from vulnerable groups) and ultimately to develop their business. At the same time, some EaSI Committee members who participated in the focus group indicated that their countries could not use the social entrepreneurship support to its full potential because this area was not mature enough in their country.

Quantitative evidence presented above allows to conclude that the EaSI programme contribution in increasing access to and availability of social enterprise finance was highly effective. Indeed, the EaSI new support in this field grew constantly over time and the results largely exceeded the targets estimated in the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation both in terms of number of enterprises supported and volume of loans. While the number of enterprises supported under this new EaSI activity and the corresponding volume are relatively limited compared to the EaSI microfinance branch, it does signal a constant/high grow over time. Qualitative evidence corroborates this finding, allowing to conclude additionally that - while participating countries were not able to benefit equally from the EaSI support - it however sparked the development of social economy markets in countries where they were previously underdeveloped.

To assess the efficiency with which this objective was achieved, the evaluation considers the leverage effect created. Compared to the total EaSI investment of EUR 40 million in the social entrepreneurship branch, a total volume of EUR 491 million was leveraged

[125] Available in the evaluation supporting study technical annexes.

under EaSI (see Table 8 in Section 3.2.1). This means that the leverage effect created by the EaSI support to social entrepreneurship was 12.3. Financial intermediaries consulted as part of the case study on '*Social entrepreneurship'* pointed out that the administrative burden associated with the EaSI support to social entrepreneurship was minimal (and lower than in other European programmes, for instance the ESF), being significantly outweighed by the benefits[126]. The leverage effect of 12.3 - which is much higher than the targeted leverage effect of 3 expected for social enterprise finance at the time of the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation - signals that EaSI was highly efficient in supporting in the social entrepreneurship. This leverage effect should continue to increase as loans are still disbursed (see Annex II.5).

4.1.9 Institutional capacity building of microcredit providers[127]

The support was provided to microcredit and social enterprises financial intermediairies through the *Capacity Building Investment Window* - which is the EaSI third financial instrument. EaSI also provided technical assistance to microenterprises and social finance under the PROGRESS axis.

A total amount of EUR 45 million was allocated under EaSI to reinforce the microcredit providers capacity, of which EUR 29 million in the microfinance field and EUR 16 million in social entrepreneurship sector. The target indicated in the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation was 50 microcredit providers to be supported by the end of the investment period. Up to the end of 2020, 14 investments were signed with financial intermediaries under the EaSI Capacity Building Investments Window[128].

In addition, 39 microcredit providers benefitted from tailored Technical Assistance for microfinance and 49 providers received assistance to implement the European Code of Good Conduct for Microcredit Provision[129]. As a pre-condition for benefitting from the EaSI Microfinance Guarantee and the EaSI Capacity Building in the area of microfinance, non-bank microcredit providers have to sign up to the above mentioned Code and the banks have to endorse it[130].

The adhesion to the Code became a central element for microcredit providers to acquire recognition and attract more support from the private and public sector. By the end of 2020, 52 microfinance institutions from 19 countries (16 Member States and 3 candidate countries) had been awarded certificates of compliance with the Code. In parallel, under the EaSI Technical Assistance for social enterprise finance, an important number of workshops, webinars, peer-to-peer trainings and study visits were organised to enhance the financial intermediaries' capacity.

[126]While this is based on a small sample of financial intermediaries and should be taken only as an indication, it corroborates the efficiency of this instrument.

[127]Experience with the predecessor instruments (EPMF and JASMINE) showed that the capacity of microfinance institutions needs to be further strengthened to improve the quality of services provided to final recipients. This, in turn, contributes to increasing access to finance for vulnerable people and micro-enterprises through, for instance, better-qualified staff (loan officers), ability to hire new people, and modernised internal working procedures (e.g. new IT system).

[128]Financial intermediaries interviewed for the case study on '*Social entrepreneurship'* explained that the *EaSI Capacity Building Investments Window* enabled them to set up new digital information systems, as well as approaches to assess the impact of investments. One microcredit provider mentioned that the support received allowed to develop an investment programme and to improve the range of products proposed. New opportunities for small companies to set up a business, diversification of the existing portfolio, higher capacity and higher financing opportunities were also reported by the financial intermediaries consulted.

[129]This 'Code' sets out good practice guidelines for microcredit providers and is expected to better enable sector organisations face the challenges of accessing long-term finance, maintaining and raising the quality of services and moving towards sustainability. The objective of the 'Code' is to detail a set of common standards for microcredit providers in the areas of customer and investor relations, governance, risk management, reporting standards and management information system.

[130]Non-bank microcredit providers signing a guarantee agreement with the EIF have to comply with the Code after a grace period of 18 months (36 months in the case of greenfield microfinance institutions). Greenfield microfinance institutions are designed to expand access to financial services for the low-income market in underdeveloped economies, and often specifically targeting small scale entrepreneurs, the business model is backed by foreign-owned holding companies or networks that provide initial capital, expertise, common branding, and standard policies and operating procedures.

The quantitative evidence presented above allows to conclude that the EaSI programme was effective in building microcredit providers capacity as the expected target of 50 microcredit providers was largely exceeded (more than 100 microcredit providers benefitted from EU support in different ways).

Qualitatively, feedbacks from the stakeholders - captured within this evaluation, but also during the EaSI support provision, as suggested by the reported increased capacity of financial intermediaries[131] - corroborate the finding above. In absence of additional quantitative data, it was not possible to measure directly the efficiency of the support delivered to the microcredit providers. Nevertheless, quantitative and qualitative evidence in relation to the effectiveness and data presented in Sections 4.1.7 and 4.1.8 (upward trends in number and volume of loans provided as well as higher leverage effects than expected), allow to conclude that EaSI was highly efficient in building capacity of microcredit providers.

4.1.10 General objectives effectiveness

The EaSI Regulation design is based on necessary links between the nine specific objectives and five general objectives[132].

Stronger ownership of EU objectives

The first general objective of EaSI was to strengthen the ownership of EU objectives among policymakers at all levels and to produce concrete, coordinated and innovative actions in close collaboration with policymakers as well as other stakeholders, such as civil society organisations and social partners. Improved shared understanding and stronger ownership implied the timely collection and analysis of relevant and accurate evidence (Section 4.1.1), the organisation of peer reviews, mutual learning activities and other information-sharing events (Section 4.1.2), as well as enhanced capacities of national and EU organisations to advocate for common actions and to support policy implementation (Section 4.1.4).

The sections mentioned above demonstrate that the programme was effective in producing high-quality comparative analytical knowledge and in building up the capacity of national and EU organisations, but moderately effective in enabling information-sharing, mutual learning and dialogue. These findings - corroborated by the increase (from 63% in 2014 to 79% in 2020) of the value of the headline indicator for the specific objective 1 (share of stakeholders who feel familiar with the main issues in the policy fields) - allow to conclude that the first general objective was effectively achieved.

The EESC evaluation corroborates this finding, with a majority of respondents (61%) believing that EaSI has strengthened the objectives and coordination of action at national and EU level in the areas of employment, social affairs and inclusion. In particular, 83% of employers' organisations consider that EaSI has achieved the objectives outlined above, 67% of representatives of associations of various interests consider the programme results to be positive; however, fewer workers' organisations see it as having a positive impact (only 42%). Nevertheless, this effectiveness is hindered by the limited programme's visibility among stakeholders, and by the decreasing satisfaction of stakeholders with information-sharing and mutual learning events (mainly due to the 2019 - 2020 pandemic context).

[131]The external contractor implementing EaSI technical assistance for microfinance and for social enterprise finance measured participant satisfaction. The participants' reported satisfaction rates running from 73% to 94% (for the activities under the technical assistance for microfinance) while the participants' reported satisfaction rate runs from 62% up to 100% (for the activities under the technical assistance for social entrepreneurship). Source: supporting study (page 58), based on Annex 4 of the "Frankfurt School of Finance & Management annual activity and monitoring report (2021; not public)".

[132]This implies that the activities implemented in relation to the specific objectives were expected to contribute to the achievement of the general objectives and ultimately of the global objectives (see Annex II.1.4).

Facilitation of policy reforms, convergence and capacities for social innovation and mutual learning

The second general objective of the programme was to support the development of adequate, accessible and efficient social protection systems and labour markets, and facilitate policy reform in the target fields. To this end, EaSI supported activities that test social and employment policy innovations on the ground before the possible dissemination and/or scaling-up of the most successful, including via the ESF (Section 4.1.3).

Moreover, it was important that the relevant knowledge and expertise gained through social policy experimentation activities were available and easily accessible, so that the participating countries could apply the new policy interventions that proved to be the most effective as widely as possible. This was mainly being achieved through information sharing and mutual learning, but also via dissemination of the relevant policy evidence supported by EaSI (Section 4.1.2). Achievement of this goal also depended on the capacities of the main actors to carry out social experimentations in order to develop innovative policy solutions (Section 4.1.4).

The sections mentioned above show that EaSI was effective in building stakeholders' capacities, but less effective in communicating and distributing the information to the stakeholders. It also results that the EaSI-funded social experimentation activities were effective in a short-term perspective, while their long-term effectiveness was hindered by the limited scaling-up of the projects and their use for the policymaking.

A proportion of 62% of stakeholders declared in 2020 that they used or intended to use social policy innovations developed at the EU level for policymaking (the headline indicator related to the second general objective). This value is equal to the comparison value of 62% registered in 2014. Qualitative evidence on the perceived efficiency of the EaSI-funded social experimentations was also considered in the evaluation.

Evidence from the INOVA+ study allows indeed to establish a correlation between the scope of individual calls and the stakeholders' perception of relevance. It appears that the perception of the social experimentations' relevance for the policymaking was particularly high for the 2018 call focusing on the access to social protection and support to national reforms, which was largely dominated by public organisations as main applicants.

By contrast, under the broader 2014 and 2015 calls, as well as the 2016 call, the level of relevance for policymaking varied by project. It largely depended on whether the project provided adequate solutions to their specific needs; for example, in the 2014 call, a project undertook an important effort to conduct the first pan-European needs' survey of people with rare diseases.

However, when asked to provide specific examples of social policy innovation developed at the EU level, the respondents to the EaSI Stakeholder Survey covering the 2019 - 2020 period were not able to indicate such examples, even after they stated that they already used them (or intend to use them in the future).

Additionally, the EESC report shows that a share of 54% of respondents to the survey consider that information and communication on the opportunities offered by EaSI (including related to social innovation and social experimentation) was poor, 21% consider information and communication systems to be adequate, 18% consider them to be good, and only 3% consider them to be very good.

Evidence from Sections 4.1.1, 4.1.3 and 4.1.4 corroborated to the elements presented above allow to conclude that the programme was moderately effective in achieving the second general objective, due notably to issues in the communicating and fructifying the results of the social experimentations by up scaling them.

Modernisation and effective application of EU law

The third EaSI general objective was to ensure that Union law on matters relating to the target fields is effectively applied, and, where necessary, contributes to modernising the Union law. This implied improving stakeholders' administrative capacity, a systematic discussion between public authorities across the EU, supporting networks of public authorities and NGOs, identifying and spreading of best practices, and offerying training programmes for public administrations. These types of actions were funded by EaSI under four specific objectives related to producing evidence (Section 4.1.1), sharing information (Section 4.1.2), testing social innovations at small scale (Section 4.1.3) and improving stakeholders' capacity (Section 4.1.4). As already indicated above, the programme was effective in building stakeholders' capacity and in generating evidence, but less effective in promoting social experimentations' upscaling and communicating information on the programme's results.

These findings are completed by qualitative information showing that a range of EaSI-supported outputs were instrumental in contributing to the improvement and better application of EU law[133]. Evidence from Sections 4.1.1 to 4.1.4 corroborated with the information presented above (and detailed in Annex VII) allows to conclude that EaSI was effective in achieving this general objective; nevertheless, it was hindered by the insuficient communication of the programme's results to the stakeholders.

High quality and inclusive EU labour markets that are open and accessible to all

The fourth EaSI general objective was to promote a high level of quality and sustainable employment throughout Europe. Free movement of workers is one of the four freedoms established in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) in order to enable workers from Member States with a high level of unemployment to move to other states where there is a demand for jobs. However, individuals face a number of hurdles to free movement. These can range from legal and administrative obstacles, housing availability and costs, employment of spouses and partners, and portability of pensions to linguistic barriers, issues on transparency of job vacancies, or lack of support from the Public Employment Services for matching CVs with job offers.

This EaSI general objective benefitted from the EURES activities aiming at, first, to ensure transparent labour market information (Section 4.1.5) and, second, providing job-matching services to employers and jobseekers (Section 4.1.6). Evidence provided in Section 4.1.5 indicates that the EURES Portal was effective in increasing the employment opportunities. Despite the downward trend in monthly visits to the Portal (due to the pandemic context but also to the way the number of visits was counted across the overall period), both the number of jobseekers and the number of employers registered on the Portal increased continously. Moreover, an upward trend can also be observed in the number of national vacancies shared on the EURES Portal by the participating countries. Additionally, the number of contacts between jobseekers and EURES advisers registered a substantial upward trend in 2014 - 2020, indicating the effectiveness of services for recruitment and placement (Section 4.1.6).

However, Table 17 below shows that compared to the substantial increase of the number of contacts, the number of placements (the headline indicator measuring progress in achieving the forth general objective)[134] increased very slightly. Compared to the number of contacts, the share of placements resulted decreased by 2.3 percentage points across the overall period.

[133]Annex VII details the EaSI contribution in 2014 - 2020 to the modernisation of EU law.

[134]Data on placements facilitated through the EURES Portal was only reported in aggregate, including those facilitated by the EURES Portal and those facilitated through personal contacts with EURES advisers staff.

Table 17. Number and share of placements facilitated by the EURES network

Item	2014	2020
Total number of placements	31 056	36 154
Total number of contacts with jobseekers	947 480	3 500 000
Share of placements resulting from all contacts	**3,3%**	**1%**

Source: DG EMPL, based on EaSI baseline report (updated 2018) and EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020 (data from EURES Performance Measurement System).

In conclusion, EaSI was moderately effective in achieving this general objective given the large decrease of the share of placements resulting from all contacts between EURES network advisers and jobseekers despite the effectiveness suggested by quantitative indicators analysed in sections 4.1.5 and 4.1.6. The slight increase of the number of placements resulted from all contacts is due partially to the fact that reporting on the number of contacts via the EaSI performance monitoring system became mandatory after 2016 when the EURES Regulation entered into force. It is to be also noted that EURES activities were strongly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic measures, notably the closure of borders, lockdowns and restricted travel.

Increased access to finance for vulnerable persons, micro- and social enterprises

The fifth general objective related to improving access to finance for vulnerable groups and micro/social enterprises. Boosting jobs, growth and investment remained among the main priorities of the European Commission in 2014 - 2020. Entrepreneurship and self-employment are powerful tools in increasing the number of jobs; access to finance, however, remained one of the major problems faced by business starters across Europe, in particular those managed by vulnerable groups.

Both EaSI and EPMF aimed to increase access to finance for vulnerable persons as well as micro- and social enterprises through provision of support to microcredit providers (Section 4.1.7) and investors in social enterprises (Section 4.1.8) in the form of guarantees, funded instruments, equity, quasi-equity as well as support for capacity building of microcredit intermediaries (Section 4.1.9). Achievement of the fifth general objective was also supported by activities funded under the PROGRESS axis, namely, policy evidence produced in the areas of microfinance and social entrepreneurship (Section 4.1.1), information sharing and mutual learning activities in the latter thematic areas (Section 4.1.2) as well as support for the main actors operating in the field, i.e. European Microfinance Network, European Venture Philanthropy Association and the Microfinance Centre and the technical assistance in the fields of microfinance and social entrepreneurship (Section 4.1.4).

From the quantitative evidence analysed in Section 4.1.7 (number and volume of microloans provided, and leverage effect achived) it results that both EPMF and EaSI were highly effective in making available microfinance. EaSI was highly effective as well in the social entrepreneurship field, as shown by the upward trends in the number of entreprises supported, the volume of microloans and the leverage effect created (Section 4.1.8). Finally, the number of microcredit providers benefitting from capacity building exceeded the target fixed in the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation, indicating that EaSI was also largely effective in building the capacities of this target group (Section 4.1.9).

The evaluation considers as well as the headline indicator (related to the fifth general objective) measuring the proportion of beneficiaries who have created or developed a business with EaSI support being unemployed or belonging to vulnerable groups. Such groups include women, unemployed people, those with no or only primary education, young and older people. The target indicated in the EaSI monitoring reports and the DG EMPL Annual Management Plan was that 50% of beneficiaries that developed a business with EU microfinance support should be unemployed or belonging to vulnerable groups.

This target was to be reached by the end of 2020. The groups mentionned above were monitored during the EaSI implementation period in order to show the direction of the headline indicator (which was not directly measured). There is no similar target for the support provided under EPMF. Experience with the implementation of EPMF provides however a point of comparison – nevertheless incomplete, as not all groups were equally monitored between 2012 and 2020 - for the implementation of microfinance activities under EaSI.

Table 18 below shows the proportion of persons belonging to different groups among EPMF beneficiaries in 2012 compared with the situation in 2015 (when EaSI began its operational phase in this field) and the situation in 2020 (under EaSI). Some individuals were potentially counted in different groups (for instance a women can be included also in the young people category and in the unemployed category).

Table 18. Vulnerable groups supported by the EaSI Microfinance Window (comparison between 2015 and 2020)

No.	Groups monitored	2012 (EPMF)	2015 (EaSI)	2020 (EaSI)
1	Women	39.27%	36.50%	29.80%
2	Unemployed or inactive [135]	31.89%	58.00%	12.30%
3	Long-term unemployed	-	28.1% (2018)	19.50%
3	No or only primary education	7.28%	18.90%	17.20%
4	People aged 55 years and above	9.74%	10.30%	22.40%
5	People younger than 25 years	5.22%	6.00%	5.80%
6	Disabled	-	1% (2016)	1.00%
7	Non-EU country as country as origin	-	11.9% (2018)	22.1%

Source: DG EMPL, based on EaSI baseline report (updated 2018) and EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020.
Note: The sum does not equate to 100% as there are some individuals which fall under several categories.

Table 18 shows that in 2015 - 2020, the values of the indicators significantly shifted for two of the monitored groups, i.e. women (it went down from 36.5% to 29,9%) and unemployed (it went down from 58% to 12.3%), while the proportion of people older than 55 doubled during the observed period of time. More than a third of the supported persons in 2015 were women; nevertheless, this proportion decreased in 2020 by 6.7 percentage points and by almost percentage 10 points compared to the value registered under EPMF. Similarly, the proportion of long-term unemployed people decreased by 8.6 percentage points between 2018 and 2020. A significant increase in support for persons from non-EU countries can be observed, while there is no change in the proportion of disabled people receiving support between 2016 and 2020. Microfinance being a means of providing financial services to the vulnerable groups based on market-driven and commercial approaches, these shifts in terms of end-recipients reflects the changing context (i.e. decreasing unemployment rate[136], demographic changes, influx of migrants, pandemic context) and thus the changing needs.

Data such as age, gender, employment status or education level is collected only for natural persons applying for EU microfinance funding. This results in an incomplete picture since many applicants are legal persons (enterprises) and therefore the social data of their representatives were not collected. Similarly, for legal persons, only data on their employees is being collected and not that of the owner or legal representative. Therefore, these impact data - collected on a voluntary basis - are not fully representative.

Sections 4.1.7 to 4.1.9 show that both EPMF and EaSI were higly effective in increasing the availability of finance for microenterprises and social enterprises, as well as the capacity of microfinance providers. Evidence provided above indicates however a downward trend mainly in the support provided to women and enemployed, paired with

[135]The definition of 'unemployed or inactive' encompasses final recipients that have been unemployed for less than a year.
[136]See also discussion in Section 4.1.5 and Section 4.4.1.

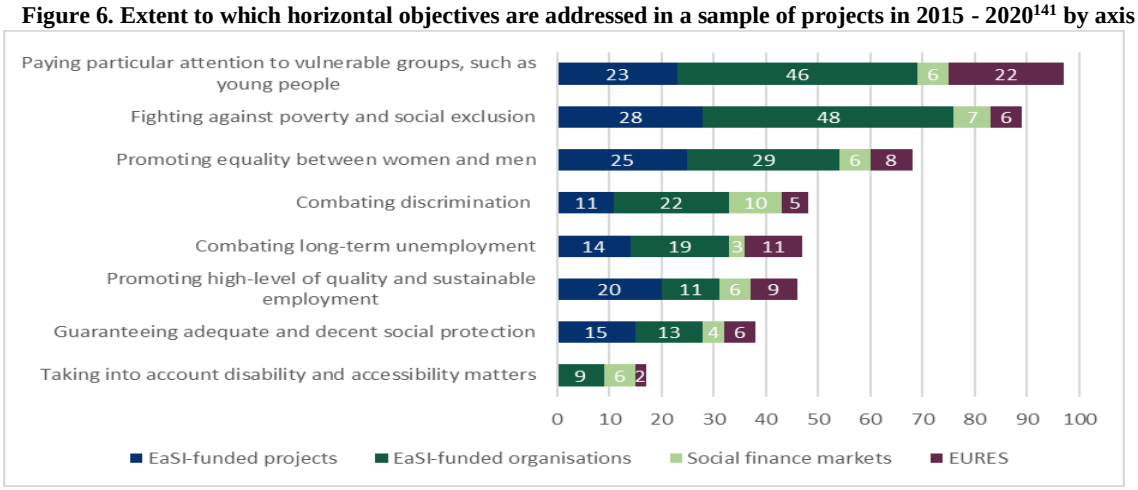
an upward trend in the support to seniors and people from third countries (due to the refugees' crisis and increased flux of migrants). EU general trends presented in Section 4.4.2 shows as well that women were (and still are) less likely than men to be self-employed or to start a business.

Given data limitations explained above and the fact that individuals monitored could fall under several categories, it is not possible to conclude mathematically on the reaching (or not) of the target fixed[137]. In conclusion, EPMF and EaSI were - despite the high effectiveness suggested by quantitative indicators (Sections 4.1.7 to 4.19) - moderately effective in increasing the availability of microfinance and social enterprises. This finding takes into account the uncertainty in the evidence of whether the 50% target was reached, due to data limitations and potential overlaps. It also considers that a downward trend was observed in the support to women and unemployed paired with upward trends in the support to senior and people coming from third countries.

4.1.11 Horizontal principles

This section looks at how successful were the programme in achieving mainstreaming of its horizontal principles[138]. The case study '*EaSI horizontal objectives*'[139] underscores that all EaSI Annual Work Programmes duly considered them when describing their socio-economic context and trends. It also indicates that stakeholders considers that these horizontal principles were well addressed in their projects[140]. The analysis of reports on projects and organisations funded by EaSI carried out whitin the evaluation supporting study shows furthermore (Figure 6) that most attention was paid to issues related to vulnerable groups, followed by gender equality, and the fight against poverty and social exclusion while less attention was paid to disability and accessibility matters.

Figure 6. Extent to which horizontal objectives are addressed in a sample of projects in 2015 - 2020[141] by axis



Source: Supporting study, based on the analysis of EaSI reports on projects and organisations (2014 - 2020).

[137]A percentage of 50% of beneficiaries that developed a business with EU microfinance support should be unemployed or belonging to vulnerable groups.

[138]In pursuing these objectives, in all its axes and actions, EaSI also aimed to take into account the horizontal principles defined in Article 4(2) of the EaSI Regulation: pay particular attention to vulnerable groups, such as young people; promote equality between women and men; combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability or sexual orientation; promote a high level of quality and sustainable employment, guarantee adequate and decent social protection, combat long-term unemployment and fight against poverty and social exclusion. Similar horizontal principles are incorporated in EPMF general objectives defined in Article 2 of the EPMF Decision.

[139]Included in the supporting study annexes.

[140]A few quotations are presented here to illustrate this finding. For instance, the representative of the EURES cross-border partnership in the border regions of Belgium, Germany and Netherlands said the following: "These issues are of course part of our 'normal work" (Final Activity Report, 2015, p. 10). Similarly, a beneficiaries' survey respondent (carried out whitin the evaluation supporting study research) commented that: "Combating social exclusion and discrimination along with gender equality and equal opportunities is a core business of trade unions, so it is just about applying our mainstream values and policies to any action."

[141]These are the 76 projects covered in Volumes X and XII of the reports on projects and organisations funded by EaSI (PPMI), 2019

Evidence collected through the survey with the EaSI beneficiaries and the online public consultation shows similar results[142]. Moreover, the EaSI Stakeholders' Survey results confirm that the 'disability and accessibility' matters were the least mainstreamed across EaSI activities (Table 19). It however indicates an important progression for all items in stakeholders' opinion compared with 2014 (the point of comparison), mainly on 'disability and accessibility' matters (24 percentage points) and 'combating long-term unemployment' (14 percentage points).

However, most respondents to the EESC survey consider the EaSI programme to be moderately effective in adressing its horizontal principles; one third of respondents believe that EaSI was very effective in paying attention to the most vulnerable sections of society; 36% considered its promotion of gender equality to be moderately effective; 30% considered EaSI to be not at all effective in tackling discrimination; and 33% considered it to be not at all effective in addressing either poverty or long-term unemployment.

Table 19. Share of stakeholders stating that EaSI contributed to the horizontal principles mainstreaming

No.	Principle	2014	2020	Increase
1	Paying attention to vulnerable groups	79%	80%	1
2	Promoting equality between women and men	78%	79%	1
3	Combating discrimination	76%	77%	1
4	Promoting high-quality and sustainable work	65%	71%	6
5	Guaranteeing adequate social protection	62%	73%	11
6	Fighting aginst poverty and social exclusion	60%	67%	7
7	Combating long-term unemployment	57%	71%	14
8	Considering disability and accessibility matters	47%	71%	24

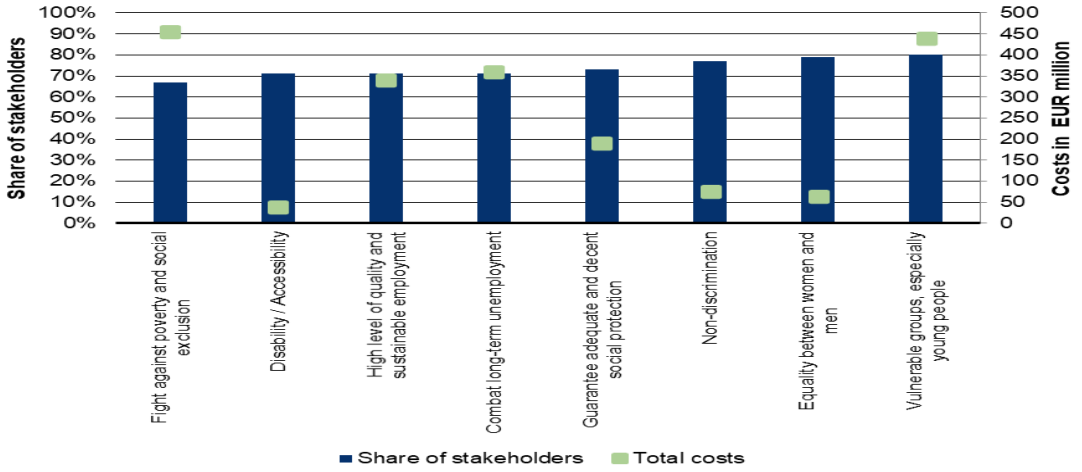
Source: DG EMPL, based on EaSI baseline report (2014) and EaSI monitoring report (2019 - 2020).
Note: The sum does not equate to 100% as there are several activities which fall under several categories.

The evaluation assessed the cost-effectiveness of the EaSI horizontal principles by comparing the total cost of actions related to each horizontal objective and to the stakeholders' opinion. Thus, Figure 7[143] below suggests that the horizontal principles related to 'disability and accessibility', 'equality between women and men' and 'non-discrimination' were the most cost-effective, while the 'fight against poverty and social exclusion' appears to have been the least cost-effective, with less than 70% of stakeholders indicating moderate or high integration and a cost of over EUR 450 million. It is followed by issues related to 'vulnerable people', 'combating unemployment' and 'ensuring sustainable employment'.

Evidence presented above allows to conclude that EaSI was effective in mainstreaming the horizontal principles, values for 2020 showing notably an upward trend for all of them compared to 2014. Emphasis was placed on the cross-cutting issues more directly aligned with the EaSI objectives such as 'paying attention to vulnerable groups'; 'guaranteeing adequate and decent social protection'; and 'promoting a high level of quality and sustainable employment'. Different sources of evidence corroborated above also indicate however that 'disability and accessibility' matters were addressed to a more limited extent through EaSI-funded actions, but their integration improved significantly between 2014 and 2020. At the same time, they are also among the most cost-effective actions, together with the promotion of gender equality and of the actions against discriminations.

[142]See Figure 27 and Figure 28 in Annex VI.5.
[143]In Figure 7, the blue bars represent the share of stakeholders that indicated moderate or high integration of the relevant objective (left axis), and the green squares refer to the total costs (right axis). Do note that one action can be aimed at multiple horizontal objectives, therefore actions can be counted multiple times and costs can be biased upwards.

Figure 7. Cost-effectiveness of the horizontal objectives



Source: Supporting study, based on data from the EaSI monitoring reports.

Similar horizontal principles were incorporated in the EPMF general objectives. From the online public consultation, it emerged that the EPMF programme had broadened existing action at EU level by supporting people that would not have received support otherwise[144], while EaSI microfinance branch continued and expanded this support (Section 4.1.7). Indeed microfinance traditionally targets social groups that are at risk of financial exclusion, including long-term unemployed, but also women, youth, migrants, disabled persons and seniors.

4.1.12 Monetary and non-monetary efficiency

This section examines the programmes' efficiency in monetary and non-monetary terms, by analysing first the budgetary execution, and focusing then on the administrative and governance costs.

Budgetary execution

Table 20 presents an overview of the total commitments[145] made over the whole period of the programme per axis[146]. **Table 20. EaSI total commitments per axis in 2014 - 2020 (EUR)**

Year	PROGRESS	EURES	MF/SE	EaSI administrative	Overall
2014	65 278 249.91	21 439 000.00	28 500 200.00	3 549 908.34	**118 767 358.25**
2015	71 836 540.60	23 024 481.86	31 427 570.00	3 537 533.76	**129 826 126.22**
2016	71 500 435.22	22 865 150.32	27 744 070.32	3 621 471.00	**125 731 126.86**
2017	65 315 596.64	25 128 868.00	43 497 384.00	3 454 699.44	**137 396 548.08**
2018	71 415 291.66	30 459 785.85	27 356 263.00	2 504 071.00	**131 735 411.51**
2019	80 728 270.45	33 755 332.72	20 843 726.00	1 510 040.88	**136 837 370.05**
2020	79 172 352.10	23 001 378.12	14 254 929.00	1 805 425.00	**118 234 084.22**
Total	**505 246 736.58**	**179 673 996.87**	**193 624 142.32**	**19 983 149.42**	**898 528 025.19**
Share per axis	**56 %**	**20 %**	**22 %**	**2 %**	**100 %**

Source: EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020[147]

When looking at each axis separately, the highest share of funding was dedicated to the PROGRESS axis which consumed 56% of the budget. It can be observed that the commitments made to Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis came to almost 22%,

[144]Twenty-three (23) respondents to the online public consultation out of 52 agreed with this statement that the while 24 respondents out of 52 admitted that the EPMF increased access and availability of microfinance for vulnerable groups.

[145]The budget foreseen for the implementation of EaSI (EUR 919 million) was divided following minimum shares allocated to each of the three axes: 55% to PROGRESS, 18% to EURES and 18% to Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship (Regulation 2018/1046). The Regulation 2018/1046 (hereafter 'The Omnibus Regulation') softened the allocation foreseen in the EaSI original legal basis and stated that they should be treated as indicative and not binding. Table 39 (Annex VI.2) compares the allocations originally defined with those defined by the Omnibus Regulation.

[146]Tables 40 - 46 included in Annex VI.2 show the financial implementation of the programme in terms of planned and actual commitments per axis for each year.

[147]https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8501&furtherPubs=yes

while around 20% of the total budget was disbursed to the EURES axis. In addition, 2% were allocated to finance the operational expenditure to support the implementation of the programme.Table 21 below compares each axis' planned/implemented monetary inputs and shows corresponding performance (execution rate, share actual/planned commitments compared with the minimum thresholds[148]). The actual commitments over the whole period of the programme amount to EUR 898 million, which represents 98% of the planned commitments (execution rate). The execution rate stayed high throughout the duration of the programme, varying from 96% to 99% over the years[149]. Compared to the two other axes, PROGRESS axis did not commit all the plannned funding (execution rate 98,1%), which resulted in unused funding that was returned to the EU budget (around EUR 10 million). This was notably due to the cancellation of a number of studies or events that became 'unnecessary' in the light of socio-economic developments; for instance events cancelled or converted in online format due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 21. Overview of monetary inputs per EaSI axis (2014 - 2020)

Axis	Planned commitments (EUR)	Actual commitments (implemented) (EUR)	Execution rate (implemented/ planned)	Share of actual commitments in the total commitments	Minimum budget shares targeted[150]
PROGRESS	515 026 509,00	505 246 736,58	98,1%	56,23%	55%
EURES	180 544 938,00	179 673 996,87	99,5%	19,99%	18%
MF/SE	193 798 278,00	193 624 142,32	99,9%	21,54%	18%
Support EaSI	26 497 494,00	19 983 149,42	75,4%	2%	2%
Total	**915 867 219,00**	**898 528 025,19**	**98,1%**	**99,76%**	**-**

Source: DG EMPL, based on the EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020

To cope with this type of situation and to facilitate budgetary flexibility, the EaSI legal basis foresaw the possibility to adjust the available funds across the axes depending on 'specific' needs (Article 33)[151]. Confirming the EaSI mid-term evaluation finding in this respect, the evidence collected (desk research, stakeholders' feedbacks) during the current evaluation indicates that there was no significant need for reallocation across the axes. Some stakeholders raised however the need for more funding to allow social experimentations to achieve wider impacts via their upscaling/transferring to other contexts, to facilitate the social enterprises growth as well as to adress the emerging social, environmental and digital challenges[152].

Evidence presented in Sections 4.1.1 to 4.1.9 corroborated with those presented above indicates that aside a larger demand than foreseen for the EaSI microfinance branch (see Section 3.2.1), the budgets planned for the remaining programme's activities were appropriate. Indeed, the high uptake of the EaSI Guarantee Instrument under the third axis put pressure on its budget and resulted in a full utilisation of the EaSI microfinance branch budget by 2016. In response to this strong demand, the total financial envelope of

[148]An overview of the planned budget and the actual commitments per axis for each year in 2014 - 2020 is included in Annex VI.2 (Tables 40 - 46).

[149]Financial data provided in these tables must be interpreted considering that 2014 was the first year of implementation and some activities planned under the EaSI third axis were postponed to subsequent years (after the signature of the agreement with the EIF).

[150]As amended by the Omnibus Regulation.

[151]Based mainly on the EaSI mid-term evaluation findings related to this issue, the Omnibus Regulation (2018) introduced amendments to the EaSI Regulation to make the budget even more flexible (see Section 3.2). A consequence was that Article 33 became obsolete, and so was deleted from the legal basis. Evidence collected within the current evaluation confirm that in practice the flexibility clause (Article 33) was underexploited. DG EMPL officials involved in the EaSI programme implementation explained that while re-allocation of funds was in theory possible through specific amendments to the budget, this rarely happened given the huge administrative burden generated.

[152]Fifty-six (56) respondents out of 97 do not know if the EaSI budget was sufficient to achieve its objectives, 20 considered that it was insufficient, 19 thought that it was sufficient and even 2 respondents felt that it was too high. Some of them commented that EaSI should have funded more projects given the large number of grant applications received for the calls of proposals. Other respondents pointed to the wide gap between the supply of financial products to microfinance providers and the (growing) market needs, notably to support the growth of social enterprises. Furthermore, other respondents believed that there was a need for more funding to truly mitigate the social, environmental, and digital challenges across Europe. Finally, some respondents indicated that the support allocated to social innovation was too low to achieve their expected impact.

EUR 193 million allocated from EaSI was toped-up with a European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI)[153] guarantee amounting to EUR 300 million to the *EaSI Guarantee Instrument* in the second implementation period. The EaSI third axis budget was also topped up with an additional contribution from repayments from the EPMF[154] amounting to EUR 69 million.

The evaluation also examines how the EU anti-fraud system and internal/external audit[155] allowed the prevention and timely detection of frauds/malfunctioning in the implementation of EaSI and EPMF. Information collected indicates that the mechanisms established at the level of the financial and audit units were effective in managing the risks of fraud/malfunction under EaSI[156]. Similarly, no evidence of fraud was identified in relation to EPMF, participants to the focus group with the EIF representatives confirming that any fraudulent activity was registered under the EPMF. They also indicated that checks were consistently carried out to ensure compliance with contractual obligations and noted improvements in the implementation scrutiny moving from EPMF to EaSI.

Evidence provided above suggests that funding was apropriately allocated among the three axes and met the stakeholders' needs, notably as regards the high demand for the *EaSI Guarantee Instrument* products detected in the first implementation period. Nevertless, more funding would be needed notably in the social innovation field, to support the social enterprises development as well as to adress the social, environmental and digital challenges.

EaSI administrative costs

This section focuses on the cost-effectiveness of EaSI administrative costs. They included costs incurred with the EaSI Committee organisation, EaSI performance monitoring and evaluation, as well as with services required for the administration of the programme, such as the development or maintainance of IT applications as well as other outsourced services (technical assistance, audit, translations, meetings of experts, information/communication activities). Table 22 shows the planned and actual administrative costs for the whole period 2014 - 2020 .

Table 22. Planned and actual commitments for EaSI administrative costs in 2014 - 2020

Year/costs (EUR)	Planned (EUR)	Actual (EUR)	Share in the total commitments	Execution rate	Estimated administrative expenses (EUR)[157]
2014	3 914 000,00	3 549 908,34	3%	96%	4 400 000
2015	4 426 420,00	3 537 533,76	3%	80%	4 600 000
2016	4 857 074,00	3 621 471,00	3%	75%	5 000 000
2017	4 000 000,00	3 454 699,44	3%	86%	5 000 000
2018	3 400 000,00	2 504 071,00	2%	74%	5 200 000
2019	3 400 000,00	1 510 040,88	1%	44%	5 200 000
2020	2 500 000,00	1 805 425,00	2%	72%	5 000 000

[153]https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/investment-plan/strategic-investments-fund/

[154]As per Article 30(4) of the EaSI Regulation.

[155]From the review of the DG EMPL annual activity reports for 2014 – 2020 (effectuated by the supporting study contractor), it results that there was a common audit strategy used by DG EMPL, DG REGIO and DG MARE. This common strategy was accompanied by a single audit plan including joint audit missions. Common IT tools have also been developed: MAPAR, which allows auditors to manage their audit missions from the preparation to the final report; and ARACHNE, a risk scoring tool to be used by both the Commission and Member States to identify the riskiest projects, and to strengthen fraud prevention and detection. Following the adoption of the new Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy in 2019, DG EMPL also reviewed its procedures and issued a new manual of procedures regarding relations with OLAF and the fight against fraud.

[156]A review of DG EMPL annual reports 2014 - 2020 (effectuated by the supporting study contractor) showed as well that fraud or malfunctioning cases were rare for most EMPL programmes, and none related to EaSI activities were identified. A review of OLAF annual reports for the period 2014 - 2020 also did not provide evidence of any EaSI-related fraud. OLAF does not list all cases but highlights those that are illustrative of a particular type of fraud that tends to be common. EaSI programme was not mentioned in any of these OLAF reports.

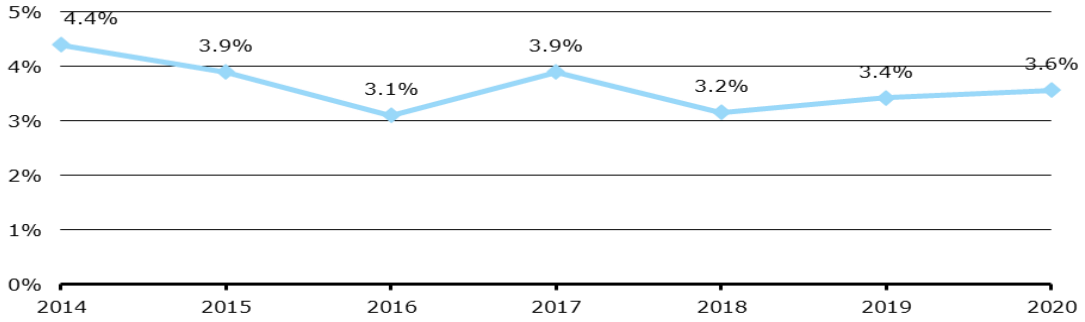
[157]As referred in the Proposal for PSCI/EaSI (2011).

Total	**26 497 494,00**	**19 983 149,42**	**2%**	**75,4%**	**34 600 000**

Source: DG EMPL, based on the EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020 and the Proposal for PSCI/EaSI (2011).

The budget spent for administrative support was relatively constant every year, and even decreased towards the end of the programme period, following in particular the decreasing trend in budgets devoted to the development of DG EMPL internal IT applications (DEFIS for evaluation and FINAP for programming, both arriving at their 'maturity' in 2018). The decrease observed in 2018 - 2020 can be explained mainly by the IT investment typical decreasing lifecycle[158], but also by the COVID-19 effects (for instance meetings being cancelled and/or re-organised online with less costs). The fact that DG EMPL anticipated the use of corporate applications for projects' management (eGrants) and programming (MAPP[159]) in the next programming period also explains why new developments were stopped by the end of the implementation period.

Figure 8. Costs of control for direct and indirect management incurred by DG EMPL as a share of total funds managed through direct and indirect management (not only EaSI)



Source: Supporting study, based on DG EMPL Annual Activity Reports 2014-2020 (aggregate for direct and indirect management for DG EMPL as a whole)

The EaSI administrative costs incurred were also largely inferior to what was estimated to be spent at the time of the Proposal for PSCI/EaSI[160] under the 'administrative costs' heading (see the last column of the Table 22 above). While this estimate could indicate a high degree of cost-effectiveness of EaSI administrative costs, it should however be considered with caution given that no calculation methodology was provided in the proposal document. When comparing the trend in the EaSI administrative costs with the trend in the DG EMPL overall costs of control[161] (including both direct and indirect management), it can be observed that both followed the same trajectory. While they were high in 2014 (associated with the start of the new financial/programming period), they followed a slightly downward trend over the 2014 - 2020 period (see Figure 8 above).

The evidence presented above allows to conclude that the budget devoted to EaSI general administration was efficiently planned and spent, pursuing a decreasing trend (similar to the DG EMPL administrative costs downward trend) and being lower than the estimated costs before the programme's starting.

Programmes' governance

This section places the focus on the cost-effectiveness of activities related to the programme governance *stricto sensu*, namely the planning and organisation of the EaSI

[158]Also, it should be considered that less investment was made in DEFIS (the DG EMPL tool for submission and evaluation of proposals) development in the perspective of its replacement in the current programming period with the corporate application eGrants. FINAP, still functional, will be also replaced in the coming years with a Commission corporate application (MAPP).

[159]Corporate MAPP (Multi-Annual Programming and Planning).

[160]The initial name of the programme - 'Programme for Social Change and Innovation (PSCI') - was renamed 'Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)' in 2014.

[161]Costs of control include financial management; budget and accounting; external audit; coordination (e.g., strategic planning and programming, internal control); anti-fraud; programme management; and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The estimates are calculated based on the time dedicated by staff members to the functions/activities which is translated into costs by using the annual average cost of staff, complemented with the external costs incurred by the Commission for the same functions/activities (e.g., outsourced audit, ICT, etc.).

Committee meetings, and the EaSI monitoring and evaluation activities, both from a monetary and a non-monetary perspective. In monetary terms, Table 23 shows the evolution in the related costs over the 2014 - 2020 period. EaSI Committee meetings costed on average EUR 59 888 per year. When considering the average cost per meeting, costs reduced significantly after 2016, as shown in the table below, signalling improved efficiency[162]. At the same time, the costs in 2019 and 2020 were drastically reduced, since meetings took place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

EaSI benefitted from a performance measurement framework, with regular monitoring and evaluation of programme implementation. It involved a set of 42 performance indicators (one headline and two complementary for each of the nine specific objective, five general objectives and the horizontal principles), a methodology for gathering information (based on a bi-annual EaSI Stakeholders' Survey and specific monitoring systems for the EURES and Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axes) and a methodology for analysing information about EaSI-funded projects and organisations.

A baseline report was drafted in 2014; the values of the performance indicators estimated in 2014 - based on data from the monitoring of the three previous programmes (PROGRESS, EURES and EPMF) - were considered as the baseline for EaSI. Three updates of the baseline situation were effectuated in 2016, 2018 and 2021.

Table 23. Allocation and evolution in EaSI programme management costs in 2014 - 2020 (EUR)

<table>
<tr><th>Costs (EUR)</th><th>2014</th><th>2015</th><th>2016</th><th>2017</th><th>2018</th><th>2019</th><th>2020</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">EaSI Committee meetings[163] (average cost per meeting)</td><td>99 452
(33 151)</td><td>76 775
(38 388)</td><td>81 018
(40 509)</td><td>56 542
(14 136)</td><td>47 113
(15 704)</td><td>22 206
(7 402)</td><td>36 109
(18 055)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">419 215</td></tr>
<tr><td>EaSI monitoring contracts (average cost per deliverable)</td><td colspan="3">361 000
(60 166)</td><td colspan="2">376 000
(62 666)</td><td>715 500
(51 071)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">EaSI evaluation contracts</td><td colspan="3">489 483 (mid-term)</td><td colspan="4">-</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="7">541 862 (ex post)</td></tr>
<tr><td>TOTAL (EUR)</td><td colspan="7">2 876 070</td></tr>
</table>

Source: DG EMPL, based on FINAP and ABAC data

The EaSI monitoring costs were adapted over time to the extension in the number of deliverables and their scope. Over the 2014 - 2020 period, there were three successive monitoring contracts. Each of the two first contracts (signed in 2013 and 2015) covered 6 deliverables (1 baseline report, 1 monitoring report and 4 reports on projects and organisations). The last contract (2017) covered 2 performance monitoring reports, 2 updates of the baseline report as well as 10 reports on projects and organisations[164]. When considering the cost per deliverable, they decreasead from EUR 60 166 to EUR 51 071 per deliverable, indicating the cost-effectiveness of the spending.

Mid-term and *ex post* evaluations were also required under the EaSI Regulation. Each evaluation costed around EUR 500 000. The *ex post* evaluation was more costly because of its extended scope compared to the mid-term evaluation, including the EPMF and

[162]The evaluation supporting study shows (based on desk research and cost analysis) that there is no clear trend or correlation between the annual costs of meetings and the number of meetings held, nor between the costs of meetings and the number of participants that attended the meetings.

[163]The amounts corresponding to the EaSI Committee meeting organization were calculated by the contractor based on the titles of activities reported in the FINAP database.

[164]Overall, the tasks covered by these contracts included the baseline report (2014) and its three updates, the monitoring reports, as well as the reports on projects and organisations funded under EaSI. Four EaSI monitoring reports were published up to 2020: a first report covered 2014 and three other reports covered 2015 - 2016, 2017 - 2018 and 2019 - 2020. Eighteen (18) reports on projects and organisations (named 'good practices reports' in 2014 - 2015) were published in total. They consists in a systematic presentation of all projects and organisations (operating grants) funded under EaSI.

covering a longer timespan. However, there was no clear pattern over time in the programme's evaluation related costs, given that the evaluations were punctual exercices.

The non-monetary inputs (staff) involved in the management of the programme remained relatively stable throughout the implementation period, with a low of 2.75 FTE (full-time equivalent) in 2015 to a constant high of 3.3 FTE in 2016 - 2020 as shown in Table 24 below. While the FTEs remained pratically constant during the overall period, they were substantially lower than what was originally foreseen. The PSCI/EaSI proposal indeed estimated 120 FTE per year to be engaged in the programme. However, it is unclear in the proposal document on what and how this estimate was based on, as it appears to be disproportionally large. One hypothesis could be that this number did not only envisage the FTE involved in managing the programme, but also the supporting FTEs (for instance the DG EMPL policy units involved in the implementation of EaSI thematic activities and related calls for proposals, and/or EaSI monitoring and evaluation support staff, and/or EaSI financial management support staff).

Moreover, the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation does not provide an estimation of the human resources needed for the programme's management. It only indicates that the new programme should focus on large projects in order to reach critical mass and reduce administrative burden. Also, it highlighted the necessity of a joint management with the EIF as the Commission would not have the specific expertise and the resources to manage the EaSI third axis instruments on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, given the lack of methodological information on the FTEs estimates calculation in the EaSI proposal and in the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation, no robust conclusions on the efficiency of EaSI non-monetary inputs could be made.

Table 24. Evolution in FTE (full-time equivalent) for EaSI programme management in 2014-2020

Full-time equivalent	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Administrators	2	1.25	1.75	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8
Assistants	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Deputy head of unit / team leader	0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Total FTE	**3**	**2.75**	**3.25**	**3.3**	**3.3**	**3.3**	**3.3**

Source: Supporting study, based on data provided by DG EMPL.

From the evidence collected during the supporting study it emerged that the merger of the three EaSI predecessor programmes streamlined their financial and administrative management[165]. With the three axes under one common legal base, the Commission developed indeed one annual work programme rather than three separate ones. This produced efficiency gains by limiting the time and resources necessary for drafting and adopting the work programmes, including consultations with the EaSI Committee representing the Member States.

In terms of non-monetary inputs assigned to the EPMF, the programme was managed by one FTE (administrator) during the whole implementation period. The staff effort was lower than what was foreseen in the EPMF *ex ante* evaluation, which estimated one AD post and two external staff[166]. Evidence presented above suggests that EaSI and EPMF were efficiently managed with resources (financial/human) below those estimated in the respective *ex ante* evaluation.

Monitoring and evaluation

This section focuses on the programmes' monitoring and evaluation (complementary information is provided in Annex VI.1). The design and implementation of EaSI and

[165]It also results from the interviews inside DG EMPL (supporting study technical annexes) that the 2021 - 2027 set-up, with the EaSI strand being part of ESF+, will probably not reduce administrative burden related to the programming, as the two ESF+ strands will be implemented independently, requiring separate work plans, while the financial management workload will remain similar.

[166]No additional reliable information related to this topic was available at the time of the evaluation.

EPMF were complex due to the diverse range of aspects they cover. Both EaSI and EPMF were monitored under legal frameworks including agreements with the EIF for the EaSI third axis and EPMF, as well different complementary data collection and monitoring systems (DG EMPL contracts for monitoring and evaluation, EURES network specific monitoring and evaluation frameworks, EIF monitoring reports for the EaSI third axis implementation). This required the use of different skills and methodologies according to each of the aspects to be monitored and evaluated. Hence, this involved multidisciplinary teams within DG EMPL for the programmes coordination and implementation, as well as within contractors' teams carrying out respectively monitoring and evaluation.

DG EMPL and the monitoring contractor set up formats, procedures and systems for regular information collection which can monitor and evaluate the development of programmes' activities and the increase in the efficiency of service provision to users. These included indicators and mechanisms for data collection (EaSI Stakeholders' Survey, additional specific information reported by the units in charge with the EURES axis and EaSI third axis implementation) and measuring the progress in achieving specific and general objectives.

Evaluating and measuring impacts on (different) groups stakeholders required a baseline from the very beginning of the programme including an analysis of the situation of the programme's target areas. The initial creation of this baseline involved the use of different methods (EaSI Stakeholders' Survey and desk research of previous' programmes available data sources), owing to which the level of information obtained on the EaSI baseline situation varied from one specific objective to another and from one axis to another (see discussion in Section 2.3). The creation of a sample of stakeholders potentially benefitting from the programme proven challenging (see details on the methodological approach and on how the representativity was ensured in Annex II.5). This database was necessary to carry out the EaSI Stakeholders' Survey, which was the main instrument to collect data on indicators, in particular for the PROGRESS axis. Finally, it is worth noticing that the impact of some EaSI activities – notably related to the capacity building, social experimentation and the labour market transparency - require time to take effect.

4.2 Internal and external coherence



This section is structured in three parts: the first one analyses the EaSI internal coherence[167] (between its three axes); the second one focuses on the complementary with ESF; and the third part identifies external coherence/complementarity[168] with other EU programmes.

[167]As for the internal coherence, the programme should "pursue a coherent approach to promoting quality and sustainable employment, as well as to combating and preventing social exclusion and poverty, while taking into account the need to respect equality between women and men. The implementation of EaSI should be rationalised and simplified, notably through the establishment of a set of common provisions including, inter alia, general objectives and monitoring and evaluation arrangements" (EaSI Regulation, Recital 10).

[168]As for the external coherence, the EaSI Regulation (Recital 11) states that "funding priority should be given to the development of structures with a clear multiplier effect which will benefit further activities and initiatives. Appropriate measures should also be put in place to avoid any possibility of overlap or double-financing with other funds or programmes, in particular the ESF".

4.2.1 Internal coherence

The merging of the three programmes preceding EaSI was expected to increase complementarity and the budgetary flexibility (see discussion in Section 2.1)[169]. From a governance perspective, the new 'umbrella' programme allowed for a joint coordination involving the DG EMPL programming unit, group of EaSI coordinators from the operational units and the EaSI Committee (see Annex VI.1). Only one work programme was issued annually encompassing the three axes, instead of three as previously. This centralised governance saved time and effort in terms of the programme's coordination (as argued in Section 4.1.12).

The EaSI mid-term evaluation also found that - building on the existing links between the three predecessors - the support provided under EaSI was more effective than those provided separately before 2014. The case study on '*EaSI past and future synergies*'[170] identified additional examples of synergies between the axes during the second part of the implementation period. A wide range of activities[171] funded under the PROGRESS axis were relevant to the EURES and Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axes, thereby shedding light on EaSI internal coherence design and purpose[172]. Other examples of PROGRESS activities relevant to the two other axes are the 2019 call for proposals for actions to boost the development of finance markets for social enterprises (relevant for the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis) and the European Solidarity Corps – occupational strand (relevant for the EURES axis). Throughout the overall implementation period, the PROGRESS axis also funded the Technical Assistance for capacity building of microfinance and social enterprise microcredit providers (Section 4.1.4 and Sections 4.1.7 to 4.1.9) and organised two EaSI Conferences (2019 and 2021) which encompassed all three axes.

Evidence collected during the supporting study reveals as well obvious links between the different categories of activities and gains of efficiency at the governance level, while the budgetary flexibility clause foreseen in the original legal basis was not a useful tool in practice (as discussed in Section 4.1.12). Feedbacks from the online public consultation also indicate an improved complementarity between the EaSI axes[173], respondents highlighting practical benefits stemming from the merger, such as rationalisation of rules and procedures, and more transnational exchange of knowledge and cross-sectoral cooperation.

4.2.2 Coherence with ESF

EaSI and ESF had similar objectives (aiming to contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy) but were different in their approach to achieving those. This implied different priorities

[169]While the issue of budgetary flexibility was discussed in Section 4.1.12, this section focuses on the complementarity in relation to the implemented actions.

[170]Included in the supporting study technical annexes.

[171]Annex 2.1 of the case study on '*EaSI past and future synergies*' (supporting study technical annexes) provides a detailed overview of such cross-cutting actions, including events.

[172]Many analytical activities funded under the PROGRESS axis were relevant to the two other axes. For instance, the studies related to cross-border mobility such as Mapping and Analysing Bottleneck Vacancies in EU Labour Markets, Overview report: Free movement of workers and transitional arrangements: lessons from the 2004 and 2007 enlargements; Inferring (labour) mobility and migration in the EU from big data and social media data; and An Ad Hoc Statistical Analysis on Short Term Mobility – Economic Value of Posting of Workers, contributed to the implementation of the EURES axis actions. Other analytical outputs were relevant for the implementation of the EaSI third axis, for instance: A map of social enterprises and their eco-systems in Europe; A recipe book for social finance: a practical guide on designing and implementing initiatives to develop social finance instruments and markets; Policy brief on scaling the impact of social enterprises; Policy Brief on Social Impact Measurement for Social Enterprises - Policies for Social Entrepreneurship.

[173]Twenty-one (21) respondents (out of 71) thought that the merging ensured more consistency. To note that more than half of the respondents did not have an opinion related to the effects of the merger in 2014, most probably due to their limited familiarity with the predecessor programmes (see more information in the supporting study technical annexes).

(more Member State centric for ESF, more EU-level for EaSI)[174], as well as different implementation rules, timescales and planning approaches. This makes the instruments complementary as they worked towards the same goals in different ways. One main complementarity between the two programmes was related to the scaling up under ESF of the social experimentations implemented under EaSI. Section 4.1.3 shows that the limited scaling up of EaSI projects emerged as one of the least successful outcome of the EaSI programme, even if it was not a provision included in the EaSI Regulation.

This negative finding was however moderated by the positive results of the EaSI social experimentations (Section 4.1.3) featuring progress under EaSI compared to its predecessor PROGRESS (2007 - 2013) where no link with the ESF was developed despite the potential of the funded projects[175]. Section 4.1.3 shows as well that despite the limited possibility to generalise the experiences at different levels/populations, the funded projects in 2014 - 2020 present interesting approaches for innovation in the field of social policy, targeting disadvantaged groups and putting the emphasis on the need for cooperation between different types of organisations. One key reason for the limited scaling up through ESF - as corroborated by the analysis of the EaSI Committee meetings operational conclusions[176] and also identified within other evaluations (EaSI mid-term evaluation[177]; ESF+ impact assessment[178]) - was the lack of dedicated mechanisms to facilitate effective links between EaSI and ESF. Different legal bases, different coordination units and the specific scale/nature of respective programmes implied the participation of a range of diverse actors within the Commission and at national level, and hindered the coordination at strategic and operational level[179]. A further explanation for the limited scaling up, which is rather (multi)level context-dependent and (multi)stakeholders-dependent, was the inherent demand-driven nature of social innovation. The EaSI calls have been designed and managed by the Commission services, whilst the ESF calls were launched by the Managing Authorities in the Member States. Therefore, it was an inherent mismatch between the supply and demand for social innovation, which resulted in limited use of the ESF in upscaling the results of projects carried out under EaSI.

Another way in which EaSI and ESF were expected to be complementary was in relation to the EaSI third axis activities, considering that ESF provided likewise support through financial instruments, including microcredits and funding for social entrepreneurship. For instance, a financial intermediary interviewed explained that in Poland, ESF funds were used to set up a new financial instrument within the Polish National Fund for Social Entrepreneurship. Therefore, beneficiaries had the possibility to combine this fund with the EaSI financial instruments. While this kind of synergies were rare, they signify an improvement compared to the period before EaSI, when potential synergies between the

[174]While the ESF was implemented through shared management (i.e., Member States have the primary responsibility for setting up a management and control system while the Commission plays a supervisory role), EaSI was implemented through direct and indirect management, meaning the Commission bears the responsibility.

[175]Synthesis report of the support study: Ex-post evaluation of the Programme for employment and social solidarity – Progress 2007-2013 and recommendations for the successor programmes to PROGRESS 2014-2020, page 13.

[176]Based on operational conclusions from EaSI Committee meetings 2, 5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 (internal documents).

[177]https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52019SC0182&qid=1646639704549

[178]https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018SC0289&qid=1646641000664.

[179]For instance, only one joint meeting between the ESF Technical Working Group and the EaSI Committee took place in November 2018, where the potential synergies between the programmes were discussed (14th meeting of the EaSI Programme Committee: Operational conclusions). One former EaSI Committee member explained that a similar disconnection existed at national level, as most often there is no coordination between the members of the ESF Technical Working Group and the national officials nominated in the EaSI Committee. This lack of awareness/coordination between the members of the two governance structures was also pointed out by some project beneficiaries[179]. This finding was also corroborated by one DG EMPL official consulted who highlighted that the complexity of the ESF management system combined with the lack of a specific dedicated budget discouraged potential candidates from applying directly for follow-up funding under ESF. At both Member State and Commission level, interviewees expected that this gap would be covered within the ESF+.

EPMF[180] and the ESF were underexploited. Evidence collected during the EPMF interim evaluation shows that there was little evidence of ESF managing authorities using the ESF option designed to cover all or part of the interest rate on loans in order to alleviate the burden on the borrowers. Based on the EPMF interim evaluation, an European Parliament in-depth analysis (page 36) estimated that only 20% of EPMF financial intermediaries reported cooperation with entities supported by ESF.

The respondents to the survey carried out by the EESC pointed out a potential risk of overlap between the projects funded under EaSI and those funded through the ESF and suggested to create a tool permitting to obtain an overview of different programmes and the opportunities offered at EU level. The same respondents also highlight that complementarity should be ensured in particular with the ESF, but also with the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) as part of a national strategy rather than a piecemeal approach.

4.2.3 External coherence

Evidence from desk research and stakeholder consultations provides insights on how EaSI was coherent with other specific EU-level programmes/instruments. Evidence collected indicates that EaSI complemented actions not only under the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), particularly the European Social Fund (ESF), but also other EU funds such as Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, COSME[181], InnovFin and EURAXESS[182]. For example, the project 'SHARE wave 6 Croatia' was financed by the PROGRESS axis and its project team has secured funding for the next cycle under the Horizon 2020 programme. Other PROGRESS projects complemented EU-level initiatives launched by other DGs; for instance, the INNOVCare EaSI-funded project built on the project partners' experience in expert groups on rare diseases organised by DG SANTE.

EURES axis supported cross-border connections in a transnational framework, whereas the ESF supports purely national activities, under national rules, so the two complement each other. They did not overlap, because ESF actions focused on supporting individual workers at national level (by providing information and services, active labour market measures) while EaSI supported the functioning of the European job search network as a whole and transparency of all EU labour markets. It did this through a common training programme for staff of EURES network member organisations and by developing a common Job Mobility Portal. Moreover, while other EU programmes such as Erasmus+ and EURAXESS encouraged labour mobility, EaSI's EURES axis was the only one with a focus purely on cross-border mobility. Moreover, EURES axis supported projects addressed to specific target groups, like workers in cross-border regions, or to youth (for instance the 'Your first EURES job' instrument). In this way, EaSI-funded services complemented the more general information, assistance and guidance that each individual country provided to workers interested in mobility. In this area, a good example of upscaling a project started under EaSI and making it 'national' was Spain's decision to take on project activities first financed by 'Your first EURES job' and to run them under a national programme cofunded by the ESF.

[180]Article 3 of the EPMF Decision specified that while EPMF shall provide support to the targeted beneficiaries through specific financial products and actions (guarantees and risk-sharing instruments; equity instruments; debt instruments; support measures such as communication, monitoring, evaluation, audit), ESF should provide mentoring and training programmes to those beneficiaries.

[181]COSME (https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme/) was an EU fund for small/medium-sized enterprises managed by DG GROW.

[182]EURAXESS - *Researchers in Motion* was a pan-European initiative delivering information and support services to professional researchers. Backed by the European Union and its Member States, it supports researcher mobility and career development, while enhancing scientific collaboration between Europe and the world (https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/).

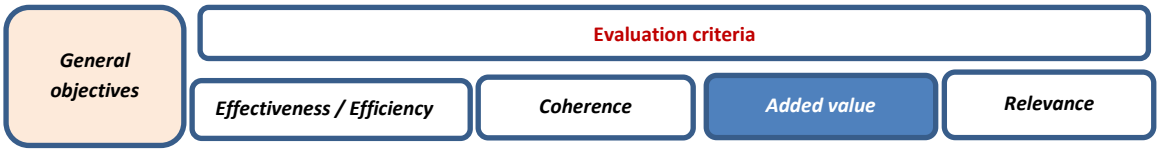
Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis was most complementary with COSME and InnovFin; however, the EaSI support was the only one that focused solely on supporting financially microenterprises and social enterprises. COSME, for instance, promoted entrepreneurship and seeks to improve the business environment for SMEs; but COSME and EaSI differ both in terms of their target groups, and in the type and size of the funds. Another example is the InnovFin programme (EU Finance for Innovators)[183] that offered early-stage equity investment to microenterprises, SMEs and social enterprises and therefore complemented the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis. InnovFin aimed to support investment in enterprises of any size (from microenterprises and small businesses to large businesses) with a focus on research and innovation investments across the entire value chain of research and innovation. To be eligible, businesses therefore needed to operate in the sectors listed under Horizon 2020. Given this restriction, InnovFin and the EaSI Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis do not overlaped, but complemented each other.

In terms of complementarities with Horizon 2020, the evaluation indicates that despite the similarities in some of the objectives and target groups of the two instruments, their focus was sufficiently different to ensure there was no unnecessary duplication (EaSI was focused on social experimentation and projects' implementation; Horizon 2020 on innovation and knowledge generation). The evaluation found as well that there were some similarities between Erasmus+ and EaSI in terms of objectives (notably related to skills building) and target audience (notably youth), but the instruments were sufficiently different to avoid unnecessary duplication, and can rather be considered to be complementary. For example, while both instruments encouraged cross-border mobility, Erasmus+ did so primarily for students and from the perspective of temporary mobility for linguistic training, while the EURES axis focused on labour mobility for workers. Another example is the synergy between EURES and Europass. They were (and continue to be) connected, for instance users from Europass were able to publish their CVs on EURES and vice versa; Europass users were allowed to receive a list of possibly interesting job vacancies in their Europass account. As regards Interreg, the evaluation indicates that it offered opportunities for regional and local public authorities across Europe to share ideas and experience on public policy. In that sense, it was similar to EaSI mutual learning, awareness and dissemination activities. They can be considered however complementary due to their different geographical scope and priorities.

Evidence collected during the evaluation inside DG EMPL and other DGs (JUST, RTD, EAC, REGIO) indicates that coordinated work between services ensured there was no unnecessary overlap or duplication of funding. Notably with regards to calls for proposals for actions grants touching on topics of relevance to other DGs, there was coordination/consultations inter-DGs to avoid duplication. As regards operating grants, internal control procedures, including audit, are in place to ensure that an organisation does not receive an operating grant from more than one DG, as that would lead to double funding, for instance from EaSI and the 'Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme' (CERV). However, stakeholders consulted by the ESSC consider that having several EU programmes (for instance EaSI, ESF, Interreg, Erasmus+) with similar objectives and target groups can be confusing for national-level applicants to EU-level support. These stakeholders suggested therefore to design and rationalise the EU-level programmes in order to cover all target audiences' needs, instead of providing fragmented support.

[183]InnovFin (EU Finance for Innovators) was a joint initiative launched by the European Investment Bank Group (EIB and EIF) in cooperation with the European Commission under Horizon 2020 (http://www.eib.org/products/blending/innovfin/index.htm).

4.3 How did the EU intervention make a difference?



This section focuses on the EU added value resulting from the EaSI and EPMF programmes beyond the value that would have been created by participating countries individually. Supported in particular by the evidence provided in Chapter 3 and in Section 4.1, the narrative explains how and to whom the EU programmes made a difference at different levels (individual, local, national, cross-border, EU-level).

The EaSI *ex ante* evaluation formulated a number of expectations related to the EU value added. EaSI was originally seen as an instrument uniquely placed to provide a European platform for policy exchange and mutual learning processes between the Member States, also including the EEA and candidate countries. It was therefore expected to add value to national programmes by providing a European reference or benchmark through gathering and comparing evidence, developing statistical tools, methods (including the social experimentation) and common indicators to allow for a comprehensive picture of the socio-economic situation at European level.

It was also considered that developing the capacity of key European level civil-society networks to support and impact the European Union social policies could best be achieved at EU level than at other levels. Moreover, in the area of free movement of workers, a widely connected system such as the EURES network (and Portal) was expected to facilitate fair intra-EU labour mobility. Similarly, it was also considered that a better allocation of microcredit (notably to vulnerable groups) could be best achieved at the EU level in cooperation with the European Investment Fund. Finally, it was expected that an EU level instrument facilitating access to finance for social enterprise(s) would have a multiplier effect by paving the way for a dynamic social entrepreneurship ecosystem in the programme's participating countries.

EaSI provided additionality by funding social experimentation projects, meaning that most projects could not have been funded through national sources or other EU funding sources[184]. As argued in the Section 4.1.3 and Section 4.2, despite the limited scaling up of the innovative approaches developed under EaSI[185], the EU added-value of the programme in this field was high. Some project promoters acknowledged that national funding could have been available, but highlighted that the scope of the projects would have been more limited and transnational cooperation would not have taken place[186].

The evaluation revealed equally a high EU added value of mutual learning, awareness and dissemination activities as well of multi-country/comparative databases, studies and statistics. The analytical knowledge generated was largely used for policymaking, as argued in Section 4.1.1 and Section 4.1.2. Moreover, the same results would likely not exist in the absence of EU level funding/coordination due to the high cost implications for Member States to collect data. These findings were also illustrated by the EESC evaluation; for instance, one French stakeholder interviewed indicated that there was a systemic difference between EaSI and other EU funds as the richness and specificity of

[184]This was especially true in countries where funding for the application of social experimentation methods was not a priority on the political agenda or where the ESF tended not to fund such activities, for instance in France or Spain (see section on the results from beneficiaries' survey included in the Technical Annexes of the supporting study).

[185]The specific objective was to test social innovations at small scale, while upscaling was not formulated as a specific objective in the Regulation. The social experimentation was considered as a method to test innovative approaches to policy intervention on a small population to evaluate its efficacy before deciding whether it should be scaled up or not.

[186]Examples include Acceleration of labour market integration of immigrants through mapping of skills and trainings (ALMIT) and Regional Integration Accelerators (RIAC), projects based on the exchange of good practices in the field of migration.

EaSI lies notably on its ability to bring together institutional decision-makers and stakeholders.

EaSI also added value to the institutional capacity of EU-level NGO networks that otherwise - as argued in Section 4.1.4 - would likely not have been able to implement the same activities (in terms of number, scope and impact). According to the networks consulted, while other sources of funding were available at EU level, they were primarily project-based rather than covering operating costs as EaSI did; therefore, other sources would not have met their needs for sustainable financial support necessary to carry out policy-shaping work. They also indicated that before EaSI, their work was dependent on volatile and non-systematic funding which significantly hindered their ability to influence the national and/or EU agendas.

Likewise for facilitating the labour mobility objective, the supporting study desk research and consultations[187] show that there were no other comparable sources of funding that could equally support the activities implemented through EaSI (see also Section 4.1.5). Although other EU instruments (for instance Interreg or ESF) supported cooperation across borders and/or measures to promote mobility when programmed by individual Member States, EaSI created cross-border partnerships at EU level bringing added-value to vulnerable jobseekers in particular (Section 4.1.6). These cross-border partnerships supported workers at each stage of their career and answered any questions they may have had about the practicalities of working abroad/across the border. They monitored the flows of workers across the borders and the development of the job market, and identified obstacles that may hamper the free movement of workers. While private recruitment or head-hunter companies might help promote labour mobility for highly skilled workers, EURES support was open to everyone, including the low skilled workers[188].

EaSI (and EPMF initially) also demonstrated EU added value in the field of micro- and social finance (see Sections 4.1.7 to 4.1.9). Consulted financial intermediaries[189] confirmed that EaSI clearly contributed to consolidate their investments and portfolio. The dedicated financial instruments reinforced the microfinance and social investment markets notably in countries where these traditions already existed. This finding was corroborated by the case study on '*Social entrepreneurship*' and by stakeholders' feedbacks. However, as resulting from the focus group with the former EaSI Committee members, some countries were not ready to implement the EaSI third axis instruments.

Back to EPMF, its objective was to address both the effects of the 2008 financial crisis and the structural problems disadvantaged groups were facing when setting-up or developing a business. As formulated in the EPMF *ex ante* evaluation, it was expected that EPMF would add value notably by offering targeted support to individuals and enterprises whose credit risk rating represents an obstacle to get funding for the creation of economic activity. As argued in Section 4.1.7, the EPMF provided significant support in terms of number and volume, while other comparable funding opportunities were not accessible for these target groups when the initiative was launched. The EPMF added value was also widely recognised by the stakeholders consulted[190], notably in the EPMF

[187]See Section 4.2 of the supporting study and its technical annexes.

[188]See the analysis of interviews in the supporting study technical annexes.

[189]A majority of 21 out of 37 EaSI-funded financial intermediaries that responded to the targeted survey reported that their microfinance portfolio would have looked different in the absence of the EaSI financial instruments. Most financial intermediaries who answered the targeted survey acknowledged that they would not know where to access guarantee coverage (30 out of 37 respondents) or similar debt financing (26 out of 37 respondents) without the support provided under EaSI. In the online public consultation, 82 out of 107 respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that EU support was required to provide better access to and availability of microfinance; 93 that it was required to improve support for social entrepreneurship.

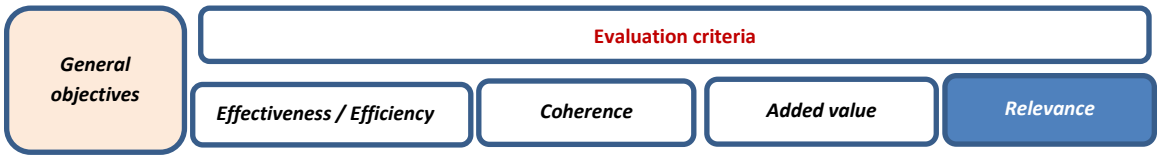
[190]For instance, in the survey targeted at financial intermediaries, 7 out of the 14 respondents who received EPMF guarantees reported that their microfinance portfolio would have looked different (in terms of financial volume), given that they would not have been able

Central and Eastern Europe participating countries that did not traditionally have a strong microfinance sector[191].

The aspects highlighted above allow to conclude that EPMF and EaSI brought added-value to the level of EU citizens as well as by contributing to policymaking and modernisation of legislation at EU/national levels on topics such as work-life balance, long-term care and pension schemes. They did it directly through contributing to labour mobility or creating conditions for microfinance and social entrepreneurship. For instance, the support provided to social enterprises had potentially a multiplier effect as they provided jobs for vulnerable persons (e.g. people with disabilities) who would otherwise likely not have had the same opportunities[192].

Evidence presented above and findings from sections 4.1.1 to 4.1.12 allow to conclude that EaSI and EPMF provided added-value compared to what would possibly be achieved by their participating countries at national, regional and local levels[193]. Indeed, EaSI was the sole EU-level programme in the social field that was open to a range of participating countries and stakeholders, producing in a coherent way many relevant outputs and results. In a forward-looking perspective, the implications for the social policy field - should the EaSI types of activities be discontinued - would be clearly negative; notably, employment opportunities and jobseekers' intra-EU mobility would decrease, as well as the availability of microfinance for individuals and enterprises, of comparative analytical knowledge for evidence-based policy-making as well as the opportunities for social experimentation and mutual learning at EU level.

4.4 Is the intervention still relevant?



This section looks at how well the initial general objectives of the programmes reflected and still reflect the current and future needs. The programmes' relevance is first examined in the light of global trends perspectives, including the main exceptional challenges encountered during the implementation period.

After an overview of contextual factors (Section 4.4.1), the relevance's analysis (Section 4.4.2) was structured in three main building blocks alongside the programmes' contribution to policy change, social innovation and reforms (general objectives 1, 2 and 3); to employment and labour mobility (general objective 4); and to access to microfinance and social finance (general objective 5).

to take the same risks in the absence of the EPMF guarantee. The financial intermediaries who expressed this opinion were from Belgium, Bulgaria, Ireland, Romania, Spain, and Netherlands.

[191]This finding was underlined by interviewees inside the EC and the EIF, and was consistent with results from the online public consultation (21 respondents out of 52 who were familiar with the programme noted that EPMF supported existing actions at national/regional level aiming at increasing access to and availability of microfinance for vulnerable groups).

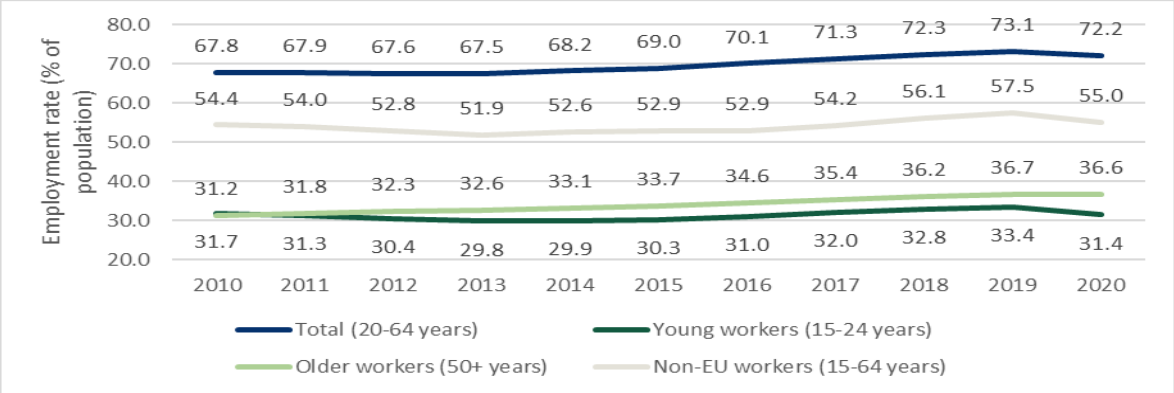
[192]For example the financial intermediary LaNef, was able to provide social enterprise financing to Drôle de Pain, a Montpellier bakery that offers work placements to vulnerable people – ex-convicts, substance abusers, or unemployed people with mental and physical disabilities (which make up around half of the enterprise's workforce). Beyond just providing these vulnerable groups with a job, the project supported them by building up professional skills so that they improve their employability when the placement is over, as well as building basic life-skills, like professional behaviour, self-confidence or communication (Source: EIF, social impact of social enterprises). Other telling stories are included in the EaSI reports on projects and organisations.

[193]These findings were corroborated by the results of the stakeholders' consultations. Notably the online public consultation, interviews inside the EC, the focus groups with the EU-level NGO networks and the EaSI Committee members. For instance, 70 online public consultation respondents out of the 94 observed positive changes that they believed would not have happened in the absence of EaSI and its capacity to combine and broaden existing actions in terms of scope and supported stakeholders.

4.4.1 Limited scale to impact on macro-economic context

This section explores how the socio-economic context of programmes influenced the delivery and the achievement of the five general objectives. Despite generally positive trends, the target employment rates of 75% by 2020 (EU 2020 Strategy) and 78% by 2030 (European Pillar of Social Rights, EPSR) were not reached. Inequalities in employment rates of young, older, migrant workers and disabled workers also persist. Figure 9 shows that the total employment rate in the EU has been on a continuous positive trajectory since 2013, all along the EaSI main implementation period (2014 - 2019), but it dropped down in 2020 notably due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Similar trends were observed in the employment rates of young and older workers as well as non-EU workers.

Figure 9. Employment rates by age and citizenship, 2010 - 2020



Source: Supporting study, based on Eurostat Employment rates by sex, age and citizenship (%) [LFSA_ERGAN] (data extracted on 11/05/2022)

Moreover, the employment rate gap of people with disabilities widened during the 2014 - 2020 period, from 22.7 percentage points below the employment rate of people without disability in 2014 to 24.4 percentage points below the employment rate of people without disability in 2020[194]. Gender inequalities persist as well: male employment rate was 11 percentage points higher than female employment rate in 2020[195]. The risk of poverty was also higher on average for women than for men in 2020 (22.9 % compared to 20.9 %)[196].

Overall, the percentage of the EU27 population at risk of poverty or social exclusion shows a downward trend in 2010 - 2020[197] with an upward trend in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic which affected mostly the vulnerable groups. In 2020, there were 96.5 million people in the EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion, marking a reduction of 10 million compared to 2008[198]. Despite this downward trend, the EU 2020 Strategy target of a reduction of 20 million people at risk of poverty by 2020 and the EPSR target of lifting 15 million people out of poverty (horizon 2030) were not achieved.

Evidence presented in Chapter 3 and Sections 4.1.1 to 4.1.12 shows how EaSI and EPMF contributed – by achieving their specific and general objectives – to their ultimate goal, which is to reduce the unemployment and social exclusion. However, given their limited scale in terms of budget and volume of activities, the programmes' influence on these global trends is not realistically measurable. Additionally, evidence collected from the online public consultation reflects the stakeholders' perceptions on how the different

[194]Eurostat, Disability employment gap by level of activity limitation and sex [TEPSR_SP200] (last accessed 11/05/2022).
[195]There was still a significant gender pay gap as well: in 2020, the gender pay gap in the EU stood at 13%, meaning that women earn on average 13% less per hour than men. Ranges across the EU27 countries were significant: from a low of 0.7% in Luxembourg to a high of 22.3% in Latvia (Eurostat website: Gender statistics, 'Labour market' section; last accessed 11/05/2022).
[196]From 23.9% in 2013 to 21.9% in 2020 (Eurostat website: Living conditions in Europe - poverty and social exclusion (last accessed 12/05/2022).
[197]Eurostat data, Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex - EU2020 strategy [ILC_PEPS01].
[198]Eurostat data, Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex - EU2020 strategy [ILC_PEPS01].

activities contributed to improve the vulnerable groups' situation[199]. These findings were also corroborated by other stakeholders' consultations, notably those carried within the EESC evaluation that captured in particular the projects' beneficiaries, national authorities and civil society views[200].

During 2014 - 2020, Europe was also faced with numerous contextual challenges that are increasingly global in nature, and of immediate and continued importance: migration, Covid-19 pandemic and climate change. Information provided in Chapter 3 and the analysis presented in Section 4.1 show how EaSI responded successfully to these challenges in terms of evidence-based policy and financial support to different target groups.

Stakeholders consulted through the online public consultation agreed that EaSI successfully adapted to changes in the social, economic and political context[201]. A high number of respondents (45) illustrated their views with additional comments; among them, better responding to challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and more rapid and flexible financial support for EU-level NGO networks were recurring themes[202]. Also, for some of these stakeholders, EaSI should have better supported experimentation of new pathways to the integration of migrants, particularly women and children, as well as to the creation of new businesses. Suggestions were also made for EaSI to better support networking and capacity building of organizations working on health and social services in rural areas.

Trends and qualitative evidence above - supported by the analysis included in the preceding sections - allow to conclude that over the implementation period, EaSI and EPMF were continuously relevant in addressing the stakeholders' needs and continues to be considering the remaining challenges ahead.

4.4.2 EaSI still relevant in supporting its general objectives

The focus of the following three buildings-blocks[203] was put on the higher-level programme's results under the relevance criterion.

[199]Perceptions of 80 out of 97 respondents to the online public consultation confirm that EaSI was relevant in paying attention to vulnerable groups; 71 respondents considered it relevant to promote equality between women and men; and 74 considered the programme relevant in combating discrimination. Overall, 79 out of 97 respondents confirmed the EaSI relevance pursuing in promoting its general objectives. These results include respondents who answered "moderately relevant" and "very relevant", and exclude those who answered "not at all relevant", "slightly relevant" and "do not know".

[200]For instance, Austrian stakeholders consulted by EESC indicated that some EaSI topics – for instance youth, employment, anti-discrimination, policies for people with disabilities – were highly relevant. The French stakeholders also indicated that EaSI was relevant in addressing vulnerable groups, promoting gender equality, combating discrimination, and combating poverty and social exclusion. The Hungarian stakeholders interviewed noted that a number of projects implemented in their country paid particular attention to vulnerable groups, such as young and older people, contributing to the overarching objectives of the EaSI programme. The stakeholders consulted in Austria also agreed that the EaSI implementation in their country had been highly relevant on the issues of gender equality, combating poverty and fighting social exclusion. Two examples were mentioned in this regard by the stakeholders consulted by the EESC: the EURES project led by the Grand Est region, which offered cross-border employment opportunities and supported companies in their recruitment difficulties. The project was aimed in particular at jobseekers, people seeking cross-border mobility and students; it was also inclusive (including in particular persons with disabilities). Another project titled "A roof on your head: a job in your pocket!" carried out by Lyon Metropolis targeted young people with social and economic vulnerabilities (marginalisation, homelessness or complex family situations) and not using social assistance. The project also addresses age-related discrimination in access to minimum resources (access to a minimum income for young people aged 18 - 25).

[201]An overwhelming majority of respondents (83 out of 97) agreed that EaSI was sufficiently flexible to respond to the general social, economic and political context in the EU in 2014 - 2020. Similarly, they agreed (61 out of 97) that EaSI was flexible enough the respond to the needs emerging from COVID-19. Around half of respondents agreed that EaSI had been flexible enough to respond to the challenges steaming from the digital transition (52 out of 97) and green transition (44 out of 97) as well. Over half of respondents did not know whether EaSI was sufficiently flexible to respond to Brexit (60 out of 97) or to the refugee crisis (50 out of 97).

[202]The respondents believed that more support to EU-level NGO networks would have been welcome, particularly for those networks whose members were severely impacted by the pandemic Some respondents thought that more attention should have been directed to the social economy organisations in the emergency response packages. As an illustration, RREUSE, EU-level network representing social enterprises active in the repairing and recycling sector, reported that they received lower membership fees income during the pandemic, and had therefore to licence staff.

[203]The five general objectives were clustered in there building blocks (similar as for the analysis included in Section 4.1.10) alongside the programmes' contribution to policy change, social innovation and reforms (general objectives 1, 2 and 3); to employment and labour mobility (general objective 4); and to access to microfinance and social finance (general objective 5).

Supporting social policies and modernising EU social law

The global trends presented in the Section 4.4.1 point to the relevance of the EaSI programme in contributing to its objectives in the areas of social protection, policy reform and the modernisation of EU law. Contextually speaking, there has been also an increasing trend in the fragmentation of the labour force in the EU throughout the 2014 - 2020 period, with an increase in forms of work and employment which differ from the standard employment relationship of permanent, full-time, socially secure employment[204]. Notably the proportion of part-time and temporary employment remained high, despite a slight decrease between 2014 (12,4% of the EU27 working-age population) and 2020 (11,1%)[205]. These trends became even more relevant in the post COVID-19 pandemic world, where working from home and flexible working hours have become more common[206].

Moreover, there has been a growing trend in ageing populations across the EU. The old-age-dependency ratio increased from 28.3 in 2014 to 32.0 in 2020[207]. With the increase in the share of the population aged 65 and over, came a reduction in the percentage of available workforce and an increasing financial pressure on social protection systems. Meanwhile, there has also been an increased challenge to combine work and caring responsibilities. In 2018, more than 11 million persons in the EU-27 had care responsibilities for incapacitated relatives aged 15 years and more[208], but only 4.2% interrupted work or reduced working time (in their overall employment history) to take care of ill, elderly or disabled relatives[209]. Economic and demographic changes have continuously impacted the funding of healthcare, social services and pensions, and entail challenges for the financial sustainability of social protection provisions[210].

The relevance of the EaSI objectives was estimated as to the extent they addressed the new priorities. Notable examples include the calls for proposals related to social innovation covering topics linked to emerging policy priorities[211] and the call for proposals 'Strengthening the role of social partners in mitigating the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 crisis'. Overall, the stakeholders consulted considered that the Commission introduced appropriate flexibility in the implementation of actions affected by the pandemic. When it was feasible, events were converted in online format; it also accepted for grantees when it was justified to submit expenses for events that were cancelled due to *force majeure*[212]. Another example of adaptation to the context is the call for proposals 'Fast track integration into the labour market for third country nationals

[204]Complementing the standard form of employment is the growth of part-time work, fixed-term contracts, temporary agency work, homeworking, self-employment, casual work, seasonal work and other 'non-standard' forms of employment (EUROFOUND website, Fragmentation of the labour force; last accessed 05/01/2023).

[205]Eurostat data, Part-time employment and temporary contracts - annual data [LFSI_PT_A] (last accessed 05/01/2023).

[206]Eurostat, Employment – Annual statistics 'Remote work: disparities by country and level of education' section (last accessed 12/05/2022).

[207]The ratio between the number of persons aged 65 and over (age when they are generally economically inactive) and the number of persons aged between 15 and 64. The value is expressed per 100 persons of working age (15-64). Source: Eurostat, Old-age-dependency ratio [TPS00198] (last accessed 15/02/2022)

[208]Last available Eurostat data, Population by care responsibilities and labour status [LFSO_18CRESLS] (last accessed 12/05/2022).

[209] Eurostat website, Reconciliation of work and family life - statistics (last accessed 12/05/2022).

[210]EPRS briefing, The future of work: Trends, challenges and potential initiatives, page 2.

[211]Namely: integrated delivery of social services (2014 and 2015); integration into the labour market for vulnerable groups including refugees (2015 and 2016); innovative work-life balance strategies (2018); access to social protection and national reform support (2018); long-term care (2019); and integrated interventions aimed at people in vulnerable positions (2020). Section 4.1.3 and the case study on "*EaSI social innovation*" (included in the supporting study technical annexes) provides- more details on the adaptation of these calls' topics to current trends and challenges.

[212]The majority of the EaSI beneficiaries consulted through the targeted survey (36 out of the 52) agreed that the Commission took sufficient actions to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. Those who disagreed (7 out of 52 respondents) were almost all (5 of 7) representatives from EU-level networks benefitting from operating grants, as they considered the EU contribution too low. This sentiment was also echoed by EU level networks that participated in the focus group. They however appreciated the Commission decision to increase the maximum co-financing rate from 80% to 90% in the call for proposals for 2022-2025 Framework Partnership Agreement (see the case study on '*EaSI flexibility to adapt*' and the results of the survey targeted at EaSI grant beneficiaries).

targeting exclusively asylum seekers, refugees and their family members' launched in coordination with DG HOME to cope with the refugee crisis. This call was adapted from a call foreseen in the 2017 EaSI Annual Work Programme to support job integration for those distant from the labour market. Case study research on '*EaSI flexibility to adapt*' uncovered many other activities (studies, events, capacity building activities) related to the integration of refugees, both before and after the refugee crisis.

As evidenced by the focus of the calls for proposals and other actions, EaSI programme's funding priorities were encompassed by the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). The supporting study's mapping of the EU level priorities, of the EaSI Annual Work Programmes and of the EaSI calls for proposals' technical specifications put forward that most actions were developed in response to the EU priorities as well as to address emerging stakeholders' needs. Notably, strong linkages were identified between the social experimentation calls (see Table 50 in the Annex VI.3.1) and the EU priorities. Indeed, the Europe 2020 Strategy[213] steered the topical direction of these calls published between 2014 - 2017 (with the exception of the 2016 call targeting exclusively asylum seekers, refugees and their family members), while the 2018 call for proposals had a clear link to the Work-Life Balance legislative initiative as part of the EPSR. The focus of the 2019 call was on addressing the EPSR principle of promoting access to social protection and developing adequate social protection systems, while the 2020 call focussed on addressing Principle 14 of the EPSR, linked to minimum income. Moreover, the fact that EaSI was implemented mostly through direct management (based on calls for proposals and tenders) enabled to link its activities with the EU policy agenda in a swift manner. As EaSI was implemented on a yearly basis using annual work programmes (which can be amended when a need arises), allowed it to adapt to changes in EU policy priorities as well as to unforeseen social-economic challenges (including the refugee crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic).

EaSI programme also sought to influence policy reform and in turn modernise EU law in the relevant fields[214]. As shown notably in the Sections 4.1.1 to 4.1.4 and Section 4.1.10, EaSI contributions to policymaking and modernisation of legislation at EU/national levels are related to topics such as work-life balance, long-term care, pension schemes, labour mobility, microfinance and social economy. They were made by funding comparative knowledge and by supporting the capacity-building, networking and cooperation of EU-level NGO networks, national administrations and specialist stakeholders (for instance Public Employment Services and microcredit providers). Nevertheless, despite the innovative approaches promoted - as a result of the challenges encountered in scaling up/transfer of social innovations - the contribution of social experimentation projects to policy change or the modernisation of EU law appears as being limited (Section 4.1.3).

The trends and evidence presented above as well as in the preceding sections allow to conclude that over the implementation period, EaSI demonstrated its flexibility to adapt to exceptional challenges, and contributed to supporting social policies and modernising EU law. This was enabled both by its broad thematic scope, but also by its management

[213]The Europe 2020 strategy mainstreamed as well the 2008 active inclusion strategy (see the SWD on the Commission Recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market, 2017), also confirmed by the Principle 14 of the European Pillar of Social Rights stating that people should have the right to effective access to adequate minimum income support and enabling goods and services, which should be combined with incentives to (re)integrate into the labour market.

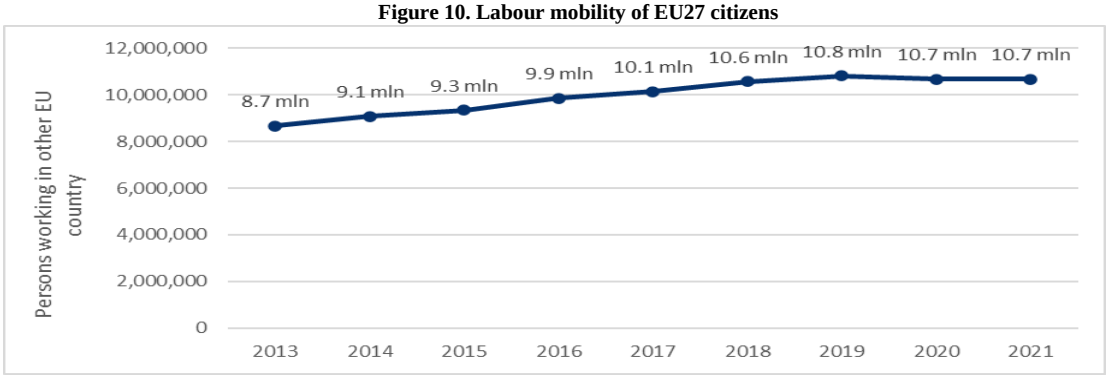
[214]The effective implementation and potential modernisation of Union law requires sharing of existing sources (such as available good practices) through mutual learning processes such as periodic monitoring, evaluation, and peer review, as assessed in the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation. The evaluation underlying hypothesis was therefore that a wider availability of mutual learning, awareness and dissemination activities that are considered useful by stakeholders should increase the knowledge and hence ownership of EU policies among stakeholders, facilitate policy making, and contribute to the implementation and modernisation of EU and national legislation.

mode involving planning the actions on a yearly basis through the adoption of annual work programmes materialised in calls for proposals and calls for tenders.

Enhancing labour mobility

Before the start of the EaSI programme in 2014, the proportion of EU-27 residents considering working in another EU country decreased from 28% in 2011 to 25% in 2013[215]. Since then, labour mobility has steadily increased by an average of 4% annually in 2014 - 2018 (see Figure 10 below). The growth slowed down after 2018 and stopped after 2020, most probably due to Brexit[216] and the COVID-19 pandemic related mobility constraints[217].

Figure 10. Labour mobility of EU27 citizens



Source: Eurostat data on EU/EFTA citizens of working age who usually reside in another EU/EFTA country by citizenship, age and sex [LFST_LMBPCITG]. Note: The graph reflects the number of EU27 citizens of working age (15-64) who usually reside in another EU/EFTA country

The general trends above, those described in section 4.4.1 and the analysis presented in Sections 4.1.5 and 4.1.6 allow to conclude that the EURES Portal, and the support provided by EURES advisers to jobseekers and employers remained relevant in 2014 - 2020. This is particularly true for the 'Your first EURES Job' scheme given the high youth unemployment rates[218]. The expansion of the EaSI targeted mobility schemes after 2018, considering not only youth but also people above 35 years, was also relevant in light of labour market shortages throughout the EU. Germany was a frequent user of the cross-border partnership scheme, which might be explained by the fact that it shares borders with nine other countries, which is the largest number of shared borders among all EU Member States. Italy was a frequent user of the EURES axis as well, which might be explained by the high rates of youth unemployment which required targeted mobility schemes aimed at youth (YfEJ).

The case study research on '*EaSI flexibility to adapt*' shows that the EURES activities were particularly impacted by the pandemic[219] due to reduced demand for workers in certain sectors, cancellation of job fairs, counselling days and seminars due to restrictions to public gatherings, and cancelled placements due to cross-border and cross-region travel restrictions. The Commission took steps to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on these actions (for instance organising or supporting online rather than in-person events). Since certain events (for instance the European Online Job Days) were already taking place online before (on average between 2016 and 2019, 27 job days per year, online and

[215]DG EMPL (2014), EU Employment and Social Situation: Recent trends in the geographical mobility of workers in the EU. Quarterly review. Supplement June 2014.
[216]European Commission (2021), Annual report on intra-EU labour mobility 2020, page 13.
[217]Note that according to the Commission's there was also a large decrease in 2019-2020 due to large decreases of stocks of movers in the UK due to Brexit. However, this is not reflected in the Figure 10 above which includes EU27 citizens only.
[218]Youth unemployment rates reduced over time but remained at a high level (25.2% in 2013, 17.6% in 2020), with some countries continuing to experience youth unemployment rates of over 25% in 2020 (for instance Greece, Spain and Italy). Based on Eurostat, Unemployment by sex and age – annual data [UNE_RT_A], considering only age group 15 - 24.
[219]Given the scale/scope of the Brexit unforeseen changes/effects, no mitigation actions were possible to be taken under EaSI to reduce the effect on stocks of mobile workers across the EU.

in person), 21 job days (20 online and one hybrid) could still be organised during 2020[220] showing that the Commission and the EURES network members were prepared to organise this type of events without disruption. The EURES Regulation *ex post* evaluation corroborates this finding, highlighting that COVID-19 disruption provided proof of EURES activities adaptability to change.

The trends and evidence presented above and in the preceding sections allow to conclude that EaSI objective of facilitating voluntary geographical mobility was relevant[221] at the time of the adoption of the programme and remained so during the implementation phase, becoming even more relevant in the context of unexpected developments related with Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strengthening accessibility of micro- and social finance

This section focuses on the relevance of EPMF and EaSI third axis objectives. EPMF was introduced in 2010 just after the global financial crisis, in a context of scarce credit supply, especially for disadvantaged groups (Section 2.1). The analysis of the women's entrepreneurship drivers showed that they were (and still are) 40% less likely than men to be self-employed[222]; more likely than men to have started their business out of necessity[223]; and less likely to be active in starting a business[224]. In light of these general trends, the EPMF horizontal objective (and later of EaSI) to promote equal opportunities between men and women remained highly relevant in 2010 - 2020 as well.

Since 2010, the steady growth in the use of financial instruments for microfinance (Section 3.2.1, Section 3.2.2 and Section 4.1.7) demonstrated the continuous relevance of this type of support throughout the overall EPMF and EaSI respective implementation periods. This finding was corroborated by a study on microfinance at EU-level (2020)[225] showing that the support provided to final beneficiaries by smaller and/or non-bank lenders remains limited. This financing gap coexisting with a strong demand potential of this target group (i.e. the small microcredit providers) was covered by the EPMF, complemented since 2014 by the EaSI Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis[226].

As concerns the EaSI social entrepreneurship branch, the volume and the number of loans allocated to social enterprises (Section 3.2.1 and 4.1.8) provided evidence of an increase in the access to and availability of social finance. By supporting social enterprises that in turn provide jobs to vulnerable groups, EaSI sought to contribute to reducing unemployment rate in the EU. Notably in the light of high youth and female unemployment rates throughout 2014 - 2020 (see Section 4.4.1), this objective also remained relevant throughout the overall implementation period. This finding was corroborated by evidence collected from different sources within the supporting study[227].

[220]Based on a review of past European (Online) Job Days.

[221]This finding was corroborated by stakeholders who participated in the online public consultation: 47 out of 97 respondents found this objective relevant. This was, however, one of the lowest scores when compared to the stakeholders' appreciation related to the other objectives of EaSI (see more information in the supporting study technical annexes).

[222]OECD/European Commission, 2021. The Missing Entrepreneurs. Policies for inclusive entrepreneurship and self-employment

[223]Idem.

[224] OECD/European Commission, 2016. Policy brief on women's entrepreneurship.

[225]Microfinance in the European Union: Market analysis and recommendations for delivery options in 2021-2027.

[226]Available evidence indicate (survey targeted at financial intermediaries, Section 3.2 and Section 4.1.7) that the products provided under the *Guarantee Instrument* (both under EPMF and EaSI) were more suited to the needs of stakeholders than those provided under the *Funding Instrument*. The increased budget for guarantees, from approximately EUR 20 million under EPMF to approximately EUR 400 million under EaSI, show the relevance of this financial instrument.

[227]The review of EIF case study reports (Best at home, Bici-t, Ecce homo, Impact Hub, Video Instan and Yumeko) concludes that EaSI met the needs of the social entrepreneurs (see examples in the case study '*Social entrepreneurship*'). Interviewed financial intermediaries corroborated this finding by agreeing that EaSI provided access to funding that was otherwise difficult to find in their countries (for instance in Denmark and Poland). EIF representatives also explained that due to the *EaSI Guarantee Window* entailing lower costs than the traditional banking system, loans were more sustainable; therefore, the absence of such a system would have a significant impact on (vulnerable) groups across the EU. Finally, in the online public consultation, 57 out of 97 respondents confirmed that the objective of increasing access/availability of microfinance and of social enterprise finance as relevant.

Improving the microcredit providers capacity building (Section 4.1.9) was a clearly identified need when the EaSI programme was established as evidenced in the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation and confirmed in the EPMF mid-term evaluation. The financial intermediaries consulted during the supporting study process believe that EPMF and EaSI met their needs[228]. Nevertheless, the same study on microfinance quoted above[229] found that the EaSI Capacity Building Investments Window was innovative but not sufficiently tailored to the needs and characteristics of individual financial intermediaries.

In response to the refugee crisis, EaSI launched the Business Development Services Pilot for refugees and migrants as part of the EaSI Guarantee Instrument. The aim was to offer mentoring, coaching and training to refugees who were facing many additional hurdles (for example related to language or lack of knowledge about administrative steps) in setting up a business. Its objective was thus to further strengthen the provision of business development services to refugees and migrants, and therefore to contribute to their financial and social inclusion[230]. Other capacity-building activities, such as a Workshop on Refugee and Migrant Finance and Support in Europe (2019) and a peer-to-peer visit to MicroStart with focus on refugee clients (2019) were also implemented through the EaSI programme[231].

To cope with the COVID-19 pandemic - which particularly affected (vulnerable) micro-borrowers, micro-enterprises and social enterprises - EaSI launched in 2020 support measures under the EaSI Guarantee Instrument. This scheme allowed specific terms and conditions for guarantees and counter-guarantees to incentivise financial intermediaries to continue providing financing[232]. The high demand for this scheme, which prompted its extension in early 2021[233], indicates the relevance of this instrument to the target groups. Related events were also organised, for instance the workshop on the EU response to COVID-19 and on the future of the EaSI programme in 2021 - 2027 as part of the European Microfinance Network's Annual Conference 2020.

The EaSI programme also addressed the topic of the twin green and digital transitions[234] notably through its actions related to microfinance and social entrepreneurship. With sustainability and climate change high on the EU policy agenda, financial institutions targeting microfinance may need additional financial and technical support to develop new products and services tailored to the needs of micro-enterprises interested in using more energy efficient technologies[235]. The EU committed to further investing in this area, as visible in the Commission initiatives such as the Social Economy Action Plan and the associated Transition Pathway. Under EaSI, more than seven events related to digitalisation and microfinance/social finance took place in 2019 - 2020[236]; in particular, a four-part technical assistance webinar series on green finance at microfinance institutions

[228]See survey targeted at the financial intermediaries in the 'Technical Annexes' of the supporting study.
[229]Microfinance in the European Union: Market analysis and recommendations for delivery options in 2021-2027, page 11.
[230]MFC website, EaSI programme: EU launches EUR 1 million BDS Pilot to support financial and social inclusion of migrants and refugees (last accessed 11/05/2022).
[231]The case study on *'EaSI flexibility to adapt'* provides additional details (see the technical annexes of the supporting study).
[232]The improved conditions included: increased (counter)guarantee rates; possibility to increase cap rates; reduction of risk retention; adapted fixed recovery rates; longer timeframe for guarantee coverage and for coverage of accrued interest; possibility to waive the commitment fee; possible extension of the availability period of ongoing agreements; and increased maximum loan amounts. Source: EIF, presentation on the EaSI GFI COVID-19 support measures, page 4.
[233]EIF website, EaSI Guarantee Instrument (last accessed 11/05/2022).
[234]The European Commission 2019 - 2024 flagship priorities include the European Green Deal and a Europe fit for the digital age. Together, these are referred to as a twin transition.
[235]Microfinance in the European Union: Market analysis and recommendations for delivery options in 2021 - 2027, page 5.
[236]EaSI Technical Assistance Microfinance workshop exploring digitalisation strategies for microfinance institutions, 2019; EaSI Technical Assistance webinar on how to use digital financial solutions to enhance financial inclusion, 2019; EaSI Technical Assistance webinar on free IT tools for non-profit, 2019; EaSI Technical Assistance Webinar on Risk Management in a Digital Era, 2019; EaSI Technical Assistance Webinar on Digital Capabilities for MFIs, 2020; EaSI Technical Assistance Webinar on Digital Payments and Open Banking for Albanian MFIs, 2020; EaSI Technical Assistance webinar on leading a team in the digital era, 2020.

was organised in 2019. Nevertheless, the rise in financial technology (Fintech), digital transformation and crowdfunding platforms, which impact the regular banking and microfinance sectors alike, will require additional measures, especially in countries where the use of digital financial services is low[237] and for vulnerable people who are the least likely to benefit from the digitalization of financial services.

The trends and evidence presented above as well as in the preceding sections allow to conclude that the introduction of EPMF was timely and relevant for its stakeholders. By providing support to financial intermediaries, it permitted them to improve the accessibility of microfinance to the final beneficiaries. Building on the EPMF success, EaSI continued to provide support to microfinance sector, by extending this scope to encompass the social entrepreneurship market. The high demand for support and high leverage effects of the EPMF/EaSI contribution in the microfinance and social entrepreneurship fields (see Sections 4.1.7 to 4.1.9) indicates the EaSI relevance in these fields as well as the programme's ability to act fast in response to market needs.

While their respective scales did not allow to influence reallistically on the EU 2020 Strategy and the EPSR targets (see Section 4.4.1), the EPMF and EaSI objectives were aligned with these EU policy frameworks and remained relevant throughout the 2014 - 2020 period (as argued in Section 4.4.2). Indeed, by the end of the programming period, despite initial positive evolutions in the area of employment and social inclusion, the EU 2020 Strategy and the EPSR targets were not fully met, while the COVID-19 pandemic had translated into additional labour market and social inclusion strain. Additionally, the current economic and social context dominated by the consequences of the Russian Federation's military aggression against Ukraine, make the EaSI objectives still relevant to the 2021 - 2027 period. As regards EPMF, it was introduced as a response to the economic crisis of 2008, which resulted in a simultaneous increase in unemployment levels and decrease in the lending capacity of financial intermediaries. The introduction of the EPMF was timely and appropriate, enabling an improvement in the accessibility of microfinancing to entrepreneurs, including from disadvantaged groups, as well as to the small businesses.

The evaluation also considers the key issues related to the social inclusion and the principle of "leaving no one behind" as mandated by the UN 2030 Agenda through the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The findings emerged from Sections 4.1.1 to 4.1.12 - examined in the light of macro forces influencing the general context (Section 4.4.1) show that the programmes' general objectives and their operationalisation in specific objectives corresponded to their initial rationale, i.e. to adress the target groups needs. The evaluation shows that the programmes' were particularly appropriate to adress the SDG 1 ('end poverty in all its forms everywhere') and SDG2 ('reduce inequalities within and between countries'), being also sensitive to the economic, social, environmental and policy context in which the activities took place. When applying an "equity lens", the evaluation shows progress in the integration of all EaSI and EPMF horizontal principles (Section 4.1.11). However, the support through the financial instruments presents a downward trend in support provided to women-led enterprises, which is a more mitigated aspect of the 'gender equality' principle integration in line with the SDG 5 ('achieve gender equality and empower women and girls').

[237] Idem.

5. WHAT ARE THE CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED?

5.1 Conclusions

This *ex post* evaluation encountered some methodological and empirical challenges and limitations in collecting and analysing data to draw conclusions (discussed in Section 2.1 and Annex II). The main limitation is the use of indicators based on stakeholders' satisfaction to measure the performance of activities implemented under the PROGRESS axis in 2014 - 2020. Given the intangible nature of the related activities (production of analytical knowledge, implementation of social experimentations, organisation of mutual learning events and stakeholders' capacity building), the performance of these activities was evaluated by means of subjective variables both in 2007 - 2013 (PROGRESS programme) and 2014 – 2020 (PROGRESS axis of EaSI). Although these indicators did not provide the same quality of information as quantitative indicators used for the EURES and Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axes, they offered nevertheless a standardized measures that allowed for comparisons over time. Moreover, despite the variations in the response rate to the Stakeholder Survey in 2014 - 2020 (between 10% - 17%), in absolute terms, the number of respondents was enough large to offer a good representativeness of views[238].

Additionally, the *ex post* evaluation combined and triangulated several data collection methodologies, data sources and comparison across different sources and/or data sets (Section 1.2) to enhance the overall understanding of the situation addressed by a specific indicator or set of indicators. The PROGRESS's axis headline indicators were used to calculate cost–effectiveness ratios allowing to identify good value for money to be identified. Although these cost–effectiveness ratios are informative in assessing incremental value for money in an *ex post evaluation context*, applying this methodology to support the decision-making is not realistic given the uncertainty in measuring both the costs and the effectiveness. However, these cost-effectiveness ratios indicate whether expensive is one activity, while offering a greater effectiveness and a good value.

5.1.1 Effectiveness and efficiency

The evidence collected on the specific objectives shows that the production of the analytical evidence (Section 4.1.1) to support policy and legislation was a cost-effective activity, despite the fact that the budget spent to develop entirely new knowledge was below the *ex ante* evaluation estimate[239]. The information sharing and mutual learning activities were moderately effective, being undermined by the insuficient dissemination of EaSI funding opportunities and results, and by the cancellation or conversion into online format of most events planned to be organised in 2019 - 2020, in a pandemic context (Section 4.1.2).

The efficiency of the social experimentation activities was also hindered by their unexploited scalability potential (Section 4.1.3). On a positive side, social experimentation have been applied to a large spectrum of social interventions targeting

[238]For larger populations, such as a population of 10 000, a comparatively small minimum ratio of 10 percent (1 000) of individuals is required to ensure representativeness of the sample In 2014 (covering 2014 period), 10 737 invitations were sent to participate in the Stakeholder Survey. In total, 1662 responses were received. The response rate of the 2014 EaSI Stakeholder Survey was around 17%. In 2017 (covering the implementation period 2015 - 2016), the survey was disseminated to 7 195 stakeholders and received 1 038 responses. The response rate of the EaSI Stakeholder Survey was around 14%[238]. In 2019 (covering the implementation period 2017 - 2018), the survey was disseminated to 15 374 stakeholders and received 2 325 responses. The response rate was around 15%. In 2021 (covering the implementation period 2019 - 2020), the survey was disseminated to 9 073 stakeholders and received 885 replies. The response rate was around 10%.

[239]The EaSI *ex ante* evaluation estimated that 25% of the total programme's budget should be allocated to the development of new ideas, concepts, approaches or models. This estimation may be affected however by an overestimation in the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation (see discussion in Section 4.1.1).

the most in-need groups, such as through welfare-to-work programmes, provision of health services, education, access to public utilities, active retirement, or integration of refugees. They also created new collaborations between the public, private and civil society sectors stakeholders. The evaluation confirmed the key role of public authorities in initiating and implementing social experimentations due to their strong institutional and territorial anchoring. On a negative side, the mainstreaming/embedding of social experimentation results in policy making was limited by the lack of appropriate dissemination channels and incentive mechanisms linking EaSI and ESF together and with the national stakeholders/policymakers.

EaSI was also efficient in boosting the stakeholders' capacity to participate in policy making (Section 4.1.4). The support offered to the EU-level NGO networks allowed them to secure their long-term sustainability and to become critical sources of expertise both for national policymakers and EU institutions. The main inefficiency pointed out by the evaluation was related to the need for the EU-level NGO networks to reapply each year to recurrent calls for proposals[240] which translated in a state of uncertainty and generated administrative burden (both on applicants' side and the Commission services' side).

EaSI was moderately efficient with the support of EURES axis in facilitating the matchmaking between available vacancies at EU-level and jobseekers needs, and contributing to the labour market transparency (Section 4.1.5). The evaluation revealed indeed the growing utility and awareness of the EURES Portal as a EU-wide job search tool both for jobseekers and employers. Despite the downward trend in the monthly visits to the Portal[241] and the upward trend in costs per visit (due to successive investments to develop the tool's fonctionalities), the number of jobseekers/employers registered and vacancies posted increased. Some shortcomings hindered however the Portal functioning, notably the fact that still not all available national vacancies were published on the Portal by end-2020 and the technical problems affecting its automatic matching function. As regards the cross-border partnerships and the targeted mobility schemes, they facilitated a constantly increasing number of contacts between the EURES advisers on one hand, and jobseekers and employers on the other hand (Section 4.1.6). However, the evaluation shows that these services were not enough visible among employers and that the cost per placement exceeded the cost estimated in the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation[242] .

Section 4.1.7 shows that the number and volume of microloans provided generated higher leverage effects than expected both under EPMF and EaSI, indicating the microfinance branch high cost-effectiveness. An additional effect consists in the coverage upward trend of the EaSI microfinance support both from geographical and beneficiaries' perspective. Indeed, the number of countries covered as well the average microloan increased under EaSI compared to EPMF. The funding provided under EaSI social entrepreneurship branch also presents a high cost-effectiveness with a significant increase in number of enterprises supported and a leverage effect higher than expected for this new activity (Section 4.1.8). In order to boost the absorption capacity of the support provided under the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis, EaSI also provided training and mentoring services to microcredit providers. From a quantitative perspective, the support provided exceeded the target fixed, while qualitatively, the

[240]As discussed in Section 4.1.4, this type of procedure for selecting operating grants is defined in the Financial Regulation, and therefore cannot be modified.

[241]Phenomenon due first to the upward trend in the EU-level employment rate and then to the Covid-19 disruption, but also explained by changes in the visits counting methodology see discussion in Section 4.1.5).

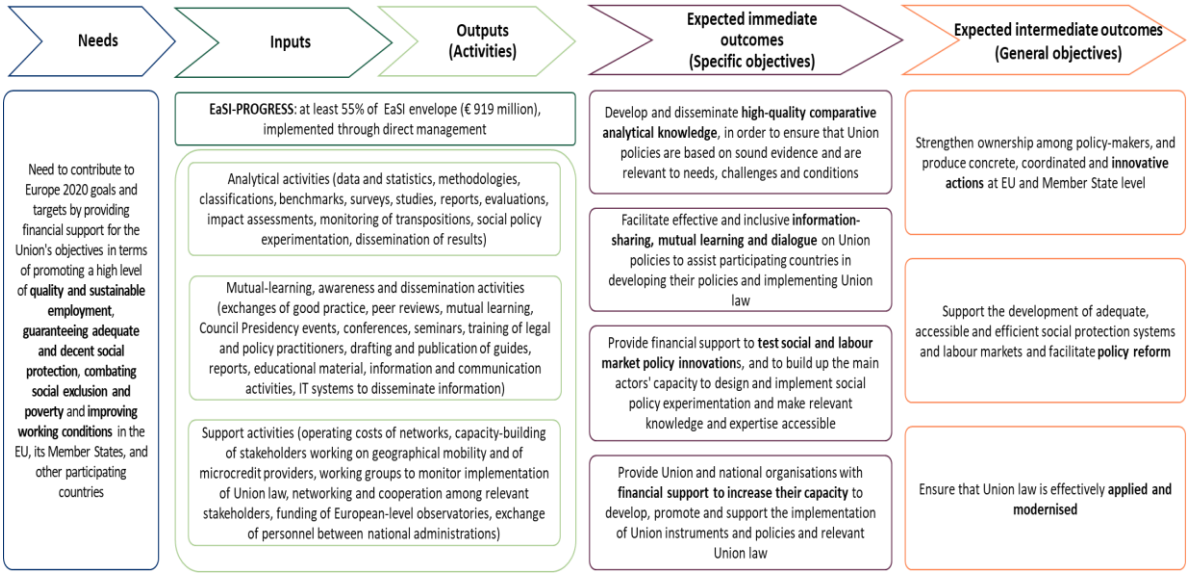
[242]As other EaSI *ex ante* evaluation estimates, this estimated cost may be also affected by an overestimation in the (see discussion in Section 4.1.6).

increased capacity of the microcredit providers was one of the EaSI key achievements (Section 4.1.9) indicating thus a high cost-effectiveness of the programme's support.

The EaSI Regulation was based on an "expected effect approach", meaning that the achievement of the nine specific objectives summarised above were expected to lead to the achievement of the five general objectives.

The first three general objectives of the EaSI programme (Figure 11) were closely interlinked. They referred to the production of concrete, coordinated and innovative actions at EU and Member State levels; the facilitation of policy reform for the development of adequate accessible and efficient social protection systems and labour markets; and the effective implementation, modernisation of EU law in the field of employment and social inclusion. Sections 4.1.1 to 4.1.4 show how the activities implemented under the respective specific objectives contributed to the achievement of the first three general objectives. Additionally, the quantitative headline indicators used to measure the progress in the achievement of the two first general objectives (Section 4.1.10) show an upward trend ('stronger ownership') respectively a stable value ('facilitation of policy reforms'), while the qualitative indicator related to the 'modernisation and application of EU law' show that EaSI was instrumental in achieving this objective. All these elements allow to conclude that the first three general objectives were successfully achieved, hindered nevertheless by inefficiencies registered in the communication and dissemination, as well as in the information-sharing and mutual learning, and social experimentation domains.

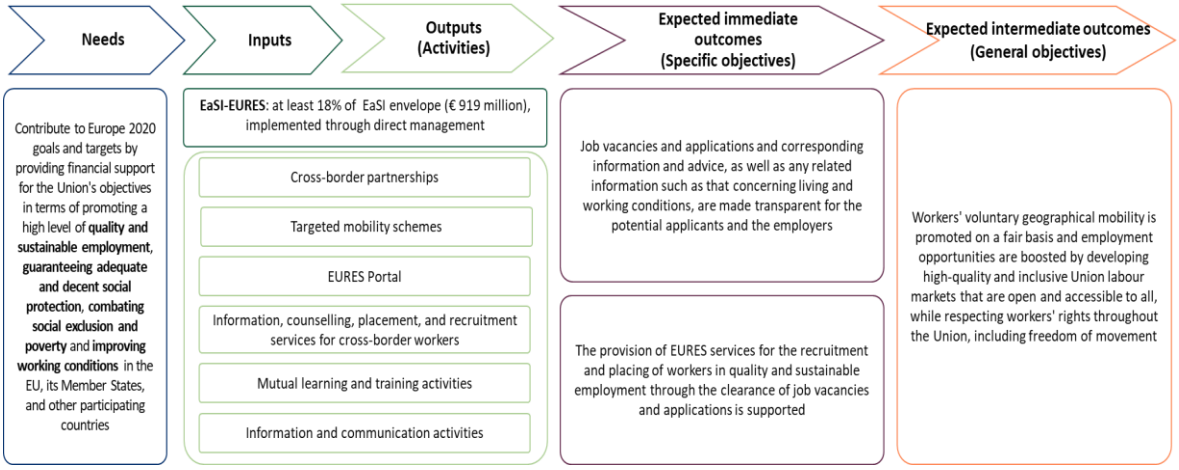
Figure 11. Snapshot of the intervention logic related to the first three EaSI general objectives.



Source: Supporting study, based on the EaSI Regulation.

The fourth general objective of the EaSI programme (Figure 12) was to promote workers' voluntary geographical mobility on a fair basis and boost employment opportunities by developing high-quality, inclusive EU labour markets that are open and accessible to all, while respecting workers' rights, including freedom of movement. Sections 4.1.5 and 4.1.6 show how the EURES Portal activity and the EURES advisers' contacts generated together an increased number of placements at EU-level. However, as shown in Section 4.1.10, the efficiency of these activities is mitigated by the decrease in the ratio between number of contacts and number of placements resulted. These elements allow to conclude that the fourth objective was moderately successfully achieved, due to shortcomings in the EURES Portal fonctionning (notably related to the automatic matching function and the posting of nationnaly available vacancies, and to the limited visibility of the placement services to the employers).

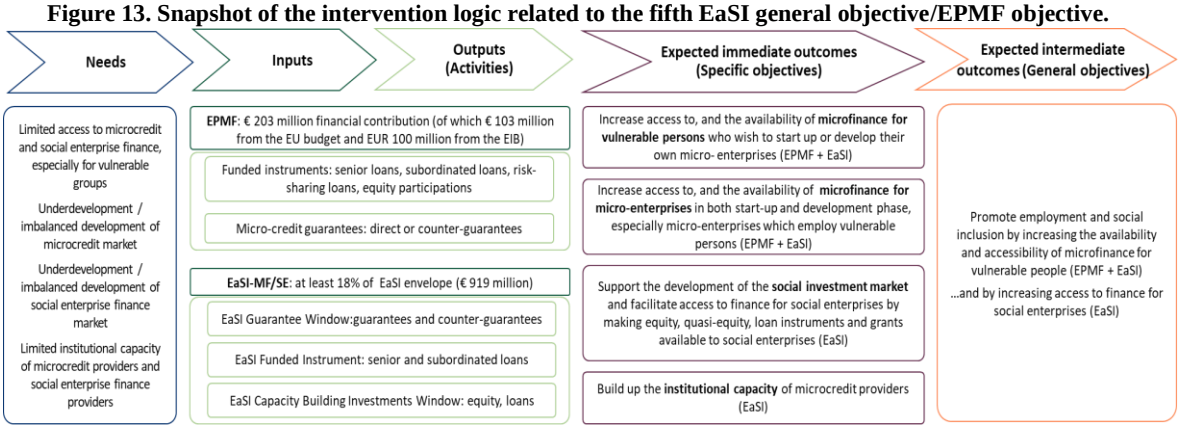
Figure 12. Snapshot of the intervention logic related to the fourth EaSI general objective.



Source: Supporting study, based on the EaSI Regulation.

The fifth general objective of the EaSI programme (Figure 13) was to promote employment and social inclusion by increasing the availability and accessibility of microfinance for vulnerable people who wish to start up a microenterprise as well as for existing microenterprises, and by increasing access to finance for social enterprises.

Figure 13. Snapshot of the intervention logic related to the fifth EaSI general objective/EPMF objective.



Source: Supporting study, based on the EaSI Regulation.

It sought to do this by providing support to financial intermediaries in the form of guarantees and counter-guarantees (EaSI Guarantee Instrument), senior and subordinated loans (EaSI Funded Instrument), as well as capacity building activities (through the EaSI Capacity Building Investments Window as well as the EaSI Technical Assistance for microfinance and social enterprise finance). The EaSI objectives related to microfinance were closely aligned with those of the EPMF. The key differences were that EaSI expanded the support from only microfinance to include support to social entrepreneurship and to the microcredit providers capacity building.

Sections 4.1.7 to 4.1.9 show how the related specific objectives contributed to the achievement of the fifth general objective (upward trends registered in all quantitative indicators). An additional headline indicator (dedicated to the fifth general objective) was used to measure how these activities contributed to an improved access to finance of disavantaged groups. Data collected suggests that the support to some categories (mainly women and unemployed people) decreased over the time, while support to seniors and people coming from third countries increased (Section 4.1.10). All these elements allow to conclude that the fifth general objective was moderately successfully achieved: EPMF

and EaSI traditionnaly targeted groups in disadvantaged position, however, a downward trend in support provided to women and unemployed was observed[243].

Section 4.1.11 shows un upward trend in the mainstreaming of all horizontal principles across programmes' activities between 2014 and 2020. A particular emphasis was placed on those directly aligned with the EaSI objectives such as paying attention to vulnerable groups; guaranteeing adequate and decent social protection; and promoting a high level of quality and sustainable employment. The evaluation indicates that for some groups of stakeholders (EaSI grants' beneficiaries, notably EU-level NGO networks, but also EaSI third axis and EPMF beneficiaries), these horizontal issues were the intrinsic motivation of their activities and they had been addressed through their implementation. The evaluation findings reveals as well that disability and accessibility matters were addressed to a more limited extent through EaSI-funded actions, but their mainstreaming improved significantly between 2014 and 2020.

From an economic efficiency perspective, the analysis shows that sufficient resources were allocated between the activities targeting different groups in need and that this spending was justified by the effectiveness in achieving the desired outcomes (as shown in Sections 4.1.1 to 4.1.12). It was however difficult to quantitatively assess the efficiency of some outputs, notably the analytical knowledge generated, the results of the capacity building, of mutual learning/communication events or of the social experimentation. To mitigate the lack of purely quantitative indicators for these actions, the analysis of efficiency was infused with an understanding of how the activities fitted with the needs of the target groups. Section 4.1.12 indicates that the beneficiaries considered the EaSI budget as sufficient to achieve the intended results, but additional funding would be necessary to allow the upscaling and/or transferring in other contexts of proven social experimentations to achieve wider impacts, to facilitate the social enterprises growth as well as to address the social, environmental, and digital challenges. There was also a consensus among beneficiaries that the project-related administrative efforts were justified considering the benefits that were brought from the actions. However, evidence indicates that the administrative burden in the application phase and the reporting requirements were too burdensome for small organisations and for the operating grants beneficiaries (EU-level NGO networks).

The budgetary execution analysis indicates that the conversion of the inputs into results was made the most cost-efficient way possible (Section 4.1.12). While PROGRESS axis did not commit EUR 10 million (the total amount planned being EUR 515 million), this is explained by the need to adjust spending to the evolving policy priorities and new (contextual) challenges[244].

The evaluation also points out that one of the effects of defining indicative shares in EaSI Regulation for each axis was that budgets cannot be easily moved to an axis in more demand to ensure faster deployment of funds when needed. The evaluation indicates that the flexibility clause foreseen in the legal basis permitting to adjust funding among axes was in practice unnecessary/inefficient given the important (potential) administrative burden generated to operate these changes (Section 4.1.12).

[243]To note however that uncertainty in the evidence of whether the 50% target was reached. As discussed in Section 4.1.10, available social data (related to gender, age, education level and employment status) is not complete, being provided by the end-beneficiaries on voluntary basis and considered as sensitive by the financial intermediaries. Additionally, some people were counted in several categories. Therefore, these data do not provide an accurate picture of support provided per group and do not allow to conclude on the reaching of the target indicated in the EaSI *ex ante* evaluation (50% of people receiving EaSI microfinance to be unemployed or belonging from vulnerable groups).

[244]The difference observed in the PROGRESS axis absorption rate corresponds to cancelled studies in line with political priorities and/or to cancellation/online conversion of events due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

While the financial means available were sufficient to implement PROGRESS and EURES activities, the budget for Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship was too low. The high uptake of the EaSI Guarantee Instrument put pressure on this budget and resulted in a full utilisation of the EaSI microfinance branch budget already by end-2016. This high demand was remedied by enabling a frontloading of the EaSI budget earmarked for 2017 - 2020 and by means of guarantee amounting to EUR 100 million provided under the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI[245]). This led to an increase in the overall volume of actions for the EaSI Guarantee Instrument and allowed EIF to meet the strong market demand and to implement additional operations resulting in a high leverage effect[246].

In terms of governance efficiency, Section 4.1.12 indicates that the overall administrative costs (including expenses related with the monitoring, evaluation, coordination and committee meetings, IT development, audit, communication) were constant and appropriately planned across the entire period. When isolating and analysing the governance (monetary and non-monetary) costs, it results that they were substantially lower than expected before initiating the programme. This may indicate a high efficiency level, however no robust conclusion could be made given the insufficient information on the *ex ante* methodological approach used for the estimations.

In terms of lessons learned in monitoring and evaluation, the evaluation shows that given the complex architecture of EaSI, multidisciplinary teams were necessary to coordinate and implement the programme, as well as for its monitoring and evaluation. The baseline values (points of comparison) established at the EaSI start allowed to evaluate *ex post* the progress both at the specific and general objectives level. Appropriate/complementary data sources and data collection methods (EaSI Stakeholders Survey, EURES monitoring system and the EIF reports) permitted to collect data on the indicators. Given the time necessary to take effect, some impacts were nevertheless difficult to assess, for instance of the social experimentation projects, of the capacity building activities as well of the labour market information. The EaSI Stakeholders Survey – carried out bi-annually – was the main instrument to collect data on indicators, mainly for the PROGRESS axis specific objectives with qualitative indicators converted in numerical indicators (based on the stakeholders' opinions). For the survey's purpose, creating in 2014 a sample of representative stakeholders that will potentially benefit from EaSI was a challenging task for the monitoring contractor and the EaSI coordination/implementation teams.

5.1.2 Internal and external coherence

Through building on the past success of each predecessor programme (see Section 2.1), the objective of EaSI was to achieve improved coordination between activities, greater policy coherence, and more effective delivery and management of activities.

Evidence provided in Section 4.2 indicates that the merging operated in 2014 generated synergies between the three EaSI axes. Notably the activities funded under the PROGRESS axis beneffited to the two other axes, for instance the analytical knowledge, the calls for proposals in areas of working conditions and employment, the support to EU-level networks operating in labour, microfinance and social entrepreneurship fields, the mutual learning activities (both among EURES and Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship actors), the training of EURES advisers and the technical assistance for microcredit providers. Moreover, as argued in Sections 4.1 and 4.2, activities such

[245]EFSI is an initiative launched jointly by the EIB Group and the European Commission to help overcome the investment gap in the EU by mobilizing private financing for strategic investments.

[246]During the 2015 - 2020 period, a total of 154 operations were signed under the two financial instruments as well as 14 microcredit providers capacity building contracts see Section 3.2).

analytical knowledge, mutual learning/events and capacity building funded under the PROGRESS axis were transversal and contributed to all programmes' general objectives, including those related to EURES and Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship. Sections 4.1.5 to 4.1.6 shows additionally that - in terms of scope - EURES provides information/guidance and recruitment/placement services for employers and jobseekers, working thus towards EaSI's ultimate goal of high quality, inclusive EU labour markets accessible to all. Sections 4.1.7 to 4.1.9 show that the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis provided loans to vulnerable groups and social enterprises, addressing thus market gaps and developping the microfinance and social finance markets. These elements allow to conclude that both EaSI axes supported employment by using different instruments in a coherent and complementary way.

The somewhat rigid structure organised by axis (PROGRESS, EURES and Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship) hindered the move of budgets from one axis to another when needed. Nevertheless, the rationalisation of instruments, rules and procedures under one fund saved resources for programming and implementation, generating ultimately simplification and efficiency gains (Section 4.1.12).

Regarding the complementarities with other EU programmes, the evaluation shows that EaSI was most strongly consistent with the ESF (Section 4.2). They had similar objectives but varied significantly in their approach to achieving them, i.e. through using direct management mode for one and shared management for other. Nevertheless, the EaSI mid-term evaluation, then the ESF+ impact assessment and now the EaSI *ex post* evaluation indicate a lack of synergies between the two funds, mostly related to the scaling up of the social innovations tested at small scale under EaSI. The reasons of this bottleneck point to an insufficient dissemination of EaSI results at national level notably among the ESF Managing Authorities and to the lack of concrete incentives and mechanisms to facilitate transition of results from the direct management mode into the shared management mode[247].

By filling the gap in the corresponding microfinance markets through specific financial instruments, EaSI and EPMF were complementary with ESF and national funding. By mitigating the risk for microfinance intermediaries, they facilitated the creation of new business and new employments in microenterprises and/or for disadvantaged people. New complementarities identified between the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis and ESF[248] indicate an improvement compared to the predecessor programming period when the potential complementarities between EPMF and ESF were underexploited (Section 4.2).

As regards complementarities with other EU-level funds, the evaluation shows (Section 4.2) that despite similarities in terms of objectives and target groups, their focus was sufficiently different, thus avoinding overlaps. PROGRESS axis and other EU programmes (such as the Erasmus+ or Horizon 2020) complemented each other in terms of specific objectives, activities and beneficiaries. Complementarities in terms of objectives (skills' building, online portals) between EURES axis and programmes such Erasmus+ or EURAXESS were also found, given that the target groups are quite different (youth for Erasmus+, jobseekers for EURES, researchers for EURAXESS). EURES axis was also complementary with Interreg, given their similar types of activities, but different as regards their geographical scope and priorities. Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis also appears to be consistent with other

[247]Creating conditions for more synergies was one of the reasons of merging ESF and EaSI under the banner of ESF+ in 2021 - 2027.
[248]Based on the EPMF interim evaluation supporting study (2014), a European Parliament in-depth analysis (page 16) of the findings estimated that only 20% of EPMF financial intermediaries reported cooperation with entities supported by the ESF.

microfinance instruments at EU level. They supported either SMEs (like the COSME financial guarantee) or companies up to large caps (InnovFin), where EaSI supported only microenterprises or social enterprises. They also offered larger financing amounts (InnovFin and COSME) and greater variety in terms of financial products (like the InnovFin programme), but targeting only specific groups of beneficiaries in certain countries, while the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis was open to all EaSI participating countries.

However, despite the complementarities between EaSI and other EU instruments, further coherence is hampered by the variety of intervention logic and rules governing the funds. The co-existence of different rulebooks (Financial Regulation for financial instruments, Common Provisions Regulations for structural funds) makes it challenging for the stakeholders to fully exploit the complementarities between different funds. The evaluation also reveals a stakeholders' consensus on the importance of maintaining of different types of support at EU level, while more coordination between EU-level programmes targeting the same groups would be necessary.

5.1.3 EU added value

The evaluation indicates that EaSI achieved impacts that would not have happened otherwise (Sections 4.1.1 - 4.1.12; Section 4.3). It results that EaSI was the most suitable vehicle for EU-wide deliverables such as comparative databases, studies and mutual learning activities that are not always top priorities at other governance levels. It would be also unlikely that national schemes would be able to support social experimentation across different participating countries and EU-level NGO networks as the PROGRESS axis did. Moreover, there are no other EU resources available which are specifically designed for cross-border partnerships, although the Interreg programme supported employment policies in cross-border regions if programmed by the Member States concerned. Nor are there EU resources specifically designed for supporting the modernisation and strengthening of online services (EURES Portal) provided under EURES, although the ESF supported capacity building of the national Public Employment Services if programmed by the individual Member States. Regarding the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis, the support for the social investment market would most likely slow down without funding from EaSI, leading to less social business across the EU and fewer employment opportunities in these sectors. The objectives of the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis went even beyond disbursing loans to vulnerable groups, addressing market gaps/failures and developing market-based instruments, while supporting the ecosystem for social finance markets in the EaSI participating countries.

The evaluation shows as well that EaSI actions stimulated the cooperation among different institutions and stakeholders from public, private, and civil society sectors, which otherwise would have scarce incentives to work together. This facilitated the mutual learning and ultimately a better alignment with the target groups' needs. In terms of governance, merging the three predecessor instruments[249] into one also contributed to enhanced interaction among stakeholders from different countries and to the cross-sectoral exchange of knowledge which would not happen.

5.1.4 Relevance

The global trends depicted in Section 4.4.1 point to a continuous relevance of the two interventions' objectives and horizontal principles. The financial power of the two

[249]EaSI (2014 - 2020) was built on and provided for the continuation of activities carried out by three previously existing instruments (Section 1.1): the Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (PROGRESS), the network of European Employment Services (EURES) and the European Progress Microfinance Facility (EPMF).

programmes did not allow to influence these global trends, but evidence collected shows that they had positive impact on the quality of life of people involved, particularly of vulnerable people (Section 4.4.2). The programme's objectives are also still pertinent considering the recent political events likely to impact the EU in the coming years.

In the period 2021 - 2027, EaSI became an integrated part of a consolidated single fund, the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). Many of the former stand-alone programme EaSI provisions were preserved, providing continuity of its objectives, while accentuating their social dimension in the context of supporting the European Pillar of Social Rights. The financial instruments for microfinance and social enterprises implemented under the former EaSI were deployed under the InvestEU Fund, while the EURES network coordination office function was transferred to the European Labour Authority (ELA) established in 2019. In this context, the PROGRESS and Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship types of activities could focus even more on gender issues and unemployment, while the former EURES axis types of activities could targed specific economic needs (as is the case with the 'Your first EURES job' targeting youth and the cross-border partnerships targeting comuters). The topics of mutual learning activities - e.g. labour market integration measures for young people, asylum seekers, refugees and long-term unemployed people, skills needs related to the twin transitions - followed the priorities set in the EU 2020 Strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights. They were also supported by other EaSI-funded analytical activities, in particular the *Employment and Social Development Report* and the *Labour Force Survey*. The analytical activities under the current ESF+/EaSI strand could prioritise the dissemination of good practices from different countries, while the social experimentations' results could be made more visible among the key actors (ESF Managing Authorities, national public authorities). Equally, maintaining the support provided to the EU-level networks appears to be key in aligning the policy agendas across different levels of governance in the participating countries.

5.1.5 Geographical coverage and stakeholders' participation

Overall, despite the limited scale and financial power of the two programmes, the evaluation presents evidence that EaSI and EPMF were effective and efficient in reaching relevant stakeholders. Quantitative and qualitative evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of each objective (Section 4.1) show how they contributed to meet the expectations formulated before their launching (Section 2.1). The most notable shortcomings were registered for the information-sharing and mutual learning related objective (mainly due to the difficulty in organising events in a pandemic context) and for the social experimentation expected upscaling (hindered by the difficult transition between the direct management and the shared management funds). The insuficient communication of EaSI financing opportunities and results to the stakeholders emerged as a transversal issue hampering the programme's performance.

However, offering a range of activities allowed EaSI to meet the needs of diverse groups of stakeholders[250]. For instance, EaSI provided policymakers with comparative knowledge including those resulting from social experimentation activities; supported EU-level NGO networks with funding securing their sustainability, advocacy activities and their role as interface with grassroots organizations; facilitated the matchmaking

[250]EaSI provided a rich set of tools and services corresponding to the (evolving/emerging) needs of different recipients. For instance, the European Online Job Days, organized by the EURES national coordination offices, is a service that has been running for years, but its relevance clearly appeared only during and after the COVID disruption, being for months one of the few public or private services that continued to support the European job mobility.

between vacancies and jobseekers/employers needs, contributing thus to their geographical/occupational mobility; and supported financial intermediaries to reach persons with difficulties in accessing finance. It also provided training and advisory services to microcredit providers, contributing to develop the microfinance/social entrepreneurship markets in the participating countries.

In terms of total committments (including grants, procurements for studies, events and other services such as evaluation, audit, IT services, translation/interpretation, communication, training), EaSI provided support to 42 countries, with Belgium and Luxembourg appearing as being the first EaSI beneficiaries. Organisations from 35 countries received grants under EaSI calls for proposals (notably Italy, Germany, Belgium and Spain). Germany and Belgium present as well the higher success rate, this being due mainly to the regular participation of organisations established in these countries in recurrent calls for proposals for cross-border partnerships respectively to support EU-level NGO networks (Chapter 3). A group of countries (Estonia, Luxembourg, Malta and Romania) were never involved in EaSI grants as main beneficiary, nevertheless, they were involved as co-beneficiary. Overall, the EaSI calls for proposals success rate was 40,60%, this being also influenced partially by the non-compliant applications (almost 14%).

In terms of stakeholders' involvement in the EaSI grants, the public bodies appear to be the projects' key drivers (notably in Germany, Belgium and Italy), followed by foundations/NGOs, the trade union organisations and the employers organisations (Chapter 3). The least involved were the universities/research institutes and enterprises (both private and not-for-profit). The only country where all types of stakeholders were involved in projects was Italy. Moreover, stakeholders operating at national level were the most involved in the EaSI implementation (notably in Italy, Germany and Spain), followed by the local-level and regional-level stakeholders. The least involved were the stakeholders operating at international level, most of them being established in Belgium where most of EU-level networks benefiting from operating grants (consuming a substantial share of EaSI budget) are established (see Chapter 3).

Overall, evidence provided in Chapter 3 and in Section 4.1 indicate that all eligible countries participated in the programme. However, the evaluation shows differences as regards countries' participation both within each of the EaSI axes as well as across them. It is nevertheless important to note that the EaSI objective was not to ensure an equal distribution of funding across participating countries given that this was not stipulated as such in the legal basis (EaSI Regulation does not contain any allocation key). EaSI was mostly implemented on the basis of calls for proposals and to a lesser extent through calls for tenders. These calls were open to all EaSI participating countries and different groups of stakeholders were targeted depending on the specific call design. Selection and award criteria applied along a dedicated evaluation process according to the EU Financial Regulation and projects/contracts were granted based on the quality of the proposals. Other different reasons explains this inequal participation in the EaSI implementation, among them being notably the absence of specific needs related to the call's topic in the country; the lack of monetary resources (to cover the co-financing of 20%) and/or of human resources (to apply, implement and report); the lack of knowledge/experience (with project design preparation complying with award criteria); and lack/insufficient communication campaigns at national level on EU funding opportunities.

5.2. Lessons learned

5.2.1 Answers to evaluation questions

To what extent was the EU intervention successful and why?

Overall, the activities implemented helped increase awareness and ownership of EU policy inputs into social inclusion and poverty reduction (benefiting to EU-level and national policy makers but also to individual citizens). They facilitated notably policy change through comparative perspectives and capacity building, helping stakeholders (in particular EU-level NGO networks and national administrations) to formulate and implement socioeconomic policies in the participating countries. They also improved the perceptions and use of cross-border potential for employment (both from jobseekers and employers perspective) and allowed to test rapidly innovative approaches (beneficial to policymakers, notably to the national authorities). Despite their small scale/budget, EPMF and EaSI also contributed to social and economic inclusion through the support to social enterprises and specific categories of social entrepreneurs..

A number of shortcomings undermined however the EaSI programme's effectiveness and efficiency. The evaluation underscored notably the insufficient communication/dissemination of results and of mutual learning opportunities, the unexploited scalability of social experimentations, the incomplete posting of national vacancies on the EURES Portal, the insufficient visibility of the EURES placement services to the employers as well as the fact that women and unemployed still encounter barriers in accessing microfinance. Moreover, disability and accessibility matters were mainstreamed to a more limited extent through the EaSI-funded actions compared to the other horizontal principles.

In terms of economic efficiency, the financial means available were sufficient to implement the two first axes' activities while the demand for the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship was higher than expected, but this was successfully topped-up using European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) guarantee. The economic efficiency was however slowed down by administrative burden in the projects' application, award and implementation stages, in particular for small structures and the EU-level NGO networks, disposing from limited financial and human resources.

In terms of internal coherence, most PROGRESS axis activities benefitted to the overall programme, while the two remaining axes worked towards increasing employment using different instruments. Regarding consistency with other EU programmes, EaSI was most strongly consistent with the ESF. However, this complementarity was undermined by the lack of incentives to enable the social experimentation tested under EaSI to be scaled up or multiplied with ESF funding. EaSI is also complementary with Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, EURAXESS, Interreg, COSME and InnovFin programmes. However, the variety of intervention logics and of rules governing the funds hampered the complementarity with ESF but also the potential new complementarities with other EU-level funds, for instance with the EU rural development programmes (EARDF). The evaluation highlights the utility of a easy-to-use tool permitting to stakeholders to have an overview of all programmes and opportunities available at EU level.

How target groups benefitted from the EU intervention?

Evidence shows – considering the limitations related to data analysed – that not all countries benefitted equally from the programme (Chapter 3). One main lesson resulting from the geographical repartition of EaSI funding could be that EaSI was more performant in countries with experience/knowledge in project design and management, and less performant in other countries (in particular small countries, more recent Member States and candidate countries/potential candidates). While the calls for proposals were open to all eligible countries - applicants from countries with more experience/know-how

in applying to EU funding (due to the proximity to the EU institutions and/or more intensive/pro-active dissemination of information about EU funding opportunities) submitted proportionally more high quality proposals. Therefore, they had more chances to be granted under the direct management mode (based on the calls for proposals' quality criteria). Another major finding points to the key role of public authorities in initiating, creating partnerships and implementing projects given their institutional/territorial embedding, their role in policymaking and their financial power.

How did the EU intervention make a difference?

The added value of EaSI comes mostly from its transnational dimension: in 2014 - 2020, there was any equivalent in the programme's participating countries in terms of scale and scope. The evaluation indicates that through EaSI, more relevant projects were supported than would have been possible through only national funding. The implications in the employment and social inclusion field — should the EaSI programme be discontinued — would be negative. For instance, both employment opportunities and jobseekers' intra-EU mobility would decrease, as well as the cooperation and mutual learning between the stakeholders, the availability of comparative analytical knowledge across participating countries, the funding to test social innovations, and the access to finance for vulnerable groups and social enterprises.

Is the intervention still relevant?

The evaluation demonstrates that there is a clear and continuous need for all types of actions assessed, in the light of their continuation in the current programming period (EaSI strand of ESF+, InvestEU and ELA) and of their contribution to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan: analytical activities to support policy making and evidence, capacity building to enhance stakeholders' participation/impact on policies, instruments to facilitate the geographical and occupational mobility, and instruments to improve access to finance, in particular of vulnerable groups.

5.2.2 Areas for improvements

The elements presented in Section 5.1 allow to conclude on one hand that EaSI was moderately successful, being affected by a number weaknesses in specific fields, by disparities in the countries' participation to the programme and by unexploited synergies with other EU-level programmes. On the other hand, EaSI generated EU added value through its transnationality, remaining relevant in the current economic and political context.

Lessons already capitalised

Below is explained how ESF+ - building notably on the EaSI mid-term evaluation conclusions - integrated in its architecture lessons learned confirmed by the EaSI *ex post* evaluation.

- In terms of communication/dissemination, the EaSI strand funding opportunities and results are promoted since 2021 via the Funding and Tenders Portal. This Portal offers a real one-stop-shop, not only for finding opportunities but also for the daily projects' interactions with the EU[251]. It provides a unique entry point for a fully electronic management of centrally managed grants and procurement contracts. All

[251]The projects are promoted at the Projects & Results section, while the eGrants system – accessible via the same Portal – became the single gateway for all exchanges (submission, evaluation, implementation and reporting) between applicants and the Commission. Additional information and statistics on proposals, success rates, funded projects and participants is available on the Portal as well. Furthermore, the Portal also hosts a 'News & events' section with news about the EaSI strand. Here the Commission informs about EaSI events, including those organised in Member States and participating countries and publishes articles informing about the strand.

centrally managed EU programmes are covered, providing easy access to funding and tender opportunities based on keywords and full-text search. Procurement section will be implemented further in view of a fully integration of the procurement service (paperless handling as for grants). Additionally, the National Contact Points for the EaSI strand promote the EaSI strand opportunities and results in the participating countries' languages. A structured stakeholders' consultation[252] is also organised before the adoption of each EaSI strand annual work programme.

- In terms of social innovation upscaling, the ESF+ Regulation incentives the Member States to take advantage of a new integrated approach to test and upscale social innovation. Under this approach, the EaSI strand continues to test new policy approaches at a small-scale through social experimentation and to serve as a basis for social innovation upscaling, mainstreaming and/or replication activities under the ESF+ shared management strand or other sources of funding. These legal provisions[253] were paired with new means to support the social innovation, notably the transnational cooperation[254] funding the Social Innovation Competence Centres and the National Contacts Points[255]. The digital and green transitions goals are also increasingly mainstreamed in the EaSI strand actions; for instance, a call for proposals aiming to test social innovation approaches to foster green and digital transition in schools, training centres, at work and in local communities was already launched in 2022.
- In terms of synergies, they are also enhanced *vis-à-vis* other funds. The ESF+ seeks in particular to ensure complementarities with the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF), Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps, the Asylum and Migration Fund (AMIF), as well as with Horizon Europe and the Digital Europe Programme. One example of synergy between the ESF+ and Erasmus+ consists in the joint financing of the EUROPASS system, which is a notable example of cooperation between the ESF+ and Erasmus+[256].
- In terms of budgetary flexibility, the *ex post* evaluation confirmed the EaSI mid-term evaluation finding that the flexibility clause foreseen to adjust funding among the three axes (Article 33 of the EaSI Regulation) was in practice an inefficient provision given the important potential administrative burden generated to operate these changes. Based on the EaSI mid-term evaluation findings, the Omnibus Regulation (2018) introduced amendments to the EaSI Regulation to make the budget more flexible. A consequence was that Article 33 became obsolete and was therefore deleted from the EaSI legal basis. In the period 2021 - 2027, the three compartments

[252]This yearly strategic dialogue exercise has two parts: on one hand the EU level civil society organisations are consulted through an online dialogue meeting; and on the other hand, the EU level social partners are consulted in an email exchange.

[253]While the ESF Regulation included a provision (Article 9) for the promotion of social innovation, the ESF+ Regulation requires Member States to dedicate at least one priority to support social innovation and social experimentation and/or scaling up of innovations tested on a small scale under the EaSI strand and other Union programmes. The maximum co-financing rate for such priorities may be increased to 95% for a maximum of 5% of the national resources under the ESF+ strand under shared management.

[254]As per the Article 15 of the ESF+ Regulation, Member States may support transnational cooperation actions under any of the specific objectives of the programme. A financial envelope of EUR 175 million (in 2018 prices) was allocated for transnational cooperation, with a view to accelerating the transfer, and facilitating the scaling up, of 'innovative solutions'. Therefore, six consortia were selected to set up Social Innovation Competence Centres and drive social innovation locally, regionally, nationally, and transnationally. Covering 25 countries and mobilising 148 organisations, they are currently helping managing authorities to programme and implement social innovation actions, as well as to support organisations on the ground with capacity building, knowledge transfer and networking measures.

[255]A complementary support initiative consists in the National Contact Points (NCPs) financed under the direct management strand. While the focus of the Competence Centres is on the social innovation, the NCPs inform about all EaSI strand activities, including financing opportunities, application requirements and projects' results.

[256]The ESF+ and Erasmus+ are active in similar fields, notably helping people gain new skills, upskilling to answer the needs of the industrial sectors, improving digital competences, as well as the quality of education and training.

of the former EaSI Programme (PROGRESS, EURES and Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship) were abolished together with simplification and flexibility of financing.

- In terms of governance, the ESF+ operates both under shared and direct management modes and relies on a new simpler governance structure. The ESF+ Committee is supported by two specialised technical working groups, one for the shared management and one for the EaSI strand. This governance design allows for stronger synergies in both programming and implementation phases, while better connecting diverse types of activities and beneficiaries. As per the resources allocation, the EaSI strand focuses increasingly now on balancing competing needs and priorities, while the previous boundaries (indicative shares allocation) between axes have been completely removed.
- In terms of programme's performance measurement, the evaluation shows that simplification and rationalisation of the programme's monitoring/evaluation system are necessary to reduce administrative burden on the EC services and stakeholders[257]. In 2021 - 2027, EaSI became a strand of the ESF+, building on the former EaSI programme's objectives, maintaining thus the focus on evidence-based policy-making and social experimentation, networking and capacity-building activities, support to job occupational/geographical mobility, and on the non-financial instrument activities to develop the microfinance and social entrepreneurship ecosystems. For the EaSI strand, Article 32 of the ESF+ Regulation (monitoring and reporting) establishes that "proportionate reporting requirements shall be imposed on recipients of Union funds and, where relevant, Member States". The ESF+ Regulation (based on the EaSI programme mid-term evaluation findings that were confirmed by the *ex post* evaluation) identifies 5 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to report on the progress of the EaSI strand towards the achievement of the specific objectives set out in Article 4(1) and the operational objectives set out in Article 25[258]. These indicators are easily understandable, practical, and feasible. Additionally, they have a proven record of performance during the former EaSI programme. Data collected using complementary qualitative and quantitative methods, such as interviews, focus groups, and surveys are foreseen in the new monitoring/evaluation system to provide a good understanding of stakeholder's perceptions and interactions. To effectively review the linkages between policy and programme implementation, data triangulation methods are used to pull together the range of data available, including quantitative and qualitative information.

[257]Based on the experience with the EaSI performance measurement system – with a total of 42 headline and complementary indicators – a simplified system with a limited number of quantitative indicators was established to measure the EaSI strand performance in 2021 - 2027.

[258]The 5 indicators defined in Annex IV of the ESF+ Regulation are the following: KPI 1: number of analytical activities; KPI 2: number of information sharing and mutual learning activities; KPI 3: number of social experimentation activities; KPI 4: number of capacity building and networking activities; KPI 5: number of job placements under targeted mobility schemes. They cover 8 (up to 10) operational objectives of the EaSI strand (Article 25). In order to ensure that the performance reporting system effectively reports on all the operational objectives established by the regulation, two new Primary Performance Indicators (PPI) linked to the two remaining operational objectives were included in addition to the 5 KPIs: PPI 6 – number of "development of the market ecosystem around microfinance to microenterprises" activities; and PPI 7 – Number of "development social enterprises and emergence of a social investment market" activities.

Lessons to inform future policy

The conclusions formulated in Section 5.1 bring out several areas for improvements to be addressed under the EaSI strand but also - when appropriate - under ELA (the business owner of the EURES Portal since 2019) and the InvestEU (bringing together the multitude of earlier EU financial instruments, including those implemented under EaSI).

- Improving the EaSI strand visibility by increasing the frequency and adapting the timing of publishing the information on opportunities for financing; by disseminating more results, country-specific examples and good practices; by creating projects' online databases; by ensuring that the information reach a wide audience in terms of geographical coverage and types of stakeholders; by making websites' content more user-friendly and accessible for the general public, including by providing multi-languages information.
- Improving stakeholders' knowledge in project design and management, in particular in small countries, more recent Member States and candidate countries/potential candidates.
- Ensuring more visibility of the social experimentations' results (notably among the ESF+ shared management Managing Authorities) and of the EURES Portal (notably among employers).
- Exploring new ways/incentives to increase the share of social experimentations upscaled, the share national vacancies published on the EURES Portal, and access of women and unemployed people to the financial instruments' market.
- Improving the connection between the EURES Portal and the Europass Portal by proposing one account to access all applications through an unique EU log-in for both EURES and Europass; by facilitating the navigation between EURES and Europass; and by removing the overlapping functionalities[259].
- Exploring ways to reduce the action grants and operating grants' administrative burden both on the applicants' side and the Commission's services side.
- Enhancing synergies with EU-level funds targeting similar groups, notably those implemented by DG EAC, DG GROW and DG RTD and additional synergies with other funds, for instance those targeting rural population (EAFRD).
- Improving the mainstreaming of horizontal principles across the EaSI strand activities notably those related to disability and accessibility matters.
- Improving the mainstreaming of the the digital and green transitions goals across the EaSI strand activities. Contributing to improve the use of digital financial services, in particular by vulnerable people who are the least likely to benefit from the digitalization of financial services (including in rural areas).
- Providing additional funding to allow proven social experimentations to be up-scaled and/or transffered to other actors or contexts thus creating a wider impact, to facilitate the social enterprises growth as well as to adress new social, environmental and digital challenges.
- Ensuring an appropriate evaluation timeframe and scope, notably for activities such those related to the capacity building, social experimentation and the labour market transparency that require time to take effect.

[259]DG EMPL and ELA are currently discussing the details of these technical improvements.

ANNEX I. PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

Lead DG, DECIDE Planning/CWP

This evaluation was included in the Commission's *Agenda Planning System* (PLAN/2019/5817) and carried out in compliance with the Articles 13(4) and 38(1) of the EaSI Regulation 1296/2013[260] (amended by the Regulation 2018/1046[261]) and Article 9 of the EPMF Decision 283/2010[262]. In line with the Better Regulation Guidelines[263] and the Inter-institutional Agreement on Better Law-Making[264], it assesses the extent to which the two programmes were effective, efficient and coherent, provided EU added value and remained relevant to tackle present needs.

The evaluation was carried out by the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) following the Article 13 (4) of the Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on a European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation ("EaSI") and amending the Decision No 283/2010/EU establishing a European Progress Microfinance Facility for employment and social inclusion and Article 9 (1) of the Decision No 283/2010/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 March 2010 establishing a European Progress Microfinance Facility for employment and social inclusion.

Organisation and timing

DG EMPL prepared the evaluation roadmap, the stakeholder consultation strategy and the technical specifications for the supporting study contract. The documents were submitted for feedback and approval to the dedicated Inter-Service Steering Group (ISSG).

The ISSG was established in September 2019 following the invitation sent on 2 April 2019 to the following DGs: BUDG, GROW, JUST, HOME, EAC, SANTE, RTD, REGIO, ECFIN, ESTAT, JRC, the Secretariat-General and the Legal Service. The group met six times (see below '*Evidence, sources and quality'*).

DG EMPL conducted the external support study with external experts between 31 March 2021 - 31 July 2022. The ISSG was consulted on the external study report (interim, final and synopsis reports) during the dedicated meetings and through a dedicated on-line collaborative space. The relevant evaluation documents (evaluation roadmap, open public consultation) were published on EUROPA 'Have your Say' dedicated page for stakeholders' feedback/consultation respectively between 8 October and 5 November 2019 for the roadmap, and between 5 October and 28 December 2021 for public consultation.

DG EMPL concluded the evaluation in 2023 with issuing a Commission Staff Working Document and a stakeholders consultations' synopsis report.

Exceptions to the Better Regulation Guidelines

The Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines were followed to carry out the evaluation without deviations.

[260] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013R1296
[261] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018R1046 (the 'The Omnibus Regulation').
[262] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:087:0001:0005:EN:PDF
[263] https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en
[264] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016Q0512%2801%29

Evidence, sources and quality

Table 25 below summarises the successive steps of the evaluation. An external study was carried out by Ramboll, Seor and Tetra Tech with a contract duration of 16 months (31 March 2021 - 31 July 2022). The study applied a mix of evaluation methods including desk research, online public consultation, surveys, workshops, case studies and interviews with stakeholders, EU officials and EIF representatives.

The ISSG concluded that the study was conducted in line with the technical specifications and the agreed inception report, with adaptations for (online) meetings, interviews and workshops due to the COVID-19 disruption. It used relevant qualitative and quantitative sources and methods, although data to support efficiency analysis had some specific caveats (discussed in Section 1.3 and Annex II). The analysis and conclusions are sound, and the methodological framework and its limitations are clearly outlined.

Table 25. Evaluation timeline

Steps/tasks	Timing
Preparation (August 2019 - March 2021)	
Political validation by inclusion in the Annual Management Plan, draft the evaluation roadmap and the consultation strategy	August 2019 - September 2019
Set up the inter-service steering group (ISSG), roadmap publication and draft the supporting study technical specifications (ToR)	September 2019
ISSG meeting to discuss the ToR and the consultation strategy	25 June 2020
Tendering procedure	September 2020 - March 2021
Evaluation supporting study (April 2021 - July 2022)	
Signature of the contract	31 March 2021
Kick-off meeting	12 April 2021
Inception meeting	21 May 2021
Online public consultation	4 October 2021 - 28 December 2021
Interim meeting	7 June 2022
Final validation seminar	5 July 2022
Finalisation of the supporting study	August 2022 – October 2022
Staff Working Document (September 2022 - November 2023)	
Draft SWD and Synopsis report	September - December 2022
ISSG meeting on SWD	10 January 2023
Submission to the Regulatory Scrutiny Board	3 April 2023
Meeting with the Regulatory Scrutiny Board	24 May 2023
RSB negative opinion received	26 May 2023
Incorporate RSB recommendations into a revised SWD	June - September 2023
Resubmission of the revised SWD to the RSB	13 October 2023
RSB positive opinion received	22 December 2023
Prepare and launch the Inter-Services Consultation package	January 2024
Revision and presentation to College of final SWD	February 2024
Transmission of the Commission Report accompanied by the SWD to the European Parliament and Council and publication (Inter-Institutional Database, Europa etc.)	March 2024

Source: DG EMPL

The EESC has drawn up a complementary evaluation report assessing the implementation of EaSI and EPMF based on research and consultations carried out between December 2021 and June 2022 in five selected EU Member States (Austria, France, Hungary, Italy and Lithuania). Its results are considered in the current evaluation Staff Working Document.

The Inter-Services Steering Group (ISSG) was involved in all key steps of the evaluation after the publication of the roadmap. Invitations and documents were circulated in advance of the meetings; ISSG members were be given at least two weeks to provide written comments on (draft) supporting study and Staff Working Document. Five ISSG meetings[265] took place along the evaluation timeline.

Consultation of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board (RSB)

The evaluation was scrutinized by the RSB on 24/05/2023, which issued a negative opinion. The reworked report was scrutinized again by the RSB, which issued a positive opinion on 22/12/2023. In the revised version of the report, the background, methodological, implementation and results sections have been rewritten in a more concise way, while the descriptive material and details were included in annexes. Consequently, the report has been reworked throughout to ensure coherence between information provided in different sections and/or in annexes. The RSB recommendations were addressed as follows (Table 26 and Table 27):

Table 26. The RSB's main findings and DG EMPL modifications

No.	Boards' findings	Modifications
RSB first opinion		
1.	The evidence base underpinning the analysis is insufficient. The report relies mostly on value judgements from stakeholders but it is not clear how these can be considered representative.	The evidence base underpinning the analysis – notably to inform the effectiveness and efficiency of each specific objective (Section 4.1.1) - was systematically reinforced with available quantitative and monetary data which completed data from the performance measurement (changes in indicators over the time and comparison with targets). During the evaluation process, a total of 412 stakeholders were consulted using methods such as interviews, questionnaire-based survey, focus groups an an open public consultation. The open public consultation, and the surveys targeting EaSI beneficiaries and financial intermediairies allowed reaching a wide spectrum of respondents, without, however, ensuring full representativeness given the low number of replies (see Annex V). Combining written consultation tools with more direct interactions with stakeholders ensured nevertheless a partial representativeness of consultation outcomes. The pertinence of opinions collected was systematically/explicitely indicated and assessed across the overall revised SWD when used to corroborate or to illustrate findings resulted from other research methods (desk research and analysis of quantitative data/indicators).
2.	The analysis does not sufficiently explain nor consistently use the target indicators. It does not assess the adequacy and suitability of the monitoring system in place for informing the evaluation.	The SWD clarifies in Section 2.3 and Annex II.4 the use of the indicators and of the points of comparison. The evaluation uses the headline indicators included in the EaSI Performance Measurement System for all the specific and general objectives as well as for the horizontal principles. This choice is based on the fact that they remained unchanged while some complementary indicators were removed following the three updates of the EaSI baseline report elaborated in 2014. Thus, the headline indicators allow comparability and an optimal capture of performance

[265]The ISSG members provided oral and written comments on all the deliverables specified in Table 25 and attended all the meetings organised within the contract for the supporting study (the minutes of these meetings can be provided upon request). Several ISSG members (DG EMPL officials from units involved in the EaSI and EPMF implementation) attended the final validation seminar together with the external stakeholders involved in consultations. The support document discussed was the (draft) final supporting study.

No.	Boards' findings	Modifications
		throughout the programme's lifetime. The points of comparison used are therefore based on the situation estimated in 2014 (EaSI baseline report), excepting for the specific objectives related to EPMF and EASI third axis, where targets from the respective *ex ante* evaluation were used (see discussion/clarification in the revised Section 2.3 and Table 31 included in Annex II.4). Additional analysis of the monitoring system was included in the revised SWD (Section 4.1.12) and related findings were reflected in the conclusions and lessons learnt (Chapter 5).
3.	The report does not identify appropriate "lessons learned" to inform future policy.	The Chapter 5 (conclusions and lessons learned) was restructured and reinforced. Section 5.1 presents - relying on the evidence gathered in the SWD - the conclusions alongside the programme's performance (including the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency and coherence/complementarity), value added and relevance. Section 5.2 formulates answers to the main evaluation questions[266] (Section 5.2.1) and areas for improvements (Section 5.2.2). The areas for improvements are separated in two categories: lessons already capitalised in the ESF+ and lessons to inform future policy (improving the ESF+, InvestEU and ELA implementation and/or to be used in the preparation of the post-2027 funds).
RSB second opinion		
1.	The report does not critically assess the adequacy and suitability of the existing monitoring system.	The section 5.2.2 has been adapted to discuss the weaknesses of the EaSI programme monitoring system
2.	The report does not sufficiently recognise the constraints and data limitations when drawing conclusions. On a number of concrete areas lessons learned and suggestions for improvements are missing. Some conclusions on effectiveness and efficiency and qualitative assessment of costs and benefits do not fully reflect the underpinning analysis.	The section 5.1 has been adapted to discuss the data limitations when drawing conclusions. Section 5.2.2 was updated to reflect additional lessons learned and areas for improvements. Anenx IV was adapted to better reflect the analysis provided in the report.

Source: DG EMPL

Table 27. The RSB's recommendations and DG EMPL modifications

No.	Board's recommendations	Modifications
1.	The report should provide an appropriate evidence base underpinning analysis by avoiding exclusively or mostly relying on the value judgements of stakeholders. The evidence base should be supported by measurable and tangible results, and claims and views, to the extent they are used as evidence base, should be reflected in such	Additionally to the quantitative and qualitative indicators on outcomes reflecting the changes connected to the interventions, the analysis (notably Section 4.1 related to the programmes' effectiveness and efficiency) was reinforced with quantitative/measurable evidence (e.g. monetary inputs and number of outputs) by (re)considering data, tables and figures initially included in annexes. The quantitative output indicators describing the number of

[266] 'To what extent was the intervention successful and why?'; 'How the target groups benefitted from the intervention?'; 'How did the EU intervention made a difference?' and 'Is the intervention still relevant?'

No.	Board's recommendations	Modifications
	results on the ground. In this regard, the report should consider what data and figures currently contained in the annexes and/or in the supporting study should substantiate further the analytical part of the report and provide support to the conclusions, in particular, on the performance of the measures. Overall, in discussing implementation of the programmes, the report should go further than listing activities and inputs and assess outcomes and impacts. It should explain why it may be difficult or not possible in some cases to identify and measure the specific contribution of the programmes to the general objectives.	tasks achieved or outputs produced were also complemented with evidence on the quality of outputs, using for instance the stakeholders' views collected through different consultations (see also the comment to the first RSB finding in Table 26 above). Quantitative evidence base was also reinforced by comparing input and outcome data for different participating countries and stakeholders' groups (see revised Chapter 3), providing thus information on how benefits were distributed and highlighting areas for improvement (see also reply to the next RSB comment). Section 5 (conclusions and lessons learnt) was revised in order to reflect the findings resulted from this reinforced combined evidence base. Finnaly, the descriptive information initially contained in the main part of the text (notable Chapter 3 related to the implementation state of play) was included in Annex VI.
2.	The report should explain why EaSI proved to be unevenly applied across Member States. It should analyse in detail the reasons behind the uneven participation across and within countries, what the consequences were in terms of making the intervention effective, relevant and efficient across Member States, and whether there was an evolution following the implementation of corrective measures, like the National Contact Points (NCP) network and improved promotion. It should thoroughly explore whether EaSI was equally beneficial for all recipients and if all its features are equally useful. Rather than relying primarily on stakeholder feedback, the report should present clearly EaSI's identified outcomes and impacts and how these can be used as a measure of success across the EU.	Chapter 3 (state of play) was restructured and refocused on the geographical repartition of funding and the stakeholders' involvement in the programme's implementation. The (descriptive) complementary information was included in the Annex VI while figures and tables included initially in this annex where sent back in Chapter 3 (mostly related with the EaSI third axis and EPMF) and/or in Sections 4.1.7 to 4.1.9. Thus, the revised Section 3.1 provides the state of play for the direct management part (calls for proposals and calls for tenders) while Section 3.2 presents the state of play for the indirect management part (financial instruments implemented under EaSI and EPMF). The tables presenting the state of play in monetary and quantitative terms per country and type of stakeholder are completely new; they were established based on data from the EU FTS (EU Financial Transparency System) and the DG EMPL DEFIS database[267]. Reasons to the unequal participation of countries and stakeholders to the EaSI programme are provided in Chapter 3, while lessons learnt are reflected in Section 5. Section 5 also indicates which findings (anticipated in the EaSI mid-term evaluation and the ESF+ impact assessment) were already addressed in the new ESF+ umbrella programme (gathering together the former ESF and EaSI activities in the current programming period). Among them, the EaSI *ex post* evaluation confirmed the insufficient communication of EaSI opportunities and dissemination of its results. To address this shortcoming, the EaSI strand facilitated the establishment of National Contact Points (NCP) in the participating countries. The main NCPs role is to inform the stakeholders on EaSI strand financing opportunities during the submission process in the national language. A number of 15 NCPs were established following a call for proposals launched in 2021 (duration 24 months) and 4 additional NCPs following the second call for proposals launched in 2022

[267]DEFIS was the DG EMPL application used in 2014 - 2020 to evaluate the projects submitted under the calls for proposals and to monitor them after their awarding.

No.	Board's recommendations	Modifications
		(duration 12 months). All 19 NCPs will be financed under the EaSI strand until 2025; after this date they could decide to stop their activity or to continue their activity supported by national funding. Nevertheless, the NCPs calls for proposals as well as other improvements/measures (see Section 5.2.2.1) were launched under the EaSI strand of the ESF+, therefore the assessment of their activity is part of the ESF+ mid-term/*ex post* evaluation.
3	The report should explain how it has concluded on the effectiveness of EPMF based on the number of micro loans, while only 30% of beneficiaries are female and cannot provide data to evaluate the objective of 50% beneficiaries to be unemployed. If the information is not fully available the report should explain why.	The fifth EaSI general objective - which was reinforced with additional quantitative data and analysis (see Section 4.1.10) - was to achieve an 'increased access to finance for vulnerable persons, micro- and social enterprises'. The headline indicator measuring the progress in achieving this EaSI general objective was the 'proportion of final recipients that have created or further developed a business with EU microfinance support that are unemployed or belong to vulnerable groups' (see Table 31 in Annex II.4). The target from the DG EMPL Management Plan and considered in the EaSI monitoring reports was 50% by 2020. There was no similar quantitative target related to the EPMF. To conclude on the effectiveness of this general objective, the evaluation draws on the findings resulting from Sections 4.1.7 to 4.1.9 (specific objectives 7, 8 and 9) and on the changes over time in the shares of groups monitored (see revised Section 4.1.10). The analysis of changes in monitored vulnerable groups shows a significant increase in support for persons from non-EU countries. An increase in the category of people aged 55 years and above is noticed as well. The support for women and unemployed or inactive is decreasing, while persons aged less than 25 years and disabled people received a somewhat equal amount of financing. In conclusion, EPMF and EaSI were - despite the high effectiveness suggested by quantitative indicators (Sections 4.1.7 to 4.19) - moderately effective in increasing the availability of microfinance and social enterprises. This finding considers that a downward trend was observed in the support to women and unemployed paired with upward trends in the support to senior and people coming from third countries (see discussion in Section 4.1.10, page 47). This conclusion also takes into account the uncertainty in the evidence of whether the 50% target was reached, due to data limitations and potential overlaps[268].
4.	While the report considers only the input, the output and the stakeholders' satisfaction with the services provided when assessing the achievement of Specific Objective 5 (transparent labour	To assess the achievement of the specific objective 5 (transparent labour market information and advice), the evaluation considers first the input, the output and the number of visitors to the EURES Portal (which is the headline indicator from the EaSI Performance

[268]The target indicated in the EaSI monitoring reports and the DG EMPL Annual Management Plan was that 50% of beneficiaries that developed a business with EU microfinance support should be unemployed or belonging to vulnerable groups. Given data limitations explained in Section 4.1.10 (not all social data available and some individuals potentially counted in several categories), it is not possible to conclude mathematically on the reaching (or not) of the target fixed.

No.	Board's recommendations	Modifications
	market information), it should also evaluate the impact based on the number of additional recruitments. While the report shows a decreasing trend of the number of monthly visitors to the EURES Portal it should explain why it could be "a positive sign of improved employment rates and labour conditions".	Measurement System for this specific objective). The number of placements is the headline indicator associated with the fourth general objective ("high quality and inclusive EU labour markets that are open and accessible to all) and was analysed in Section 4.1.10. This general objective benefitted both from actions aiming at ensuring transparent labour market information (Section 4.1.5) and from the provision of job-matching services to employers and jobseekers (Section 4.1.6). While the specific objective 5 was moderately effective, the evaluation shows the EaSI effectiveness in achieving the specific objective 6 (upward trend in the headline indicator 'number of contacts between EURES advisers and jobseekers/employers). EaSI Performance Measurement System reported data on the number of placements facilitated only in aggregate, including those facilitated by the EURES Portal and those facilitated through personal contacts of jobseekers/employers with EURES advisers staff. The increase in this headline indicator corroborated with the findings resulting from Sections 4.1.5 and 4.1.6 allow to conclude that EaSI was effective in achieving the fourth general objective (see revised Section 4.1.10).
5.	The report should explain how specific targets were set and present all of them if some are missing. It should provide clarity on which targets are used where and how in analysing effectiveness and efficiency. There should be a thorough explanation of whether and how indicators based on a small number of stakeholders' opinions can be considered representative.	The revised report clarified how the points of comparison were established and double-checked their consistent application across the overall effectiveness and efficiency analysis (Section 4.1). The evaluation used as points of comparison the values of the headline indicators estimated in 2014 for most activities, excepting for the support to social entrepreneurship (specific objective 8) and to build capacity building of microcredit providers (specific objective 9). For these new activities initiated under EaSI - as well as for EPMF - there was initially no data to establish a point of comparison at their starting. To mitigate this caveat, instead using the value '0' as point of comparison, the evaluation used the targets provided in the respective EPMF and EaSI *ex ante* evaluation for the specific objective 7 as well. This was possible because the these targets were associated with the headline indicators for the support provided to microfinance (EPMF and EaSI) and social entrepreneurship (only EaSI) established in the EaSI Performance Measurement System. Do note that for the support to microfinance, an alternative was to compare the values through EaSI (2020) with the values through EPMF (2014). Nevertheless, for sake of consistency, the evaluation used the available targets from the respective *ex ante* evaluation for all three specific objectives related to microfinance and social entrepreneurship. As regards the fifth general objective, the evaluation provides the target included in the EaSI Performance Measurement System (i.e. 50% of beneficiaries supported by the EaSI financial instruments to be unemployed or belonging to vulnerable groups). However, the value of this headline indicator was not measured directly, but through monitoring the coverage of vulnerable groups by EU-enabled microcredits (see discussion of findings and data limitations in point 3 above and Section 4.1.10).

No.	Board's recommendations	Modifications
		Data to feed the headline indicators were collected in 2014 - 2020 during the monitoring process through the EaSI Stakeholders' Survey, the EURES public sources (Job Mobility Portal, EURES Advisors Reports) and the reports submitted by the EIF. The EaSI Stakeholders' Survey - disseminated in 2014, 2017, 2019 and 2021 - notably collected data to feed the PROGRESS axis related indicators. Given that the entire population affected by EaSI was not known, a non-probability sampling strategy was used. This means that units were intentionally selected to represent particular aspects of groups within the general sampled population. In the case of EaSI, the survey gathered the opinions of a representative sample of different types of stakeholders at EU and national level, including: 1) policy and decision-makers; 2) civil society organisations, including social partner organisations; and 3) other relevant participants and stakeholders involved in the programme design and implementation. Each of the three groups constituted a separate stratum, i.e. a separate group or sub-group of the population from which it was attempted to receive a sufficient number of survey responses. The survey was continued until a sufficient number of responses were received in each stratum. More details on the EaSI Stakeholder Survey are provided in Annex II.5.
6.	The report should assess more thoroughly the suitability of the existing monitoring system and identify the areas for improvement.	Section 4.1.12 (analysing the monetary and non-monetary efficiency) was updated by including a complementary sub-section focusing on the EaSI Performance Measurement System. Additional information are provided in Annex II.5 (EaSI Stakeholders' Survey methodology) and Annex V.1 (coordination, planning, monitoring and evaluation). Specific information on the performance measurement indicators included in the EaSI Performance Measurement System is provided in Section 2.3 that discusses the indicators and the points of comparison. Lessons learned from the use of this monitoring system are included in Section 5 (conclusions and lessons learned).
7.	Conclusions should present adequate and relevant 'lessons learned' to inform the next programming period, also referring to improvements and changes already implemented for the current programming period. It should be based on the main issues identified in the report and all lessons learned should be discussed and substantiated in the analysis section. The report should recognise the constraints and limitations it faced in gathering evidence, and the fact that such constraints may bring caveats and nuances in the analysis.	Section 5 - reinforced with findings from the comparison of input and outcome data for different participating countries and stakeholders' groups - is structured in two parts: conclusions (providing key findings around the evaluation criteria) and lessons learned. The part on lessons learned was also restructured in two parts: the first one is dedicated to improvements already implemented in the current programming period and the second one presents lessons learned to be further addressed. Evidence's constraints and limits (introduced in Section 1.2 and discussed when appropriate in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4) are also reminded in the conclusions.
8.	The report should better discuss the coherence of EaSI with other EU programmes (such as Horizon2020, European Social Fund for social innovation, etc). It should explain whether synergies were sought or emerged and how	Section 4.1.2 was reinforced with additional evidence and restructured in three parts: internal coherence (between the three axes); coherence with ESF; and external coherence (with other EU-level funds, notably Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, Interreg, EURAXESS, COSME, InnovFin). Section 4.1.2 also explains how risks of overlap/duplication were

No.	Board's recommendations	Modifications
	the risk of overlap was addressed.	managed by different European Commission DGs. The conclusions (Section 5) are updated accordingly.
9.	Annex IV (Overview of costs and benefits) should be revised. Costs and benefits should be reported separately, specific benefits should be encoded; narrative statements on degrees of performance should be kept to a minimum and the general lack of quantification should be clearly explained and justified.	Annex IV was revised and restructured. It presents separately cost and benefits by specific groups of stakeholders, and identifies the potential for simplification and burden reduction for each axis. The three tables (PROGRESS, EURES and Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship) encode specific costs and benefits related to the activities implemented under each axis providing systematic qualitative statements and quantification when possible. Given the nature of the activities (see discussion in Section 2.3) the quantification was easier for EURES and Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axes than for PROGRESS axis. However, it was possible to quantify some costs incurred by PROGRESS axis stakeholders as well – for instance, costs in relation to grants agreements signed with the EC (consortiums' 20% contribution to the project total budget).
RSB second opinion		
1.	The report acknowledges the weaknesses in the performance measurement of PROGRESS axis and the necessity for quantitative indicators. However, the analysis should go further in explaining what quantification and further indicators are needed to assess the impact of the measures on the ground. It should analyse to what extent the specific objectives of the PROGRESS axis are SMART enough to serve as a base for an improved monitoring system to analyse the effectiveness, the efficiency and the coherence. It should explain how the proposed simplification in the ESF+ addresses the need for more suitable indicators for informing future evaluation.	The report highlights in Section 5.1 that the main weaknesses in the EaSI programme performance measurement was related to the indicators used in 2014 – 2020 to monitor the PROGRESS axis. The Section 5.2.2 was reviewed to reflect how the lessons from the monitoring of the former EaSI programme were already capitalised in the EaSI strand/ESF+ design. The EaSI strand monitoring system is now based on 5 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to report on the progress of the strand. They are completed with data collected using complementary qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a good understanding of stakeholder's perceptions and interactions.
2.	In assessing efficiency, the report should better explain how indicators based on a small number of stakeholders' opinions, are sufficiently reliable to draw conclusions. It should clarify the design and parameters of the 'cost-effectiveness' ratio for the PROGRESS axis and explain to what extent such ratio is informative in concluding on performance over time. It should clarify the maximum and minimum levels of such a ratio.	The Section 5.1 acknowledges that one of the main weaknesses in the EaSI programme performance was the the use of headline indicators based on stakeholders' satisfaction to measure the performance of activities implemented under the PROGRESS axis. They were used in the evaluation to calculate cost–effectiveness ratios allowing to identify good value for money to be identified. Despite the variations in the response rate to the Stakeholder Survey in 2014 - 2020 (between 10% - 17%), in absolute terms, the number of respondents was enough large to offer a good representativeness of views.
3	In general, answers to the evaluation questions should be balanced and linked to preceding analysis, taking into account all available evidence, in particular: • the conclusion on EPMF and EaSI's effect on economic growth and employment, does not seem	Section 5.2.1 was ammended to clarify that despite their small scale/budget, EPMF and EaSI contributed to social and economic inclusion through the support to social enterprises and specific categories of social entrepreneurs. Sections 4.1.10 and 5.1.1 were ammended to better reflect the limitations of evidence and alternative interpretation when formulating findings related effectiveness of microfinance related activities and in achieving the

No.	Board's recommendations	Modifications
	substantiated by the preceding analysis; • the conclusion that EPMF was "highly" effective in increasing the availability of microfinance (including for women and the unemployed) does not seem to account for the uncertainty in the evidence of whether the 50% target was reached, due to data limitations and potential overlaps; it should also address the evidence pointing to potential decrease in access over time for these two categories; • the conclusion on the effectiveness of the general objective on 'high quality and inclusive EU labour markets' needs to address the evidence, which could equally lend itself to alternative readings of the data, such as large decreases of the share of placements resulting from all contacts.	objective 'high quality and inclusive EU labour markets'.
4.	The report should ensure that all identified weaknesses are followed up by corresponding lessons learned, and equally that all lessons learned follow logically from the preceding analysis. In particular, although the report: • indicates that the flexibility clause, permitting to adjust funding among axes was in practice inefficient given the important (potential) administrative burden generated to operate these changes, there is no discussion in the lessons learned on this finding; • highlights the utility of an easy-to-use tool allowing stakeholders to have an overview of all programmes and opportunities available at EU level, this is not reflected in the lessons learned; • concludes that the evidence presented indicates that the budgets planned for the remaining programme's activities were appropriate, it still suggests as an area for improvement the provision of additional funding for social experimentation to achieve their expected impacts.	The report was adapted (Section 5.1.1) to clarify the lessons learned related to the flexibility clause (Article 33 of the initial EaSI Regulation) and to highlight the utility of the Funding and Tenders Portal. It also clarifies that the former EaSI programme funding was sufficient to achieve its objectives, while additional funding would be necessary for new/future activities (for instance to allow proven social experimentations to be up-scaled and/or transffered to other actors or contexts, to facilitate the social enterprises growth as well as to adress new social, environmental and digital challenges).

No.	Board's recommendations	Modifications
5.	The parameters for some qualitative judgements accompanying or substituting quantification in Annex IV (Overview of costs and benefits) are not explained, and sometimes do not appear in line with the analysis and the answers to the evaluation questions in the report. They should be reassessed to ensure that they reflect the underpinning evidence and previous analysis (for example cases where effectiveness was found to be "moderate"). In particular: • the analysis is unclear whether qualifying the magnitude of benefits for certain areas of the intervention is based only on outputs such as number of analytical documents, mutual learning events etc. and whether is the parameter to justify the qualitative assessment of the benefit as "high"; • the qualitative assessment of EPMF's burden reduction achievement needs to address findings in the report on impacts on the efficiency due to administrative burden in the projects' application, award, and implementation stages in cases of using the EFSI guarantee, in particular for small organisations and some EU-level NGO networks.	Annex IV was reviewed to align qualitative judgements to reflect the evidence and previous analysis, notably in cases where effectiveness was found to be "high" or "moderate".

Source: DG EMPL

ANNEX II. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL MODELS USED

This annex provides an overview - complementary to Section 1.2 - of the methodology adopted to carry out this *ex post* evaluation. It details data collection methods and tools used, as well as the limitations to the reliability of information used to develop findings.

II.1 Intervention logic

The evaluation design relies on a combined intervention logic (see Figure 1 in Section 2.2) that ensured that the two programmes were evaluated according to the outputs, outcomes, results and impacts which they intended to reach, as well as the transparency and the rigorousness of the evaluation design. The main elements of the intervention logic are identified alongside the three following building blocks:

II.1.1 The needs of the target groups in an evolving context

The main **needs** identified in the EaSI programme's preparatory work (i.e. EaSI *ex ante* evaluation and ESF impact assessment in Section 2.1) pinpointed to insufficiency of EU-wide definitions of/and comparable indicators; lack of data for evidence-based policymaking; lack of coordination at EU level due to fragmentation of related efforts and resources. The EaSI/PSCI *ex ante* analysis also highlighted the need for robust impact evaluation methodologies to better exploit projects results' potential in policy making, notably for replication of the tested interventions (social experimentations). Aside, the needs for enhanced voluntary labour mobility, and for support to microfinance and social entrepreneurship across Europe were also identified.

The **target groups**[269] identified for the **PROGRESS axis** (but not exclusively, given that PROGRESS' activities benefitted to the remaining axes) include:

- public authorities and public bodies;
- social partners;
- EU-level NGO networks;
- civil society organisations/foundations;
- universities/research institutes;
- not-for-profit enterprises;
- private enterprises.

The target groups identified for the **EURES axis** activities include:

- employers;
- jobseekers[270].

The target groups identified for **Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis/EPMF** are:

- microcredit providers (private or public banks, non-bank microfinance institutions and not-for-profit microcredit providers);
- final beneficiaries (micro-enterprises, vulnerable people, social enterprises).

[269]The target groups include persons, groups and organisations who need the support, services and information identified above. The term stakeholders - used often in this document - have a wider scope, including other groups involved directly or indirectly in the interventions' governance or implementation or having an interest in the interventions (see Annex V for more information on the stakeholders' consultation).

[270]This category includes in particular the young people as being more at risk of long-term unemployment, and more subject to mobility than other age categories.

The second category includes micro-enterprises and people wanting to become self-employers or to develop their own business and facing difficulties in accessing bank loans, in particular unemployed people or people from disadvantaged groups[271]. It also includes social enterprises that needed better access to funding for development and consolidation of their activities in order to achieve their social impact were also targeted. In order to reach out to the final beneficiaries, the EaSI and EPMF programmes incentivised microcredit providers (private or public banks, non-bank microfinance institutions and not-for-profit microcredit providers) to provide microloans to persons and micro-enterprises by covering part of their risks and by providing them with liquidity as well as with institutional capacity building.

EPMF had similar targets groups as the EaSI microfinance branch given that it was designed to address the lack of access to finance, especially for disadvantaged groups such as women, unemployed, young people or migrants having difficulties securing traditional bank loans, identified as being one of the main obstacles preventing individuals to start their own business (see Section 2.1.2).

The EaSI and EPMF target groups' needs were considered in the light of the 2010 - 2020 evolving policy and **socio-economic context** related employment and social challenges, including Brexit, refugee crisis, COVID-19 pandemic, and the twin green and digital transitions.

In terms of EU **policy context**, EaSI was first expected to contribute to Europe 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth that steered the EaSI management and topical direction (annual programming, funding, monitoring system), implementation (activities and events) and results (performance and evaluation), notably in the 2014 - 2017 period. As of 2018, the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) became the overall political priority underpinning the EaSI activities for the years to come. The adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 Agenda in 2015 provided a new framework for the international development. Therefore, the impacts of the two programmes were also considered in the light of the potential linkages between their objectives and the relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

In terms of **coherence/complementarities** with other EU-level programmes, EaSI was first expected to be complementary with ESF, but consistency with other EU programmes such as the Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, Interreg, EURAXESS, COSME and InnovFin was also considered when assessing EaSI impacts.

II.1.2 Inputs and outputs

The **inputs**[272] covered the resources that were mobilised for the implementation of the programmes. The budget allocated to the EaSI programme was EUR 919 million. A global financial envelope of EUR 203 million was available for the implementation of the EPMF (EUR 103 million from the EU budget and EUR 100 million from the EIB). These inputs were converted into outputs using different procedures for delivering financial support (see details in Annex VI.1).

EaSI was implemented on the basis of annual work programmes. It was coordinated by the DG EMPL's 'Budget and planning cycle' unit, assisted by the DG EMPL EaSI coordinators

[271]The EPMF Decision (Article 2) defined them more explicitly as being "persons who want to start or develop further their own microenterprise; who have lost or at risk of losing their job; have difficulties re-entering the labour market; are facing the threat of social exclusion; are vulnerable persons in a disadvantaged position with regard to access to the conventional credit market".

[272]See Section 3 complemented with Annex VI.

(composed by representatives from the operational units implementing the programme) and the EaSI Committee (composed by Member States representatives). The EPMF was monitored via annual implementation reports issued under the global mandate entrusted by the Commission to the EIF.

The **outputs** included the activities[273] (Table 1 in Section 2.2. and Table 28 below) implemented with the inputs allocated. They covered analytical activities; social experimentation; mutual learning, awareness and dissemination activities; capacity building activities; information, counselling, placement and recruitment services for cross-border workers; development of a multilingual digital platform for job vacancies and applications; financial instruments and grants to support microfinance and social enterprises ecosystems.

Table 28. Classification of outputs by types of EaSI-funded activities

Type of activities	Outputs
Policy evidence / analytical activities	Data and statistics
	Common methodologies, classifications, micro-simulations, indicators and benchmarks
	Surveys, studies, analyses and reports, including through the funding of networks of experts and development of expertise in thematic sections
	Qualitative and quantitative evaluations and impact assessments carried out by both public and private bodies
	Monitoring and assessment of the transposition and application of Union law
	Preparation and implementation of social policy experimentation as a method for testing and evaluating innovative solutions with a view to up-scaling them
	Dissemination of the results of analytical activities
Mutual learning, awareness and dissemination activities	Exchanges and dissemination of good practice, innovative approaches and experience, peer reviews, benchmarking, and mutual learning at European level
	Council Presidency events, conferences, and seminars
	Training of legal and policy practitioners
	Drafting and publication of guides, reports and educational material and measures relating to information, communication and media coverage of initiatives supported by the Programme
	Information and communication activities
	Development and maintenance of information systems to exchange and disseminate information on union policy and legislation and on the labour market
Support for main actors	Covering operating costs of key Union-level networks, the activities of which relate to and contribute to the objectives of the Progress axis
	Capacity building of national administrations and specialist services responsible for promoting geographical mobility designated by the Member States and microcredit providers
	Organisation of working groups of national officials to monitor the implementation of Union law
	Networking and cooperation among specialist bodies and other relevant stakeholders, national, regional, and local authorities and employment services at European level
	Funding of European-level observatories, including on key thematic sections
	Exchange of personnel between national administrations
EURES – cross-border partnerships	Development and the activities of EURES cross-border partnerships when requested by services territorially responsible for border regions (action grants)
EURES – counselling, placement, and recruitment services	Provision of information, counselling, placement, and recruitment services for cross-border workers
EURES – platform for job vacancies	Development of the multilingual digital platform for the clearance of job vacancies and applications
EURES – targeted mobility schemes	Development of targeted mobility schemes, following calls for proposals, to fill job vacancies where labour market shortcomings have been identified
EURES – mutual learning and	Mutual learning among EURES actors and training of EURES advisors, including

[273]The types of actions are defined in Article 16 (PROGRESS), Article 21 (EURES) and Article 27 (Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship) of the EaSI Regulation.

Type of activities	Outputs
training	EURES cross-border partnerships advisors
EURES – information and communication activities	Information and communication activities to raise awareness of the benefits of geographical and occupational mobility in general and of the activities and services provided by EURES
MF/SE – support to microfinance intermediaries	Guarantees, counter-guarantees and funded instruments (debt and equity)
MF/SE – support to social enterprises	Guarantees, counter-guarantees, grants, funded instruments (debt and equity)
MF/SE – institutional capacity building	Building institutional capacity of microfinance intermediaries and investors in social enterprises

Source: Rapport updating the EaSI baseline situation (2016), page 13.

As regards EPMF[274], the types of eligible actions were guarantees and risk-sharing instruments; equity instruments; debt instruments; support measures, such as communication activities, monitoring, control, audit and evaluation. Two out of the the three financial instruments implemented under the EaSI third axis built on the EPMF instruments experience; for this reason the EPMF types of actions were merged with those of the EaSI Microfinance branch in the intervention logic.

II.1.3 Outcomes and impacts

The EaSI Regulation defined nine specific objectives contributing to the achievement of the five general objectives (see Figure 1 and Table 1 in Section 2.2 and Figure 14 below). The EaSI Regulation design is based on necessary links between the specific objectives and general objectives (see Section 4.1.10 and Table 29 below). In other words, it was expected that the activities implemented to achieve the specific objectives will contribute to the achievement of the general objectives (results) and ultimately of the global objectives (impacts).

In pursuing these objectives, in all its axes and actions, EaSI also aimed to take into account the following **horizontal principles**[275]: pay particular attention to vulnerable groups, such as young people; promote equality between women and men; combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability or sexual orientation; promote a high level of quality and sustainable employment, guarantee adequate and decent social protection, combat long-term unemployment and fight against poverty and social exclusion. Similar horizontal principles are incorporated in EPMF general objectives.

The EaSI third axis and EPMF specific and general objectives (defined in Article 2 of the EPMF Decision) were quasi identical and for this reason merged in the intervention logic. The EaSI third axis was indeed intended as a continuation of EPMF (Microfinance branch), although it widened its scope to support the development of the social investment market and facilitate access to finance for social enterprises (Social Entrepreneurship branch).

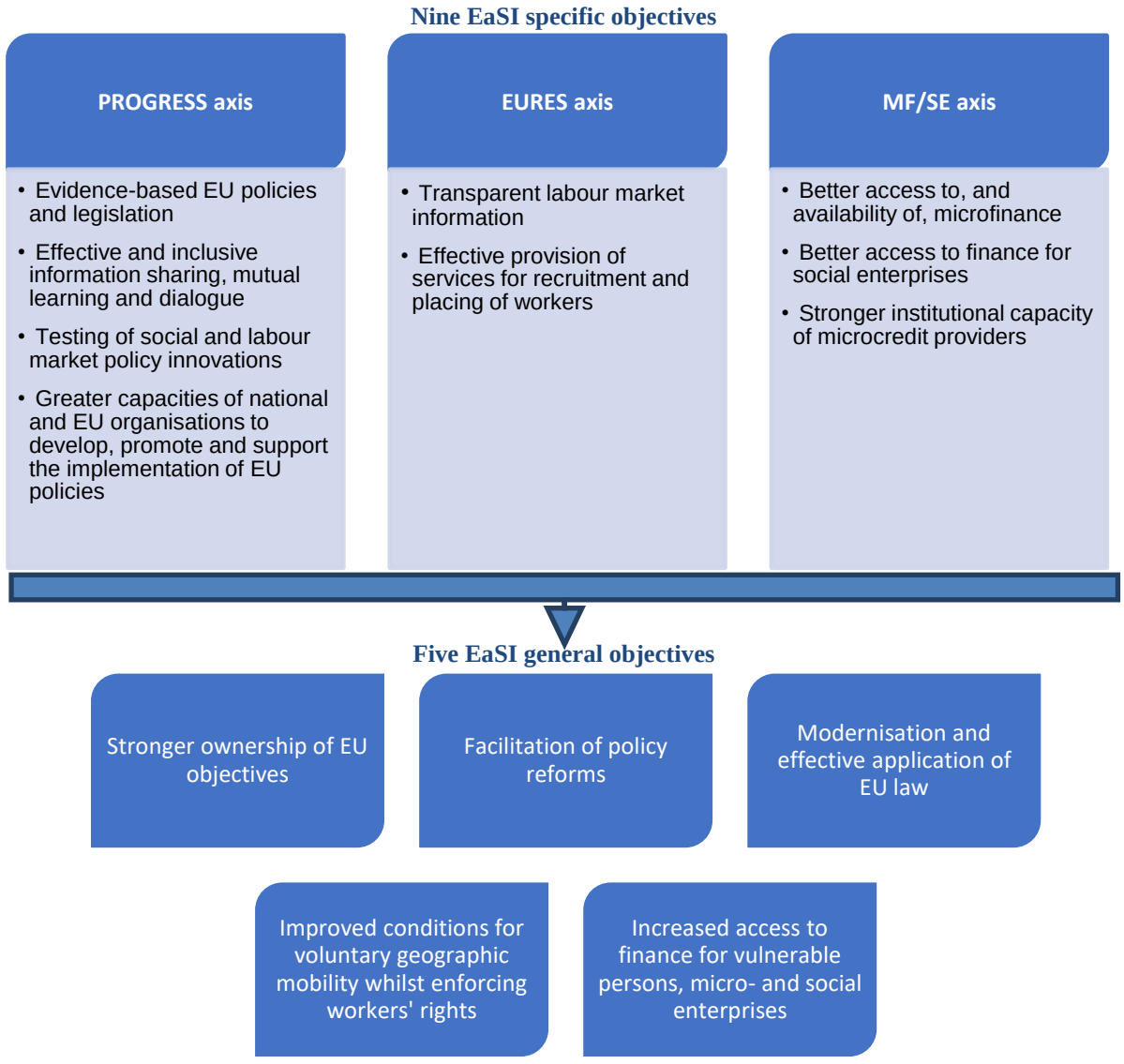
The (expected) outcomes and impacts of both programmes (see Figure 1 in Section 2.2) responded to the initial needs (Section 2.1 and Annex II.1.1) and mobilised resources for delivering the (expected) outputs, contributing to achieve the specific, general and/or global objectives of the two funds. These aspects of the evaluation are further developed in Sections 3 and 4. The outcomes - including the positive/negative and expected/unexpected ones - reflect the results of the programmes for the target groups concerned, while the impacts describe the programmes' ultimate expected effects on society and individuals. The

[274]Defined in Article 4 of the EPMF Decision.

[275]The general objectives are defined in Article 4(1) and the horizontal principles are defined in Article 4(2). The specific objectives are defined in Article 15 (PROGRESS), Article 20 (EURES) and Article 26 (Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship).

combined EaSI/EPMF impacts look at the higher-level (intended or unintended) effects expected alongside the programmes' global objectives (as per Article 1 of the EaSI Regulation and Article 2 of the EPMF Decision), respectively "promote a high level of quality and sustainable employment, guarantee adequate and decent social protection, combat social exclusion and poverty, and improve working conditions (EaSI) and increase access to, and availability of, microfinance to microenterprises and to particular at-risk groups (EPMF)".

Figure 14: EaSI specific and general objectives



Source: DG EMPL, based on EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020.

II.1.4 An expected effects approach

Table 29 below maps the links between objectives and the related performance expectations/hypotheses. This causal chain was reflected in the the analytical part (Section 4), which was structured alongside the specific objectives. Section 5 presents the conclusions and the lessons learned by (re)focusing on the general and global objectives.

General objective 1: stronger ownership of EU objectives

In order to produce concrete, coordinated and innovative actions and to implement them, policy-makers at all levels should agree on common EU objectives in the social and employment fields, and be willing to take action to implement them. Ownership of objectives implies not only a good (shared) understanding of those objectives, but also readiness to act in order to achieve them.

Improved shared understanding and stronger ownership requires timely collection and analysis of relevant/accurate evidence and policy advice capable of withstanding detailed scrutiny and rallying EU-wide support (specific objective 1). It also requires organisation of peer reviews, mutual learning activities and other types of events (specific objective 2), responding to the needs and expectations of EU/national policy-makers and stakeholders. It is also important that the process in which EU objectives are defined is inclusive, i.e. social partners, civil society organisations and all other relevant public and private bodies are involved. Such organisations must also possess a capacity to transmit the views of the societal groups that they represent (specific objective 4).

General objective 2: facilitation of policy reforms, convergence and capacities for social innovation and mutual learning

Innovative actions are needed in order to provide solutions for challenges that the EU is facing. High unemployment rates, increasingly fragmented labour markets, shrinking workforce and increasing pressure on social protection systems as well as the increase in the number of people living in poverty and social exclusion are problems which need tailor-made policy answers. It was expected that improved capacities of the participating countries to implement social innovations (specific objective 3) would contribute to developing adequate social protection systems and labour markets, and to facilitating policy reforms.

Moreover, it is important that the relevant knowledge and expertise gained through social policy experimentation activities are available and easily accessible, so that the participating countries can apply the new policy interventions, which prove to be the most effective, as widely as possible. This was mainly being achieved through information sharing and mutual learning, but also via dissemination of the relevant policy evidence supported by EaSI (specific objective 2). Achievement of this goal also depended on the capacities of the main actors to carry out social experimentations in order to develop innovative solutions (specific objective 4).

General objective 3: modernisation and effective application of EU law

EaSI supported monitoring, effective application and enforcement of EU legislation in the fields of employment, social protection and social inclusion and, especially, working conditions (labour law and health and safety at work). While the primary aim of EaSI in this regard was to ensure that the EU law is effectively applied, actions funded by the programme also sought to improve its quality. This implied necessary improvements in specific areas, such as guaranteeing administrative capacity, screening domestic rules and procedures, a systematic discussion between relevant authorities across the EU, *ex post* evaluations and accountability of national administrations towards their counterpart authorities in other participating countries, supporting networks of public authorities and NGOs and assessment

of their performance identification, spread of best practices, as well as extension of training programmes for public administrations. A number of these outputs were funded by EaSI under the first three immediate outcomes related to producing evidence (specific objective 1), sharing information (specific objective 2) and improving capacity of EU organisations (specific objective 4).

General objective 4: high quality and inclusive EU labour markets that are open and accessible to all

Free movement of workers is one of the four freedoms established in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). One of the ideas behind Articles 45 and 46 of TFEU was to enable workers from Member States with a high level of unemployment to move to other states where there is a demand for jobs, i.e. geographical labour mobility should contribute to promoting a high level of quality and sustainable employment throughout Europe. However, geographical labour mobility in Europe is limited due to a number of obstacles. Aside from uncertainty over the advantages of being mobile, individuals face a number of other hurdles to free movement. These can consist in legal and administrative obstacles, housing costs and availability, employment of partners, portability of pensions, linguistic barriers, issues related to the transparency of job vacancies, and missing support from the employment services for matching CVs with job offers.

EURES axis outputs such as European Job Mobility Portal (specific objective 5), cross-border partnerships, targeted mobility schemes and a network of EURES advisers (specific objective 6) supported the EaSI's third general objective. This objective was also supported supported by actions funded under PROGRESS such as production of evidence (specific objective 1) and information sharing and mutual learning (specific objective 2). projects and organisations all contribute to this intermediate outcome.

General objective 5: increased access to finance for vulnerable persons, micro- and social enterprises

A significant share of new jobs in the EU is created by newly established firms and micro-enterprises. Access to finance remains one of the most important problems faced by business starters across Europe, in particular those established by vulnerable groups of people. In order to contribute to these objectives, EaSI and EPMF aimed to increase access to finance for vulnerable persons as well as micro- and social enterprises through provision of support to microcredit providers (specific objective 7) and investors in social enterprises (specific objective 8) in the form of guarantees, funded instruments, equity, quasi-equity as well as of support for capacity building of microcredit intermediaries (specific objective 9).

The achievement of this goal was also supported by activities funded under the PROGRESS axis, namely, policy evidence produced in the areas of microfinance and social entrepreneurship (specific objective 1), information sharing and mutual learning activities in the latter thematic areas (specific objective 2) as well as support for the main actors operating in the field (specific objective 4).

Table 29. Specific objectives contribution to the achievement of the general objectives

Nine specific objectives	Four horizontal principles	Five general objectives	Specific objectives contribution to general objectives
Specific objective 1: evidence based EU policy and legislation **Specific objective 2**: effective and inclusive information sharing, mutual learning and dialogue **Specific objective 3:** testing social and labour market policy innovations	**Pay particular attention to vulnerable groups; promote equality between men and women; combat discrimination; promote sustainable employment**	**Stronger ownership of EU objectives** • Member States' policy choices and priorities as defined in the national strategic and other official documents (especially as a part of the European Semester) duly take into account EU objectives. • Stakeholders are aware of the EU priorities in the field of employment and social affairs and relevance of the EU actions in addressing the socio-economic challenges/advancing selected policy areas. • Horizontal issues, such as gender equality, non-discrimination and inclusion of vulnerable groups, are regularly taken into account when designing policies in the field of employment and social affairs both on EU and Member States levels.	The achievement of this general objective depended mainly on the availability of comparable policy evidence (specific objective 1) effective information sharing, mutual learning and dialogue (specific objective 3) as well as on the capacities of national and EU organisations to advocate for common actions and to support policy implementation (specific objective 4).
Specific objective 4: greater capacity of national and EU organisations to develop, promote and support the implementation of EU policies **Specific objective 5**: transparent labour market information **Specific objective 6:** effective provision of services for recruitment and placing of workers		**Facilitation of policy reforms, convergence and capacities for social innovation and mutual learning** • Learning among the EU Member States is enhanced. • EaSI-funded policy innovations contribute to facilitation of policy reforms.	The achievement of this general objective depended mainly on creating better conditions for social innovations (specific objective 3) and on the stakeholders' capacities to carry out social policy experimentations (specific objective 4). Moreover, relevant knowledge/expertise gained through social policy experimentation activities should be available and easily accessible. This will be mainly achieved through information sharing and mutual learning (specific objective 2), but also via dissemination of the relevant policy evidence (specific objective 1).
Specific objective 7[276]: better access to, and availability of microfinance **Specific objective 8:** Better access to finance for social enterprises **Specific objective 9**:		**Modernisation and effective application of EU law** • Legal proposals and the new legislation are of high quality, i.e. implementation and interpretation of rules are clear for public authorities, citizens and businesses, legislation responds to, inter alia, the emergence of new risks for human health and safety in the workplace, and unnecessary administrative burden is reduced; • EU law in the areas of a) labour law and b) health and safety at work is correctly	The achievement of this general objective implies improvements in administrative capacity, screening domestic rules and procedures (specific objective 1), a systematic dialogue between relevant authorities across the EU and dissemination of good practices (specific objective 2) and supporting networks of public authorities and

[276]This specific objective is common to EaSI and EPMF and considered as such across the evaluation.

Nine specific objectives	Four horizontal principles	Five general objectives	Specific objectives contribution to general objectives
build up the institutional capacity of the microcredit providers		transposed into national law and effectively applied by the Member States; • The European Commission acts as an effective and efficient guardian of the EU law, effectively monitoring its transposition and implementation in all Member States.	NGOs (specific objective 4).
		High quality and inclusive EU labour markets open and accessible to all • Adequate information, advice and services are available for workers and employers wishing to benefit from the principle of the free movement of workers; • EU citizens are aware of their rights (such as how they can benefit from EU social security coordination rules while moving within Europe), which are being defended and promoted.	The achievement of this general objective implied ensuring that job vacancies, applications, and corresponding information and advice, are transparent for the potential applicants and the employers (specific objective 5) and supporting the provision of services for the recruitment and placing of workers (specific objective 6). Producing relevant evidence (specific objective 1), organising information sharing and mutual learning activities (2) and building capacity of the key national and EU organisations working in the field of labour mobility (specific objective 4) also contributed.
		Increased access to finance for vulnerable persons, micro- and social enterprises • Beneficiaries who are unemployed or belong to the vulnerable groups are being reached by programme-supported funding mechanisms; • Unemployed and otherwise socially and economically vulnerable persons are able to create or further develop their businesses as a result of the Programme support; • Impact of the EU microfinance and social entrepreneurship support is sustainable, i.e. the supported enterprises are economically active for unlimited duration after receiving the EU support; • Access to finance for social enterprises is increasing.	This general objective was expected to be achieved through provision of support to microcredit providers and investors in social enterprises in the form of guarantees, funded instruments, equity, quasi-equity (specific objective 8) as well as support for capacity building (specific objective 9). Its achievement was also supported by policy evidence produced in the areas of microfinance and social entrepreneurship (specific objective 1), information sharing and mutual learning activities (specific objective 2) as well as support for the main actors operating in the field (specific objective 3).

Source: DG EMPL, based on the EaSI and EPMF legal bases, EaSI and EPMF ex ante evaluations, and EaSI monitoring reports.

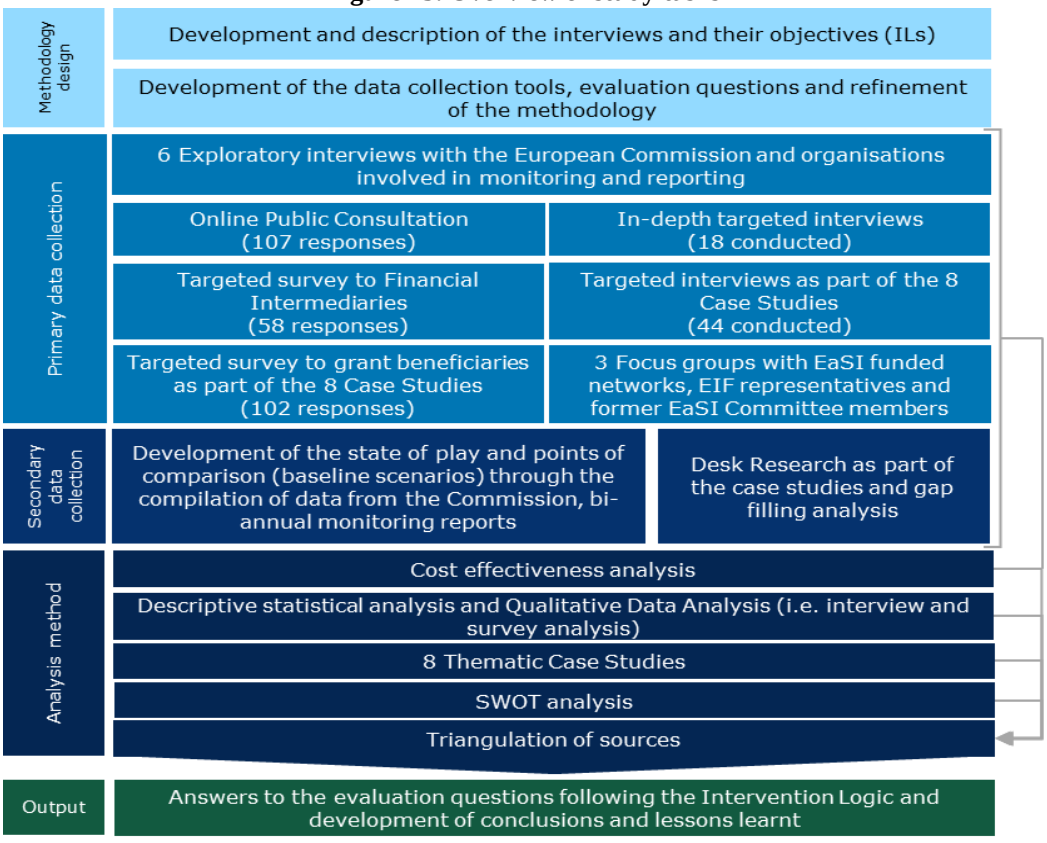
II.2 Methods and tools

This Staff Working Document builds on data collected and findings obtained during the study carried out by external experts (Ramboll, Seor and Tetra Tech) combined with additional evidence gathered from programme monitoring reports, evaluations, studies, and from the EESC contribution to this evaluation. The evaluation of the EaSI Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis was - as regards its financial instruments implemented under the EaSI Microfinance branch - grouped with that of its predecessor EPMF (see Section 2.2 and Annex II.1). The evaluation of the EURES axis made use of the results of the EURES Regulation *ex post* evaluation, while the evaluation of the PROGRESS axis made use of the INOVA+ study on social experimentation projects.

II.2.1 External supporting study

The external supporting study provided an evidence-based assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value of EaSI and EPMF. A combined intervention logic was designed for the purpose of the joint evaluation of the two programmes (see Section 2.2 and Annex II.1). The findings of the supporting study were structured along the type of actions/activities funded within the three EaSI axes (including the EPMF, linked to the EaSI specific objective 7). Figure 15 below presents an overview of the study's tasks sequencing.

Figure 15. Overview of study tasks



Source: Evaluation supporting study.

The following sections provide an overview of the methods used in the supporting study.

Study desk-based research (secondary data collection)

A wide range of documents have been collected and reviewed to provide an understanding of the existing literature on EaSI and EPMF. They came from internal and external sources such as existing evaluations, monitoring reports, related websites, regulations and communications from the EU, studies and brochures.

This variety of documents helped building an overall framework to understand the different dimensions of EaSI and EPMF ranging from the technical procedures to the policy aspects. The desks research made it possible to draw a global snapshot of the evaluation tasks and to build hypotheses, which were addressed in more depth during the evaluative work. A comprehensive documentation mapping is available in the Annex 7 to the supporting study.

Study fieldwork activities (primary data collection)

This task comprised the stakeholder consultations activities conducted for the evaluation. Despite challenges experienced during the data collection (see Section 1.2), a broad range of stakeholders were ultimately reached through the various consultation activities, covering a wide geographical scope, showing views of all stakeholder groups directly affected by the programme and/or having an interest in (see Annex V). The consultation activities are summarised below and analysed in the stakeholders' consultation synopsis report (Annex V). Detailed results are available in the technical annexes of the supporting study.

Online public consultation

The online public consultation sought to gather general insights on the performance of EaSI and EPMF as well as specific insights from the beneficiaries and stakeholders familiar with them. It was launched on 5th October 2021 and remained open until 28th December 2021. The questionnaire - including closed and open questions - was published by the Commission on EUROPA 'Have your say' dedicated consultation page. A total of 107 responses were received. The factual summary report can be consulted here.

Survey of the EaSI beneficiaries

The scope of the survey, albeit limited, enabled the study team to gather additional insights. It reached beneficiaries in 23 EU Member States and 5 third countries. To avoid survey fatigue, the survey did not cover all the evaluation criteria as the online public consultation included both general and targeted questions. The questionnaire - including open and closed questions - was sent out to 275 grant beneficiaries (many of them were beneficiaries of several EaSI grants) on 19 September 2021 and remained open until 19 October 2021. A total of 102 grant beneficiaries provided responses. In the analysis, only completed responses (90 in total) were taken into consideration.

Online survey of financial intermediaries

The online survey to financial intermediaries beneficiaries of EPMF and of EaSI was launched on 19 August 2021 and remained open until 27 September 2021. Among the microfinance intermediaries contacted by the EIF, 58 agreed to be surveyed. In the analysis, only completed responses (99 in total) were taken into consideration.

Semi-structured interviews

The interviews were carried out between April 2021 and January 2022 totalling 46 interviews including with Commission officials and with external stakeholders. A total of 14 interviews were conducted by the study team with European Commission officials (11 in DG EMPL and 3 in other DGs); they included 4 exploratory interviews conducted during the study's inception stage (April - May 2021). A number of 32 interviews were carried out -

mainly in the framework of the case studies - with stakeholders such as representative of EU-level NGO networks, EaSI Committee, EIF, EESC and programmes' beneficiaries.

Focus groups with the EU-level NGO networks

This focus group took place on 9 December 2021and brought together 10 participants. It consisted of two parts: one covering general questions about the networks' satisfaction with EaSI, making use of a live audience polling tool; and one covering more detailed questions discussed in two breakout groups. Participants received a list of topics before the meeting.

Focus group with former EaSI Committee members

This focus group took place on the 8th March 2021 with a dual purpose of gathering data/filling gaps and validating the suporting study preliminary findings. It brought together three former EaSI Committee members representing Latvia, Lithuania and Spain, and one observer representing Montenegro.

Focus group with EIF officials

This focus group took place on 10 March 2021. Its purpose was to gain a deeper understanding of issues raised during the interviews with the EIF officials, to fill identified gaps and to check the preliminary findings. Five (5) EIF officials involved in the implementation of EPMF and the EaSI third axis participated: a policy officer, an audit coordination officer, a senior member of the Microfinace team, and the director of the EPMF Financial Inclusion and Coordination team.

Final validation seminar

The contractor hold a seminar on 5 July 2022 in order to discuss and validate the findings of the supporting study with stakeholders involved in the consultations. Twelve (12) stakeholders representatives attended this event: 7 EU-level NGO networks, 3 from other EU bodies (EIF, EESC and EIB) and 2 EaSI beneficiaries (RIAC, a social experimentation project; and EURES-TriRegio DE-PT-CZ, a cross-border partnership). The European Commission and Ramboll team's representatives organised, participated, and animated the discussions, but they are not included in this number.

Case studies

The evaluation's eight (8) thematic case studies explored and provided additional in-depth qualitative and quantitative evidence illustrating EaSI and EPMF topical issues. Table 30 below provides an overview of the case studies' themes and rationale.

Table 30. Overview of the thematic case studies

No.	Theme	Rationale
1	**EaSI contribution to policy development**	To understand to what extent and how EaSI supported evidence-based policymaking and impacted policy change at Member State and EU level.
2	**EaSI past and future synergies and complementarities**	To uncover to what extent the 'merging' of three former programmes under the EaSI 'umbrella' in 2014 led to enhanced synergies.
3	**Integration of EaSI horizontal objectives**	To analyse how the horizontal principles were mainstreamed in the programme's activities.
4	**EaSI adaptability to new challenges and policy priorities**	To assess to what extent EaSI was able to adapt to challenges and policy priorities.
5	**EPMF quantitative effects**	To look at the quantitative effects of the EPMF on its end beneficiaries.
6	**EPMF qualitative effects**	To investigate how the increased access and availability of microfinance (through the EPMF) impacted end-beneficiaries.
7	**EaSI social entrepreneurship**	To understand the effectiveness of EaSI in improving access to financing for social enterprises.
8	**EaSI social experimentation**	To explore how effectively EaSI created the conditions for social innovation and its upscale.

Source: DG EMPL, based on the evaluation supporting study.

These case studies relied on a combination of desk-based analysis and consultations with stakeholders (summarised above and detailed in Annex V). The EaSI grants beneficiaries' survey helped to identify relevant projects to be included in the case studies and gathered data on specific topics (for instance on '*EaSI flexiblity to adapt*' and '*Integration of EaSI horizontal objectives*' in the actions implemented).

II.2.2 EESC contribution

A complementary source of information was the EESC information report. The main findings are summarised in Annex V. Given that the EESC proposal to contribute to the current *ex post* evaluation came during the interim phase of the supporting study, the Commission and the EESC evaluation teams agreed to focus on gaps identified at that stage. Therefore, the EESC report reflects in particular the views of the stakeholders on the coherence, effectiveness and inclusiveness of the EaSI programme, especially compared to other EU and national initiatives/programmes. The EESC's contribution is based on consultations with civil society organisations representing employers, workers and associations of various interests, as well as public authorities in five selected EU countries (Austria, France, Hungary, Italy and Lithuania). The views of civil society organisations and of public authorities were collected through two channels: five virtual fact-finding 'visits' in the selected countries and a targeted (to civil society organisations) online questionnaire.

Virtual fact-finding meetings

The virtual fact-finding meetings included semi-structured interviews with local civil society organisations and representatives of public authorities, generally following the thematic structure of the questionnaire. They took place via the Interactio online platform. The sample of Member States was selected by the EESC study group based on criteria adopted by the EESC evaluation team on 22 January 2019. The European Commission was also consulted in written. The countries were selected based on: 'political spread' (for instance high/low level of implementation, application success rates, most/least affected by the legislative proposal/programme, etc.); and 'geographical spread' (by considering five geographical groups and choosing one Member State from each group). The countries selected are: Hungary (9 March 2022), Lithuania (18 March 2022), Italy (21 March 2022), France (25 March 2022) and Austria (30 March 2022). During the fact-finding 'visits', the EESC consulted in total 53 representatives of civil society organisations and public authorities.

Online questionnaire

The aim of the EESC questionnaire was to complement the information obtained from the fact-finding meetings. The dedicated questionnaire elaborated 29 questions using a combination of question formats (filter questions, closed single/multiple choice and open-ended questions, grids). The European Commission was also consulted in written. The survey was available on the EU Survey portal from 9 March to 4 April 2022 to organisations in the 5 Member States selected for the fact-finding meetings. It was open to not only for the stakeholders participating in the virtual meetings, but also to other organisations. A total of 33 contributions were collected, including 6 representatives of the business sector, 12 representatives of workers' organisations and 15 representatives of various interests' stakeholders. Regarding the origin of the respondents, 12% originated from Austria, 15% from France, 40% from Italy, 21% from Lithuania and 12% from Hungary. Regarding the types of organisations, 18% of responses came from business sector representatives, 36% from workers' organisations and 46% from associations of various interests.

II.3 Financial data robustness

The key challenges related to data robustness are presented in Section 1.2 of this Staff Working Document. Annex II.3 provides a complementary methodological discussion on financial data limitations and explains the mitigation measures undertaken.

The main source for financial data was the FINAP system, the tool used by DG EMPL to program/monitor the activities implemented under direct and indirect management modes. This tool includes detailed breakdowns of indicative amounts allocated to given activities, considering one call for proposal as a single action, even if it resulted in the award of several action grants, which made it difficult to compare costs at the level of individual activities and outputs. Moreover, a lack of consistent/comparable data spanning the full evaluation period (2014 - 2020) hindered an accurate analysis at individual activities/outputs level.

When comparing the FINAP data to data from the Commission's Accrual-based Accounting (ABAC) system, they perfectly match for the years 2018 - 2020, but some differences were observed for the years 2014 - 2017. This is due to the fact that the FINAP system was launched in 2015 and continuously developed/adjusted by end of 2017 when it was considered as stabilised. Due to start-up problems/successive adjustments, data were not properly reported in the system for the 2014 - 2017 period. Moreover, the FINAP system does not allow any changes to previous years, and tracking down every activity and making manual changes is not feasible *a posteriori*. Consequently, data for 2014 to 2017 is less granular than data for 2018 - 2020. However, the supporting study evaluation team observed that for this period - for most years/axes - the differences were small and not likely to have a major impact on the results of the cost-effectiveness analysis.

To mitigate these data gaps, datasets from ABAC were used as basis for the total available and implemented amounts per axis. However, in the ABAC system, financial data (planned and executed) are reported at the level of the EaSI programme's axes, and no detailed breakdown per (type of) activity exists. Given the need to report at the specific objective level (related to the cost-effectiveness analysis), the following approach was used in the supporting study to mitigate the issues explained above.

All the amounts per axis from the FINAP dataset were adjusted to the corresponding amounts from the ABAC dataset. For example, if there was a total indicative amount of EUR 2 million for an activity in the FINAP data in 2014, and EUR 2.5 million in the ABAC data, all the underlying actions in the FINAP data were proportionally adjusted based on the ratio 2.5/2. Same implementation ratios (i.e. implemented amount/indicative amount) were used for each axis and for each year. The above method was susceptible to cause a caveat to the cost-effectiveness results. It was therefore assumed that the differences between FINAP and ABAC data were equally divided over all the actions.

Another caveat was that the categories defined in the FINAP system are conceived to be used for financial programming and monitoring. In practice, the FINAP activities are categorised by type of output, for instance studies, surveys, communication. Nevertheless, under one FINAP category, different types of outputs could be classified. For example, one FINAP category funds a study report, but there could be some communication outputs under this same FINAP activity, while the type of output only states 'study report'. Furthermore, as in the example provided above, for most activities there is a clear type of output (for instance, when financing a study report, the main output type is a 'study report') and it is likely that the biggest share of the funding is allocated towards this type of output. To

mitigate this caveat, the supporting study used the approach explained above - based on the main type of output - in order to directly link costs to outputs and results.

Based on the methodological approach and mitigation measures explained above, Table 2 included in Chapter 3 presents the number of activities (outputs) and the corresponding spending linked to each specific objective.

II.4 Points of comparison

The points of comparison presented in Table 31 were established based on the EaSI baseline report (2014) and its successive updates, excepting for EPMF and objectives the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis, which were based on the respective *ex ante* evaluations. Detailed explanations are included in Section 2.3.

Table 31. Objectives, indicators and points of comparison

No.	Objectives	Indicators	Points of comparison
		Specific objectives	
1.	**Evidence-based EU policies and legislation**	*Performance measurement headline indicator*: • Share of stakeholders aknowledging that EU employment and social policy and legislation is based on evidence.	*EaSI baseline report:* • **71%** (2014)
2.	**Effective and inclusive information sharing, mutual learning and dialogue**	*Performance measurement headline indicator*: • Share of stakeholders declaring that they have used (or intend to use) the information acquired during EaSI-funded events.	*EaSI baseline report:* • **89%** (2014)
3.	**Testing of social and labour market policy innovations**	*Performance measurement headline indicator*: • Share of EU and national stakeholders who see the Commission as an effective source of guidance and support for social and labour market policy innovations.	*EaSI baseline report:* • **62%** (2014)
4.	**Greater capacity of national and EU organisations to develop, promote and support the implementation of EU policies.**	*Performance measurement headline indicator*: • Share of stakeholders declaring an improved capacity to develop and promote EU social policies.	*EaSI baseline report:* • **88%** (2014)
5.	**Transparent labour market information**	*Performance measurement headline indicator*: • Number of visitors to the EURES Portal (performance measurement headline indicator. *Performance measurement complementary indicators:* • Number of jobseekers and employers registered on the EURES Portal	*EaSI baseline report:* • **509 544** visits (2014) • **190 000** jobseekers and **6 000** employers (2015)
6.	**Effective provision of services for recruitment and placing of workers**	*Performance measurement headline indicator*: • Number of individual personal contacts of EURES advisers with jobseekers, job changers and employers made via cross-border partnerships and targeted mobility schemes.	*EaSI baseline report:* • **947 480** personal contacts (2014)
7.	**Better access to, and availability of, microfinance**	*Performance measurement headline indicator*: • Total number and volume of microloans provided, and the leverage effect created.	*EPMF and EaSI ex ante evaluations:* • **EaSI: 50 000** microloans provided and a volume of

No.	Objectives	Indicators	Points of comparison
			EUR 500 million corersponding to a leverage effect of **5 times** the EU contribution. • **EPMF: 45 000** microloans provided and a volume of **EUR 500 million** corersponding to a leverage effect of **5 times** the EU contribution.
8.	**Better access to finance for social enterprises**	*Performance measurement headline indicator:* • Total number of social enterprises supported and the volume of funding provided.	*EaSI ex ante evaluation:* • **900** social enterprises supported and a volume of **EUR 270 million,** corresponding to a leverage of **3 times** the EU contribution.
9.	**Build up the institutional capacity of the microcredit providers**	*Performance measurement headline indicator*: • Total number of microcredit providers supported through funding for capacity building.	*EaSI ex ante evaluation:* • A number of **50 microcredit providers** supported.
General objectives			
1.	**Stronger ownership of EU objectives**	*Performance measurement headline indicator*: • Share of stakeholders who feel familiar with the main issues in the policy fields covered by EaSI.	*EaSI baseline report:* • **63%** (2014)
2	**Facilitation of policy reforms**	*Performance measurement complementary indicator* • Share of national, regional and local policymakers and civil society representatives who declare that they have used (or intend) outputs produced by EaSI analytical activities for policymaking or advocacy.	*EaSI baseline report:* • **79%** (2014)
3.	**Modernisation and effective application of EU law**	*Performance measurement headline indicator*: • Examples of how EaSI-funded outputs contributed to the improvement of review of the EU legislation.	*EaSI baseline report:* • EaSI outputs continued being **instrumental** in contributing to the improvement and better application of EU law.

No.	Objectives	Indicators	Points of comparison
4.	**Improved voluntary geographic mobility and employment opportunities**	*Performance measurement headline indicator*: • Number of placements resulting from contacts of EURES advisers with jobseekers.	*EaSI baseline report:* **31 056 placements** (2014).
5.	**Increased access to finance for vulnerable persons, micro- and social enterprises**	*Performance measurement headline indicator*: • Proportion of beneficiaries that have created or further developed a business with EU microfinance support that are unemployed or belonging to vulnerable groups.	*EaSI baseline report/EMPL Management Plan:* • **50%** by end-2020
Horizontal objectives[277]			
1.	**Paying attention to vulnerable groups; promoting equality between men and women; combating discrimination and promoting sustainable employment.**	*Performance measurement headline indicator*: • Share of stakeholders stating that the EU contribution to the integration of the horizontal issues into their respective policy area is moderate or high.	*EaSI baseline report:* • Particular attention to vulnerable groups **(79%),** equality between women and men **(78%), anti-discrimination (76%)**, high-quality and sustainable work **(65%),** adequate social protection **(62%),** poverty prevention and reduct**ion (60%),** long-term unemployment **(57%)** and disability and accessibility matters **(47%) (2014).**

Source: DG EMPL, based on EaSI ex ante evaluation, EPMF ex ante evaluation and EaSI baseline reports/updates.

[277]Referred as 'horizontal principles' in this Staff Working Document (the terminology used in the Article 4 of the EaSI Regulation). The EaSI preparatory documents (EaSI/PSCI *ex ante* evaluation and the ESF impact assessment) as well the current evaluation supporting study used the term 'horizontal objectives'.

II.5 EaSI Stakeholders Survey methodology

The EaSI Stakeholder Survey was the web-based survey conducted bi-annually by the contractor carrying out the EaSI monitoring in 2014 - 2020. One survey was deployed in 2014 in order to establish the baseline situation, followed by three surveys covering 2015 - 2016, 2017 - 2018 and 2019 - 2020.

The survey was available in English, French and German. The survey aimed to provide a representative picture of the opinions of stakeholders benefitting from the programme implementation (i.e., it aimed to target a wide variety of persons involved in one or another way in the EU policy process in the area of employment and social affairs). Separate questions were developed for each axis.

Given that the entire population affected by EaSI was not known, a non-probability sampling strategy was used. This means that units were intentionally selected to represent particular aspects of groups within the general sampled population. In the case of EaSI, the survey gathered the opinions of a representative sample of different types of stakeholders at EU and national level, including: 1) policy and decision-makers; 2) civil society organisations, including social partner organisations; and 3) other relevant participants and stakeholders involved in the programme design and implementation.

Each of the three groups constituted a separate stratum, i.e. a separate group or sub-group of the population from which it was attempted to receive a sufficient number of survey responses. The survey was continued until a sufficient number of responses were received in each stratum. Additionally, to ensure that the respondents are selected so as to cover the whole range of subgroups, selections were based on two key principles:

- The first principle relied on a careful mixing and matching of respondents in the different groups, making sure that each subgroup is represented by the minimum number of respondents (about 20-30 respondents).
- The second principle ensured that the overall distribution of answers across the two selection criteria remained similar to that of the previous EaSI Stakeholder Survey.

In 2014 (covering 2014 period), 10 737 invitations were sent to participate in the Stakeholder Survey. In total, 1662 responses were received. The response rate of the 2014 EaSI Stakeholder Survey was around 17%. In 2017 (covering the implementation period 2015 - 2016), the survey was disseminated to 7 195 stakeholders and received 1 038 responses. The response rate of the EaSI Stakeholder Survey was around 14%[278]. In 2019 (covering the implementation period 2017 - 2018), the survey was disseminated to 15 374 stakeholders and received 2 325 responses. The response rate was around 15%. In 2021 (covering the implementation period 2019 - 2020), the survey was disseminated to 9 073 stakeholders and received 885 replies. The response rate was around 10%.

II.6 Evaluation integrated approach

This annex explains the design of the EaSI *ex post* evaluation that includes the EPMF final evaluation.

Background information

EaSI was launched in January 2014 and ended on 31 December 2020 (the evaluation cut-off date). Its budget was managed mostly directly by DG EMPL based on calls for proposals and tenders. Out of the three instruments grouped under the EaSI third axis, the *Guarantee Instrument* and *the Capacity Building Investments Window* were implemented indirectly (the Commission entrusted their management to the EIF) while the *Funded*

[278]Response rate = [responses received/(invitations sent - bounced e-mails – unsubscribed emails)]*100

Instrument was implemented directly by the Commission in accordance with Article 216 of the Financial Regulation.

The EaSI *Guarantee Instrument* and the EaSI *Funded Instrument* implemented under the EaSI third axis were built on the success of the financial instruments implemented under the European Progress Microfinance Facility (EPMF), and combined the benefits of the experience with EPMF with an enlarged geographical scope and a dedicated support for social enterprises. The EaSI instruments mentioned above and those implemented under EPMF ran in parallel until 2016.

- The EaSI Guarantee Instrument became operational in 2015 with the end date of implementation set at 1st January 2024. By this date, the EIF can sign guarantee agreements with financial intermediaries. The financial intermediaries can include loans in their portfolio after this date until at the latest 31 December 2027.
- The EaSI Funded Instrument[279] became operational in September 2019 and its implementation period runs until 16 October 2023. By this date, the EIF can provide loans to financial intermediaries. The financial intermediaries can include loans in their portfolio after this date but the duration of the loans to final beneficiaries cannot go beyond 31 December 2031.
- Through the EaSI Capacity Building Investments Window launched in December 2016, EIF provided funding to financial intermediaries mainly through subordinated loans. The last agreements with financial intermediaries were signed in 2021; the overall budged was fully deployed by end of 2021.

The EPMF was launched by the Commission in 2010 under the PROGRESS programme (2007 - 2013) as a demand driven instrument. Both financial instruments set up under EPMF (*Guarantee Instrument* and *Funded Instrument*) were implemented by the EIF through indirect management mode. They were followed up by a new generation of financial instruments under the third axis of the EaSI programme (see above).

Under both EPMF instruments, EIF could sign guarantee agreements and provide loans to financial intermediaries until 7th April 2016, while the end-date of the implementation period was set on 31st December 2020 for the Guarantee Instrument and on 30th April 2020 for the Funded Instrument[280]. By these dates, all guarantee agreements with financial intermediaries should have been terminated and all loans provided to financial intermediaries should have been reimbursed. In practice, the guarantee coverage of the loans and therefore the implementation of the EPMF guarantee was extended until 31st December 2020 (see Annex VI.4). Therefore, the end-date of the implementation period of the EPMF as a whole was considered by 31st December 2020, which is the cut-off date considered in this evaluation.

Ex post evaluation approach

EaSI and EPMF legal bases both display evaluation requirements, while the first refers explicitly to the latter, their respective deadlines almost run in parallel. EaSI evaluation requirement defined in 2013 takes precedence over EPMF's one defined in 2010.

EaSI Regulation 1296/2013

[279]Operationally, there is no difference between the *EaSI Funded Instrument* and the *EPMF Funded Instrument*, meaning that they were both implemented by the EIF in the same way. Nevertheless, the EU Financial Regulation in force in 2010 did not contain any provisions on financial instruments (which were introduced only in the later revision of the Financial Regulation). The indirect management mode was then chosen for the *EPMF Funded Instrument* that was implemented by the EIF. The 2018 Financial Regulation, in force when the *EaSI Funded Instrument* was launched (2019), provided (under Article 216) that the specialized investment vehicles fall under direct management. In practice, the EIF still implements the *EaSI Funded Instrument* but the Commission keeps however a direct responsibility on the management of the instrument.

[280]The EPMF Funded Instrument was liquidated only in December 2022. The liquidation was delayed since one financial intermediary - receiving three loans under this instrument - went into voluntary liquidation and could not timely reimburse the loans. The liquidation of the EPMF Funded Instrument was finalised; only the three loans were no longer in the portfolio of the fund.

- Article 13(4): The Commission shall evaluate *ex post* the impact and the European Union added value of the programme by 31 December 2022.
- Article 38(1): The final evaluation provided for in Article 13(4) of the EaSI Regulation shall include the final evaluation provided for in Article 9 of the Decision 283/2010.

EPMF Decision 283/2010

- Article 9(1): The Commission shall carry out interim and final evaluations at its own initiative and in close cooperation with the international financial institutions referred to in Article 5(2). The interim evaluation shall be completed four years after the start of the Facility and the final evaluation at the latest one year after the end of the mandate(s) given to the international financial institutions referred to in Article 5(2). The final evaluation shall, in particular, examine the extent to which the Facility as a whole has achieved its objectives.

Based on the two legal bases provisions for evaluation, and consideration of economies of scale, a joint evaluation of EaSI and EPMF was agreed upfront in 2019 between the units involved. One entry in DECIDE (PLAN/2019/5817) and a joint roadmap for EaSI *ex post* evaluation including the EPMF final evaluation was published for the stakeholders' feedback between 8 October - 5 November 2019. One entry was created in the Interinstitutional Database of EU Studies for the study supporting the EaSI *ex post* evaluation including the EPMF final evaluation (March 2021 - July 2022). The supporting study and the Staff Working Document were built to allow optimal analysis and results for both programmes' evaluations as well as economies of scale in terms of process, EPMF final evaluation nourishing the EaSI *ex post* evaluation.

ANNEX III. EVALUATION MATRIX

The evaluation design relied on an evaluation matrix (see Table 32 below) build along the five Better Regulation Guidelines' evaluation criteria that guided the evaluation process. Based on the programmes' intervention logic and the supporting study technical specifications, the matrix features the key research questions, operationalised in sub-questions, indicators and related judgement criteria. The data sources are included in the table.

Table 32. Evaluation matrix

Evaluation questions	Operationalised questions	Indicators/descriptors	Norms/judgement criteria	Data sources / analytical approach
EaSI				
Relevance				
1. To what degree was the EaSI programme **relevant** for its different stakeholders, including citizens? How and to what extent were the different stakeholders affected positively and/or negatively by the intervention?	Who are the key stakeholders of the EaSI programme's axes? To what extent did EaSI effectively *target* and *reach* relevant stakeholder groups? Were there any gaps? What explains these gaps? What were the different needs of different stakeholder groups? Are there any noteworthy differences in the needs of different stakeholder groups? To what extent did the programme address these needs? Was the design of the EaSI programme appropriate to meet all stakeholder groups' needs? To what extent was each stakeholder group affected (positively or negatively) by the EaSI programme? What factors account for these differences (if any)?	Stakeholder mapping Commission approaches to targeting different stakeholder groups Assessment of thematic coverage of EaSI-funded activities Evidence / examples of EaSI actions *targeting* / *reaching* different stakeholder groups Assessment of gaps / imbalances in the stakeholder groups targeted and reached by EaSI actions Stakeholder views on the appropriateness of EaSI to meet needs of different stakeholder groups Assessment of degree to which stakeholders participated in EaSI and were impacted by EaSI, per axis Stakeholder views on negative and positive impacts Identified reasons accounting for differences	The overall majority of stakeholders, as well as a majority of stakeholders from given categories agree that their needs were sufficiently addressed by the EaSI programme	Relevant legislative and policy documents Stakeholder mapping Preparatory desk research EaSI performance monitoring reports EaSI reports on projects and organisations Interviews at EU level Public consultation Results from evaluation questions on progress relative to the baseline and effectiveness (impact on stakeholders, reach of EaSI actions)
2. How was the EaSI programme instrumental to supporting the EU 2020 Agenda, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the	How and to what extent did the EaSI programme support (operationalised the objectives of): • the Europe 2020 Agenda/ the European Pillar of Social Rights? • the Political Guidelines of the Commission and the main EU governance processes (European Semester, and the coordination in	Evidence / examples of synergies/contradictions between EaSI and the EU 2020 Agenda, Pillar of Social Rights, Political Guidelines, governance processes Evidence / examples of EaSI actions that went beyond the objectives of the EU 2020 Agenda, Pillar of Social Rights, Political Guidelines, governance processes Best practice examples of EaSI actions supporting the	The overall majority of stakeholders consulted, as well as a majority of stakeholders from given categories, are of the opinion that the EaSI programme	Relevant legislative/policy documents European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plans Interviews at EU level

	Political Guidelines of the Commission as well as the main EU governance processes (European Semester, and the coordination in the social protection and social inclusion)?	the social protection and social inclusion)? Are there key best practice examples of ways in which the EaSI programme supported these?	implementation of the EU 2020 Agenda, Pillar of Social Rights, Political Guidelines, governance processes Stakeholder views on the degree to which EaSI actions supported the implementation of the EU 2020 Agenda, Pillar of Social Rights, Political Guidelines, governance processes Stakeholder views on the appropriateness and sufficiency of synergies	adequately supported the related EU initiatives/objectives	Focus group
3.	To what extent have the EaSI general, horizontal and specific objectives been instrumental and continue to be relevant in addressing the general/permanent and emerging needs (related to the evolving context, including challenges such as the refugee crisis, Brexit, COVID-19 crisis)?	To what extent were the **general objectives** identified in Article 4(1) of the EaSI Regulation relevant throughout the 2014-2020 period? Were the general objectives complete? Were there any gaps not covered by EaSI? What lessons can be learned that can be taken into account for the next programming period?	Evidence / examples of alignment/non-alignment between general objectives and the needs of stakeholders Stakeholder views on the degree to which the general objectives meet their needs Evidence / examples of new needs that emerged that were not covered by the general objectives Stakeholder views on the degree to which the EaSI programme managed to adapt to emerging needs Evidence / examples of lessons learned from the 2014-2020 period that may be relevant for the future Stakeholder suggestions to improve the relevance of the EaSI programme's general objectives	The general objectives were judged relevant and appropriate by a majority of stakeholders, including from different stakeholder categories The general objectives continue to be relevant and appropriate according to a majority of stakeholders, including from different stakeholder categories	Mid-term evaluation of EaSI Baseline report (2014), updated baseline reports EaSI performance monitoring reports Public consultation Interviews at EU level Focus group Case studies Results from questions on the progress made in relation to the baseline, effectiveness
		To what extent were the **horizontal objectives** identified in Article 4(2) of the EaSI Regulation relevant throughout the 2014-2020 period? Were the horizontal objectives complete? Were any gaps not covered by EaSI? What lessons can be learned that can be taken into account for the next programming period?	Thematic coverage of EaSI actions Trends in relevant indicators such as gender pay gap, long term unemployment, social exclusion Evidence / examples of alignment/non-alignment between horizontal objectives and the needs of stakeholders Stakeholder views on the degree to which the horizontal objectives met their needs Evidence / examples of new needs that emerged that were not covered by the horizontal objectives Stakeholder views on the degree to which the EaSI programme managed to adapt to emerging needs Evidence / examples of lessons learned from the 2014-2020 period that may be relevant for the future Stakeholder suggestions to improve the relevance of the EaSI programme's horizontal objectives	The horizontal objectives were relevant and appropriate in light of stakeholders' needs and EU political priorities	Mid-term evaluation of EaSI Relevant statistics from Eurostat, national statistics offices EaSI performance monitoring reports Public consultation Interviews at EU level Focus groups Case study Results from questions on the progress made in relation to the

				baseline, effectiveness
	To what extent were the **specific objectives** of each of the EaSI programme's axes relevant throughout the 2014-2020 period? What lessons can be learned that can be taken into account for the next programming period?	Evidence / examples of alignment/non-alignment between specific objectives of each axis and the needs of relevant stakeholders Evidence of new needs that emerged that were not covered by the specific objectives of each axis Stakeholder views on the degree to which the specific objectives met their needs Stakeholder views on the degree to which the each EaSI axis was sufficiently flexible to adapt to emerging needs Evidence / examples of lessons learned from the 2014-2020 period that may be relevant for the future Stakeholder suggestions to improve the relevance of the EaSI programme in relation to each axis	The specific objectives of the PROGRESS axis were relevant and appropriate in light of stakeholder needs and EU political priorities The specific objectives of the EURES axis were relevant and appropriate in light of stakeholder needs and EU political priorities The specific objectives of the MF/SE axis were relevant and appropriate in light of stakeholder needs and EU political priorities	Mid-term evaluation of EaSI *Ex post* evaluation of EURES EaSI performance monitoring reports EaSI reports on projects and organisations Academic studies, research and reports on employment/social policies in the EU Public consultation Interviews at EU level Focus groups Case studies Results from questions on the progress made in relation to the baseline/ effectiveness
	Was the EaSI programme sufficiently flexible to respond to changing needs and corresponding policy priorities in a timely manner throughout its duration? How and to what extent has the EaSI programme responded to new emerging needs such as the refugee crisis, Brexit and the COVID-19 crisis? Did any new needs arise that were not sufficiently addressed by the EaSI programme? Why? What lessons were learned that can be taken into account for the next programming period?	Assessment of the decision making criteria, process, evidence and stakeholders consulted for responding to emerging needs Evidence/examples of changes/ decisions made (or not) to funding priorities based on emerging needs, including timeliness of these decisions Financial allocations requested and granted and timeframes for grant decisions made as part of the EaSI Guarantee Financial Instrument to address COVID-19 Assessment of appropriateness of redistribution of financial allocations between EaSI axes following the Omnibus Regulation Stakeholder views on the flexibility of the EaSI programme to respond to emerging needs Evidence / examples of EaSI response to emerging needs and	The EaSI programme responded flexibly to changing policy priorities New needs were sufficiently addressed by the EaSI programme, and in a timely manner	Relevant legislative/ policy documents[281] EIF / EC data on the number of requests / allocations for financial support in the context of the COVID-19 crisis Academic studies, research and reports on employment/social policies in the EU Mid-term evaluation of EaSI

[281]Including notably the amendments to the financial allocation to each EaSI axis made by the Omnibus Regulation (Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018).

		timeframes for responding to these needs Assessment and stakeholder views of appropriateness and timeliness of the EaSI response to emerging issues Identified new needs that were not sufficiently addressed by the EaSI programme Identified factors causing new needs not to be addressed by EaSI (if any) Stakeholder views on new needs that arose but were not sufficiently addressed by EaSI and reasons why Evidence / examples of lessons learned from the 2014-2020 period that may be relevant for the future Stakeholder suggestions to improve the relevance of the EaSI programme		Public consultation Interviews at EU level Focus groups SWOT analysis Results from questions on the progress made in relation to the baseline, effectiveness
Effectiveness				
4. To what extent have the specific objectives of the PROGRESS axis set out in Article 15 of the EaSI Regulation been achieved?	What have been the quantitative and qualitative effects and benefits of the EaSI intervention that contribute towards meeting the specific PROGRESS axis objectives? To what extent can the identified effects and benefits be linked to and be credited to the EaSI intervention and the actions funded under this axis? Were there any gaps in terms of achievements compared to the objectives? What caused these?	Degree of achievement of KPIs for PROGRESS axis (based on monitoring reports) Actions implemented under the PROGRESS axis, per year compared to annual work programmes Financial commitments/allocation to the PROGRESS axis, per year Share of PROGRESS commitments per specific objective, horizontal objective Number of organisations that were provided financial support to increase their capacity Evidence / examples of innovations in social and labour market policy contributed to by PROGRESS Stakeholders satisfaction with and declared use of knowledge generated by the programme Share of policy initiatives launched by DG EMPL which are informed by the knowledge generated by the programme The declared (intended/actual) use of acquired information for policymaking/advocacy by the involved participants but also other decision-makers and stakeholders Stakeholder views on the effects and benefits of these actions Documentary evidence of links between the inputs/activities under this axis and the achievement of the results Evidence/examples of external influencing factors Stakeholder views on the degree to which the results can be attributed to the actions under the PROGRESS axis	There has been an improvement compared to the baseline situation, that can be linked to EaSI funding under the PROGRESS axis, e.g.: Capacity has increased Innovations in social and labour market policies have been introduced with plausible contributions by PROGRESS Stakeholders are satisfied and make use of knowledge generated as a result of PROGRESS DG EMPL has launched new policy initiatives as a result of PROGRESS Member States have launched new policy initiatives as a result of	Administrative data Baseline report (2014), updated baseline reports EaSI performance monitoring reports EaSI reports on projects and organisations EaSI mid-term evaluation Annual work programmes 2014-2020 Public consultation Interviews at EU level Focus groups Case studies

		Evidence / examples of hindering factors and constraints Stakeholder views on possible gaps and constraints hindering achievement of objectives	PROGRESS actions	
5. To what extent have the specific objectives of the EURES axis set out in Article 20 of the EaSI Regulation been achieved?	What have been the quantitative and qualitative effects and benefits of the EaSI intervention towards meeting the objectives of the EURES axis? To what extent can the identified effects and benefits be linked to and be credited to the EaSI intervention and the actions funded under this axis? Were there any gaps in terms of achievements compared to the objectives? What caused these?	Actions implemented under the EURES axis, per year compared to annual work programmes Degree of achievement of KPIs for EURES axis (based on monitoring reports) Number of job vacancies and CVs on EURES Job Mobility Portal Number of recruitment/ placements and job offers made through the EURES Job Mobility Portal Number of transnational placements facilitated by EURES Documentary evidence of links between the inputs and different types of activities funded under this axis and the achievement of the results (to understand which types of activities produced results) Evidence/examples of external influencing factors Stakeholder views on the degree to which EURES has contributed to the observed results Evidence / examples of hindering factors and constraints Stakeholder views on possible gaps and constraints hindering achievement of objectives	There has been an improvement compared to the baseline situation, that can be linked to EaSI funding under the EURES axis, e.g.: The number of vacancies and CVs has grown The number of (transnational) placements have grown	Baseline report (2014), updated baseline reports Ex post Evaluation of EURES EaSI performance monitoring reports Annual work programmes 2014-2020 Focus group
6. To what extent have the specific objectives of the MF/SE axis set out in Article 26 of the EaSI Regulation been achieved?	What have been the quantitative and qualitative effects and benefits of the EaSI intervention towards meeting the objectives? To what extent can the identified effects and benefits be linked to and be credited to the EaSI intervention and the actions funded under this axis? Were there any gaps in terms of achievements compared to the objectives? What caused these?	Degree of achievement of KPIs for MF/SE axis (based on monitoring reports) Number of microloans provided with EU support Volume of microloans provided (€) Profile of final beneficiaries (age, gender, minority, employment status…) Number of micro-credit providers supported through funding to receive capacity building support Number of social enterprises that have been supported through EaSI Volume of investment provided to social enterprises Documentary evidence of links between the inputs/activities under this axis and the achievement of the results Evidence/examples of external influencing factors Stakeholder views on the degree to which the MF/SE axis has contributed to the observed results Evidence / examples of hindering factors and constraints	There has been an improvement compared to the baseline situation, that can be linked to EaSI funding under the MF/SE axis, e.g.: An increasing number of microloans were provided with EU support An increasing number of social enterprises have been supported through EaSI An increasing number of microfinance providers have	Results from the final evaluation of the EPMF (see Q4 in EPMF EQM) Baseline report (2014), updated baseline reports Administrative data/ annual implementation reports submitted by the EIF EaSI performance monitoring reports Annual work programmes 2014-2020 Interviews at EU level

		Stakeholder views on possible gaps and constraints hindering achievement of objectives	increased capacity, as measured by receipt of training from EaSI Technical Assistance	Public consultation
7. To what extent have the general objectives set out in Article 4(1) of the EaSI Regulation been achieved?	To what extent did each of the three axes of the EaSI programme contribute to the achievement of the programme's general objectives? To what extent did the EaSI mechanism/umbrella enable the three axes to achieve their objectives? What difference did it make that the three axes were under one 'umbrella'? To what extent can the observed effects be attributed to the EaSI programme? What external influencing factors played a role (if any)?	Evidence/examples of the interplay/ cooperation between the 3 different axes and the results this achieved Evidence/examples that the programme as a whole has delivered the expected quality and quantity of outcomes in line with the general objectives Evidence/examples of added value of EaSI umbrella mechanism and the contribution this made to each of the axes in achieving their objectives Stakeholder views that the EaSI mechanism has enabled 3 axes to together produce results that are greater than the sum of their parts Stakeholder views that the EaSI programme delivered the expected quality and quantity of outcomes in line with the general objectives Causal links between the inputs/activities and impacts showing the degree to which the observed effects can be attributed to the programme as a whole Identification of external influencing factors and their role Stakeholder views on the extent to which results can reasonably be attributed to the EaSI programme	The general objectives have been achieved or considerable progress has been made towards their achievement The observed effects can be reasonably attributed to the EaSI programme	Results from the preceding axis-based questions SWOT analysis
8. To what extent have the horizontal objectives set out in Article 4(2) of the EaSI Regulation been achieved?	What evidence is there of the EaSI programme having contributed to its horizontal objectives (gender equality, non-discrimination, vulnerable groups and youth)? How did each EaSI axes operationalise these horizontal objectives?	Extent to which each of the EaSI axes takes horizontal issues sufficiently into account in the design of EaSI activities, targeting/reaching of different groups of people, and outputs Extent to which the outcomes/benefits achieved likely to benefit vulnerable groups, young people, promote gender equality etc. Stakeholders' views that the EaSI programme has delivered the expected quality and quantity of outcomes in line with the horizontal objectives Stakeholder views on the contribution of each EaSI axis to these objectives	There is no evidence of activities going against the principles of the horizontal objectives	Results from the preceding axis-based questions Public consultation Interviews at EU level Case study 3 SWOT analysis
9. What has been the impact of the EaSI programme in relation to its intended impact as stated in Article 1 of	What has been the programme's contribution to the Europe 2020 agenda and the European Pillar of Social Rights? To what extent has the programme promoted a high level of quality and sustainable employment?	Statistics (for illustrative purposes, as causal links will be difficult to establish) on: quality of employment sustainability of employment social protection	The overall majority of stakeholders, as well as a majority of stakeholders from given categories agree	Evidence from Q1, Q3 Evidence from all preceding questions on effectiveness

the EaSI Regulation?	To what extent has the programme contributed to guaranteeing adequate and decent social protection? To what extent has the programme contributed to combating social exclusion and improving working conditions?	social inclusion working conditions Evidence/examples of the EaSI programme's contribution to the Europe 2020 agenda and the European Pillar of Social Rights? Evidence/examples of policies, measures, practices, knowledge, capacities and awareness contributed to by EaSI that are likely to positively influence quality of employment Evidence/examples of policies, measures, practices, knowledge, capacities and awareness contributed to by EaSI that are likely to positively influence adequate and decent social protection in member states Evidence of policies, policy innovations, changes in practice etc. contributed to by EaSI that are likely to contribute to social inclusion and improving working conditions Stakeholder views on the contribution of the EaSI programme and its axes	that the EaSI programme has made a positive contribution (actual impact will be difficult to measure)	Eurostat statistics Public consultation Interviews at EU level Case studies
10. Did the EU anti-fraud system and internal/external audit activities allow the prevention and timely detection of frauds/malfunctioning in EaSI programme implementation?	How effectively has the risk of fraud been managed? What processes were put in place to mitigate, monitor, manage fraud? Have any instances of fraud been detected? If so, how were instances of potential or actual fraud dealt with? Was this effective and appropriate?	Number of potential fraud cases notified and dismissed Process put in place as a result of audit requirements to monitor, mitigate and manage potential cases of fraud Evidence / examples of measures put in place to detect, prevent and deal with instances of fraud	All potential fraud cases notified have been dismissed or dealt with in a timely manner	Reports from OLAF on anti-fraud Internal audit activity reports Interviews at EU level Stakeholder mapping Public consultation Interviews at EU level
11. To what extent have stakeholders been involved effectively in the programme's implementation?	Which target groups of the programme have been involved in the implementation of the EaSI programme? Has there been sufficient involvement of different groups of stakeholders in the implementation of the EaSI programme? If not, why not? To what extent did the programme use tailored methods to target different groups and stakeholders? What were the most effective methods to involve different target groups and stakeholders?	Identification of the types of stakeholders involved in EaSI implementation under PROGRESS, EURES, MF/SE axis and their roles / interests in the programme as compared to who was supposed to be involved Evidence of the level and effects of stakeholders' involvement Stakeholder views on the sufficiency of their involvement Evidence of consideration of the needs of different groups and tailoring targeting/methods based on these Degree to which effective methods were employed at each implementation stage/in each axes Stakeholder views on the most effective methods	Judgement of sufficiency based on views expressed by different groups and comparison to targets set for the involvement of different stakeholders	
Efficiency				
12. What are the costs (and benefits) resulting	What are the costs resulting from the EaSI programme activities overall and per EaSI axis?	Annual amount (€) and share (%) of operational expenditure allocated, committed and disbursed by:	N/A – descriptive question	EaSI performance monitoring reports

from the EaSI programme activities?	How do these costs compare to the previous programming period?	Axis Thematic section specific objectives type of activities Trends in costs over time Costs borne by other stakeholders Evidence of increases / decreases in costs over time Stakeholder views on the appropriateness of changes in costs over time		Annual work programmes 2014-2020 Previous evaluations of PROGRESS, EURES, EPMF when not managed under the EaSI umbrella ABAC data / Commission internal reporting on costs Mapping of progress
	What benefits resulted from the EaSI programme activities overall and per EaSI axis? How do these benefits compare to the previous programming period?	Outputs and outcomes (as defined by EaSI KPIs) produced per EaSI axis Trends in outputs and outcomes generated over time Relationship between outputs and outcomes Stakeholder views on the benefits generated by the EaSI programme and its axes	N/A – descriptive question	Results from Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10 Previous evaluations of PROGRESS, EURES, EPMF
	How do these benefits compare to the costs incurred? Are the costs proportionate to these benefits?	Assessment of appropriateness of costs given the benefits attained, per axis and for the programme as a whole Stakeholder views on the appropriateness of the costs given the benefits attained, per axis and for the programme as a whole	The allocation of resources has been proportionate to the benefits accrued	Cost-effectiveness analysis
13. To what extent have the available financial means enabled the programme to fulfil its (general, specific, horizontal) objectives efficiently?	To what extent have the available financial means enabled EaSI to fulfil its objectives? Have any inefficiencies been identified that hindered the PROGRESS / EURES / MF/SE axis in fulfilling its objectives? Have any inefficiencies been identified that hindered the achievement of the EaSI programme's general and horizontal objectives?	Assessment of appropriateness of redistribution of financial allocations between EaSI axes following the Omnibus Regulation Evidence and EU-level stakeholder perceptions showing that the budget allocation for PROGRESS/ EURES/ MF/SE axes has been appropriate for achieving the programme's objectives under given axes EU-level stakeholder views on the appropriateness of the PROGRESS/ EURES/ MF/SE budget split by thematic areas for achieving the programme's objectives under given axes Examples and stakeholder perceptions on inefficiencies at axis level Examples and stakeholder perceptions on inefficiencies at programme level	The resources allocated were sufficient and appropriate to achieve the intended outcomes No unnecessary inefficiencies have been identified	EaSI performance monitoring reports and project documentation Results from Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10 Interviews at EU level Cost-effectiveness analysis
14.		Costs of managing the EaSI programme, incl. per axis and per year Administrative and management costs as a % of total programme budget	The administrative and governance structure operates efficiently and has been cost-	Commission internal reporting on costs Previous evaluations of the PROGRESS,

		Administrative and management costs as a % of total axis budget Evidence / examples of any inefficiencies encountered Evidence / examples of discrepancies and their link to the programme Stakeholder views on discrepancies and their link to the programme Administrative burden associated with the implementation of the programmes in the previous programming period Evidence of cost savings compared to the baseline resulting from merging the three axes under one umbrella programme	effective The governance of the PROGRESS axis has been cost-effective The governance of the EURES axis has been cost-effective The governance of the MF/SE axis has been cost-effective	EURES and EPMF Mid-term evaluation of EaSI Public consultation Interviews at EU level
Coherence				
15. To what extent was the EaSI programme coherent internally (degree of complementarity of the 3 axes)?	Are there any inconsistencies or contradictions between the three EaSI axes? If so, what caused these? To what extent did the 3 axes build synergies and work together (joint work planning, scanning of opportunities, mutual learning, budgeting, using information and knowledge from each of the axes to inform/ develop work plans or activities)? Are there any lessons to be learned to improve internal complementarity in the future (to the extent relevant considering the next MFF)?	Evidence / examples of overlaps or contradictions between the axes Evidence/examples of complementarity/reinforcement/working together Stakeholder views on the degree to which the programme is internally coherent Evidence of lessons learned Stakeholder views on lessons learned for coherence	The EaSI programme's axes are internally coherent, there are no inconsistencies or contradictions	Mid-term evaluation of EaSI Public consultation Interviews at EU level
16. To what extent was the EaSI programme coherent externally with other EU policies/ actions/ funding/instruments and international bodies policies/ actions/ funding?	To what extent was EaSI coherent with and complementary to other funding instruments such as the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), in particular the European Social Fund (ESF), in compliance with Article 7(2) of the EaSI Regulation? To what extent were there synergies with ESF, and were these sufficiently exploited, for instance through upscaling of effective practices from EaSI by ESF? Is EaSI coherent and complementary with other EU programmes than the ESF[282]?	Identified overlaps between the EaSI programme and the ESF Stakeholder views on the degree to which EaSI is coherent with and complementary to ESIF and ESF/ has synergies with ESF Stakeholder views on inconsistencies or misalignment between EaSI and the ESF Evidence / examples of synergies having been created between EaSI and ESF Evidence / examples of upscaling through the ESF Identified overlaps between the EaSI programme and other EU programmes Stakeholder views on the degree to which EaSI is coherent with and complementary to other EU programmes Stakeholder views on inconsistencies or misalignment between	There is no evidence of unnecessary overlap between EaSI and other EU programmes, in particular the ESF There is evidence of synergies having been created between EaSI and ESF	Relevant legislative/policy documents Mid-term evaluation of EaSI Public consultation Interviews at EU level Case studies

[282] For instance Horizon 2020, CERV, COSME, Erasmus.

		EaSI and other EU programmes		
17. To what extent was the EaSI programme coherent with related policy measures in the participating countries?	Is EaSI coherent with relevant policy measures in participating countries, in compliance with Article 7(4) of the EaSI Regulation? Does it add to or complement relevant policy measures in participating countries? Does it fill gaps? Is there any evidence of inconsistencies or misalignment? What mechanisms are in place to ensure coherence and complementarity? How are the national, regional and local authorities involved?	Active collaboration and partnership between government institutions of the EU and Member States Evidence / examples of inconsistencies or misalignment Stakeholder views on any incoherence or misalignments Evidence / examples of mechanisms in place to ensure coherence and complementarity Stakeholder views on mechanisms in place	National, regional and local authorities have been actively involved The overall majority of relevant stakeholders believe there is evidence of coherence and complementarity Mechanisms are in place to ensure coherence and complementarity	Mid-term evaluation of EaSI EaSI performance monitoring reports Public consultation Interviews at EU level Case studies
EU added value				
18. What was the added value of EaSI compared to what could and/or is likely to have been achieved at Member States' levels/EU level in its absence?	Has the EaSI programme added to, or supported, existing actions or policy areas (per axis)? (volume effect) Has the EaSI programme broadened existing actions by supporting groups that would not have received support otherwise (per axis)? (scope effects) Have lessons learnt from the implementation of the EaSI programme been applied elsewhere (per axis)? (role effects) Has the EaSI programme changed operational processes, including in relation to other national or European sources of funding (per axis)? (process effects) To what extent has the EaSI programme as an umbrella programme produced EU added value? Is there evidence suggesting that the specific outcomes of EaSI at overall and axis level could not have been achieved to the same degree without EU intervention?	Extent to which the programme's activities would not have taken place / would have taken place with a reduced scope in the absence of the EaSI programme Evidence / examples of volume, scope, role and/or process effects of the EaSI programme (per axis) Stakeholder views on the feasibility of alternative programmes / forms of funding in the absence of the EaSI programme	The EaSI had added value over and above what could be achieved by Member States alone in its absence	Results from preceding evaluation questions Public consultation Interviews at EU level Focus group Case studies
19. What would be the most likely consequences of not continuing the EaSI programme types of activities as foreseen	What would be the most likely consequences of stopping the existing EaSI programme's activities within each of its axes?		Majority of stakeholders believe discontinuing (parts of) the programme would have negative consequences	Results from preceding evaluation questions Interviews at EU level Focus group Case studies

under the ESF+, as well as within ELA and InvestEU?				
EPMF				
Relevance				
20. To what degree was the EPMF relevant for its different stakeholders?	Who are the key stakeholders of the EPMF? To what extent was the EPMF relevant to address the needs of: - persons who have lost or are at risk of losing their job; - persons who have difficulties entering or re-entering the labour market; - people facing threat of social exclusion; - people who are vulnerable and disadvantaged - micro-enterprises, especially in the social economy ?	Stakeholder mapping Assessment of degree to which stakeholders' needs were fully addressed by the EPMF. Identified reasons accounting for differences between stakeholder groups	N/A – descriptive question The EPMF was relevant to address the needs of target groups, as expressed by stakeholders.	Relevant legislative and policy documents Stakeholder mapping Preparatory desk research Interviews at EU level Survey to financial intermediaries Public consultation Case studies
21. To what extent were the objectives of the EPMF relevant in relation to the needs of its stakeholders?	To what extent have the EPMF and its objectives been relevant for its different stakeholders and in addressing the societal and related policy needs? To what extent do the EPMF and its objectives continue to be relevant within the EaSI MF/SE axis delivery?	Evidence / examples of alignment between objectives and the needs of stakeholders Evidence of new needs that emerged that were not covered by the objectives Stakeholder views on the degree to which the general objectives meet their needs Evidence / examples of alignment between EPMF and EaSI as a whole	The objectives were relevant and appropriate to meet needs The EPMF objectives are reflected, at least to a partial extent, in the EaSI MF/SE axis.	Results from *Q2* Interim evaluation of EPMF Mid-term evaluation of EaSI Interviews at EU level Survey to financial intermediaries Public consultation Case studies SWOT analysis
Effectiveness				
22. To what extent have the objectives set out	To what extent has EPMF increased access to and availability of microfinance for:	Number of microloans provided with EU support Volume of microloans provided (EUR)	The majority of all borrowers belong to one	Administrative data/ annual

in the EPMF Decision been achieved?	- persons who have lost or are at risk of losing their job; - persons who have difficulties entering or re-entering the labour market; - people facing threat of social exclusion; - people who are vulnerable and disadvantaged	Profile of final beneficiaries (age, gender, minority, employment status…) Ratio of borrowers with immigrant background Ratio of disabled borrowers Ratio of borrowers belonging to minority groups	of the stated target groups	implementation reports submitted by the EIF Performance Monitoring Reports, 2014-2020 Mapping of progress Public consultation Interviews at EU level Focus groups Case studies
	To what extent have Union resources been used to increase access to and availability of microfinance for micro-enterprises, especially in the social economy?	Ratio of microenterprises employing members of disadvantaged/vulnerable groups Linkage between EPMF and increased access to microfinance	Majority of micro-enterprises financed are in the social economy Majority of micro-enterprises financed employ persons in the target group	Administrative data/annual implementation reports submitted by the EIF EaSI performance monitoring reports Public consultation Interviews at EU level Focus group Case studies
	To what extent has the EPMF promoted equal opportunities for women and men?	Number of microloans provided with EU support to women / men Share of microloans provided to women / men Profile of final beneficiaries (age, gender, minority, employment status…) Ratio of female borrowers to number of female applications Ratio of male borrowers to number of male applications Evidence / examples of initiatives to promote equal opportunities	The EPMF provides equal opportunities for women and men There is no evidence of a lack of equality between male and female borrower profiles	Administrative data/ annual implementation reports submitted by the EIF EaSI performance monitoring reports Public consultation Interviews at EU level Focus groups Case studies
	To what extent has the EPMF guarantee window been useful for its stakeholders and in addressing the societal and related policy needs?	Evidence / examples of alignment between the guarantee window and the needs of stakeholders Evidence of new needs that emerged that were not covered by	The guarantee window was relevant and appropriate to meet	Results from *Q2* Interim evaluation of EPMF

	To what extent have the EPMF funded instruments been useful for its different stakeholders and in addressing the societal and related policy needs?	the guarantee window Stakeholder views on the degree to which the guarantee window met their needs Evidence / examples of alignment between the EPMF funded instruments and the needs of stakeholders Evidence of new needs that emerged that were not covered by the EPMF funded instruments Stakeholder views on the degree to which the EPMF funded instruments met their needs	needs The funded instruments were relevant and appropriate to meet needs	Mid-term evaluation of EaSI Survey to financial intermediaries Public consultation Case studies SWOT analysis
	What have been the quantitative and qualitative impacts of increasing access to and availability of microfinance for target groups?	Multiplier effects (€ generated by € invested) Number of new companies created as a result of the microloans Number of jobs created as a result of microloans enabled Evidence/examples of qualitative impacts of EPMF on target groups Increased trust in the credit markets	N/A – Descriptive question	Administrative data/ annual implementation reports submitted by the EIF EaSI performance monitoring reports Mapping of progress Public consultation Interviews at EU level Case studies
	Did any unexpected results emerge following the implementation of the EPMF? Which ones?	Evidence/examples of unintended effects	N/A – Descriptive question	Administrative data/ annual implementation reports submitted by the EIF EaSI performance monitoring reports Mapping of progress Public consultation Interviews at EU level Focus group Case studies
	To what extent can the identified effects and benefits be linked to and be credited to the EPMF?	Causal links between the inputs/activities and impacts showing the degree to which the observed effects can be attributed to the EPMF Identification of external influencing factors and their role Stakeholder views on the extent to which results can reasonably	The observed effects can be reasonably attributed to the EPMF	Interviews at EU level Focus group Case studies

		be attributed to the EPMF		
	What have been the possible constraints and gaps that have hindered the achievement of the objectives?	Evidence / examples of hindering factors and constraints Stakeholder views on possible gaps and constraints hindering achievement of objectives	N/A – descriptive question	Interviews at EU level Focus group Case studies
23. Did the EU anti-fraud system and internal/external audit activities allow the prevention and timely detection of frauds/malfunctioning in EPMF implementation?	Have any instances of fraud been detected? If so, how were they dealt with? Was this effective and appropriate?	Number of potential fraud cases notified Number of potential fraud cases notified and dismissed Evidence / examples of measures put in place to detect and prevent fraud	All potential fraud cases notified have been dismissed	Reports from OLAF on anti-fraud Internal audit activity reports Interviews at EU level
24. To what extent have stakeholders been involved effectively in the programme's implementation?	Which stakeholders have been involved in its implementation? Has there been sufficient involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the EPMF? Has there been sufficient collaboration and effective communication between the stakeholders responsible for the EPMF implementation? To what extent have financial intermediaries cooperated with organisations representing the final beneficiaries of microcredit, and in particular those who provide mentoring and training programmes to final beneficiaries?	Identification of stakeholders involved in EPMF implementation Evidence of the level and effects of stakeholders' involvement Evidence of the level and effects of stakeholders' collaboration and communication Evidence of the level and effects of stakeholders' collaboration and communication with organisations representing the final beneficiaries of microcredit.	N/A – descriptive question Judgement of sufficiency based on views expressed by relevant stakeholder groups	Stakeholder mapping Public consultation Interviews at EU level Survey to financial intermediaries
Efficiency				
25. What are the costs (and benefits) resulting from the EPMF activities and are they proportionate considering the benefits?	What are the costs resulting from the EPMF activities for its different stakeholders? - Implementing bodies - Financial intermediaries - End beneficiaries	Costs of managing the EPMF, per year (Commission, EIF) Administrative and management costs as a % of total budget Annual amount (€) and share (%) of expenditure allocated and committed	N/A – descriptive question	EPMF monitoring reports EPMF planning documents EIF internal data on costs Interim evaluation of the EPMF Interviews at EU level
	What are the benefits resulting from the EPMF activities for the different stakeholders?	Increased trust in financial providers Number of microloans provided	N/A – descriptive question	Results from questions on

	- Implementing bodies - Financial intermediaries - End beneficiaries	Volume (€) of microloans provided Number of microcredit providers supported (by country) Number of final beneficiaries		effectiveness Interviews at EU level Survey to financial intermediaries Public consultation
	Are the costs proportionate to the benefits for each stakeholder group? - Implementing bodies - Financial intermediaries - End beneficiaries	Assessment of appropriateness of costs given the benefits attained, per instrument (guarantees, funded instruments) and for the programme as a whole Stakeholder views on the appropriateness of the costs given the benefits attained, per axis and for the programme as a whole	The allocation of resources has been proportionate to the benefits accrued	Interviews at EU level Survey to financial intermediaries Cost-effectiveness analysis
26. To what extent have the available financial means enabled EPMF to fulfil its objectives efficiently?	To what extent have the available financial means enabled the EPMF to fulfil its objectives?	Evidence and stakeholder perceptions showing that the budget allocation has been proportionate for achieving the objectives Stakeholder views on the appropriateness of the budget	The resources allocated were sufficient and appropriate to achieve the intended outcomes	EIF data on costs associated with implementing EPMF Interviews at EU level Survey to financial intermediaries Focus group Cost-effectiveness analysis
	To what extent was the distribution of financial means across the different EPMF instruments reasonable?	Evidence and stakeholder perceptions showing that the budget distribution has been proportionate for achieving the objectives Stakeholder views on the appropriateness of the budget distribution	The resources allocated were appropriately distributed to achieve the intended outcomes	EIF data on costs associated with implementing EPMF Interviews at EU level Survey to financial intermediaries Focus group Cost-effectiveness analysis
	Have any inefficiencies been identified that hindered the EPMF's fulfilment of its objectives?	Evidence and stakeholder perceptions on identified inefficiencies	The implementation of the EPMF and the achievement of its objectives were not hindered by inefficiencies	Interviews at EU level Survey to financial intermediaries Focus group Cost-effectiveness analysis

27. Is there scope for a more efficient use of human/financial/technical resources in the implementation of the EPMF?	How efficient was the governance of the EPMF?	Evidence / examples of any inefficiencies encountered Stakeholder views on inefficiencies encountered	The administrative and governance structure operates efficiently The governance of the EPMF has been cost-effective	Commission data on costs associated with governance of EPMF EIF data on costs associated with implementing EPMF Interviews at EU level Focus group
Coherence				
28. To what extent was the EPMF coherent externally, notably with other EU policies / actions / funding / instruments (ESIF and in particular the ESF) and complementary to other initiatives at European and national level?	To what extent was the EPMF coherent with and complementary to the ESIF, in particular the ESF, ERDF, EAFRD?	Evidence / examples of overlaps between the EPMF and ESIF / ESF Stakeholder views on the degree to which the EPMF was coherent with and complementary to ESIF and ESF	There is no evidence of unnecessary overlap between the EPMF and ESIF / ESF	Interim evaluation of EPMF Mid-term evaluation of EaSI Interviews at EU level
	Is there any evidence of incoherence or misalignment with other EU programmes (Jasmine, CIP financial instruments, Jeremie, Horizon 2020)? Which ones?	Evidence / examples of inconsistencies or misalignment Stakeholder views on any incoherence of misalignments	There is no evidence of unnecessary overlap between the EPMF and other EU programmes	Interim evaluation of EPMF Mid-term evaluation of EaSI Interviews at EU level
	Is there any evidence of incoherence or misalignment with initiatives at national level? Which ones?	Evidence / examples of inconsistencies or misalignment Stakeholder views on any incoherence of misalignments	There is no evidence of unnecessary overlap between the EPMF and national initiatives	Interim evaluation of EPMF Interviews at EU level
EU added value				
29. What was the added value of EPMF compared to what could and/or is likely to have been achieved at Member States levels in its absence?	Has the EPMF added to, or supported, existing actions or policy areas? (volume effect) Has the EPMF broadened existing actions by supporting groups that would not have received support otherwise? (scope effects) Have lessons learnt from the implementation of the EPMF been applied elsewhere? (role effects) Has the EPMF changed operational processes, including in relation to other national or European sources of funding? (process effects)	Evidence / examples of volume, scope, role and/or process effects of the EPMF Stakeholder views on the degree to which the EPMF has had EU added value Evidence / examples of activities that would not have taken place / would have taken place with a reduced scope in the absence of the EPMF Stakeholder views on the feasibility of alternative programmes / forms of funding in the absence of the EPMF	The EPMF had EU added value	Results from preceding evaluation questions Interviews at EU level Focus groups Case studies

	Is there evidence suggesting that the specific outcomes of the EPMF could not have been achieved to the same degree without EU intervention?		The EPMF had added value over and above what could be achieved otherwise	Results from preceding evaluation questions Interviews at EU level Focus groups Case studies

ANNEX IV. OVERVIEW OF BENEFITS AND COSTS AND OF SIMPLIFICATION/BURDEN REDUCTION

This annex presents the costs and benefits by specific groups of stakeholders and identifies the potential for simplification and burden reduction for each axis: PROGRESS (Table 33), EURES (Table 34) and Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship (Table 35).

The information is broken down per axis, given that different groups of stakeholders were targeted under each axis:

PROGRESS axis:

- public sector (public authorities and public bodies)
- civil society (social partners, EU-level NGO networks, foundations, other civil society organisations)
- businesses (private enterprises; not-for-profit enterprises; social enterprises)
- universities/research institutes

EURES axis:

- employers
- jobseekers

Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis and EPMF:

- microcredit providers (private or public banks, non-bank microfinance institutions and not-for-profit microcredit providers)
- final beneficiaries (micro-enterprises, vulnerable people, social enterprises)

Table 32. PROGRESS axis costs, benefits and potential for savings/burden reduction

Target groups		**Public sector (public authorities and bodies)**		**Civil society (EU-level NGO networks/foundations/social partners, other organisations)**		**Businesses (private/not-for-profit)**		**Universities/research institutes**	
Costs/benefits/burden reduction		Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary
Cost: **EU support to evidence-based EU policies and legislation**	Policy. Recurring. Compliance cost. Expected.	N/A	**No costs**	N/A	**No costs**	N/A	**No costs**	N/A	**No costs**
Cost: **EU support to information-sharing, mutual learning and dialogue**	Policy. Recurring. Expected.	N/A	**No costs** .	N/A	**No costs**	N/A	**No costs**	N/A	**No costs**
Cost: **EU support to testing social policy innovations**	Policy. Recurring. Expected.	N/A	**Moderate** Costs in relation to grants agreements with the EC (consortium's 20% contribution to the project budget).	N/A	**Moderate** Costs in relation to grants agreements with the EC (consortium's 20% contribution to the project budget).	N/A	**Moderate** Costs in relation to grants agreements with the EC (consortium's 20% contribution to the project budget).	N/A	**Moderate** Costs in relation to grants agreements with the EC (consortium's 20% contribution to the project budget).

Target groups		Public sector (public authorities and bodies)		Civil society (EU-level NGO networks/foundations/social partners, other organisations)		Businesses (private/not-for-profit)		Universities/research institutes	
Costs/benefits/burden reduction		Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary
Cost: **EU support to building capacity of national and EU organisations**	Economic. Recurring. Compliance cost. Expected.	N/A	**No costs**	N/A	**Moderate** Costs in relation to EU-level networks operating grants agreements (20% contribution to the project budget).	N/A	**No costs**	N/A	**No costs**
Benefit: **Increased availability of comparative analytical knowledge**	Policy. Recurring. Expected.	**Moderate** Policymakers used the analytical outputs to inform policymaking at national and EU level. These outputs also contributed to support the implementation of the EU legislation, enforcement of the EU legislation as well as to the European Semester process ad country-specific recommendations.	**Unknown**	**Moderate** Civil society stakeholders used the analytical outputs to inform the policy debate and to influence the policymaking.	**Unknown** outputs.	N/A	N/A	**Moderate** Universities/research institutes used the analytical outputs tin academic, research and consultancy work.	**Unknown**

Target groups		Public sector (public authorities and bodies)		Civil society (EU-level NGO networks/foundations/social partners, other organisations)		Businesses (private/not-for-profit)		Universities/research institutes	
Costs/benefits/burden reduction		Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary
Benefit: **Increased opportunities for information-sharing, mutual learning, and dialogue.**	Economic. Recurring. Cost-saving. Expected.	**Moderate** Policymakers used the events and mutual learning opportunities to get information on strategic documents, legislation, and advocacy material.	**Unknown**	**Moderate** Civil society actors, including the EU-level NGO networks, used the events and mutual learning opportunities to get information on strategic documents, legislation, and advocacy material.	**Unknown**	N/A	N/A	**Moderate** Universities/research institutes used the events and mutual learning opportunities to get information on strategic documents, legislation, and advocacy material when relevant for academic and consultancy work.	**Unknown**
Benefit: **Increased opportunities for testing social innovations through social experimentation.**	Policy. Recurring. Expected.	**Low** Limited use of the social experimentation results by policymakers to inform policymaking.	**Unknown**	**Low** Limited use of the social experimentation results by civil society actors to inform policymaking.	**Unknown**	N/A	N/A	**Unknown** Potential use of the social experimentation results by universities and research institutes in academic/research works.	**Unknown**

Target groups		Public sector (public authorities and bodies)		Civil society (EU-level NGO networks/foundations/social partners, other organisations)		Businesses (private/not-for-profit)		Universities/research institutes	
Costs/benefits/burden reduction		Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary
Benefit: **Greater capacity of national and EU organisations**	Policy. Recurring. Expected.	**Moderate** Improved competences/capacity to develop, promote and support the implementation of EU employment and social policy and legislation.	**Unknown**	**Moderate** Larger impact of EU-level NGO networks on the development of EU/national policies and legislation (the operating grants notably allowed them to hire more staff and to expand their membership and ensure thus their durability).	**Unknown**	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Potential saving/burden reduction: **Reducing administrative burden in application, implementation and reporting phase.**	Recurrent	**Moderate** It will potentially enable stakeholders/consortia to properly and timely develop projects, submit them, implement them if granted and measure their effectiveness.	**Unknown**	**Moderate** It will potentially enable stakeholders/consortia to properly and timely develop projects, submit them, implement them if granted and measure their effectiveness.	**Unknown**	**Moderate** It will potentially enable stakeholders/consortia to properly and timely develop projects, submit them, implement them if granted and measure their effectiveness.	**Unknown**	**Moderate** It will potentially enable stakeholders/consortia to properly and timely develop projects, submit them, implement them if granted and measure their effectiveness.	**Unknown**

Target groups		Public sector (public authorities and bodies)		Civil society (EU-level NGO networks/foundations/social partners, other organisations)		Businesses (private/not-for-profit)		Universities/research institutes	
Costs/benefits/burden reduction		Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary
Potential saving/burden reduction: **Reducing operating grants calls for proposals[283] frequency.**	One-off	N/A	N/A	**Moderate** Continuity and stability of the EU-level NGO networks work. Representatives as it could potentially limit the continuity of their work.	**Unknown**	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: DG EMPL, based on Sections 4.1.7, 4.1.8, 4.1.9 and 4.1.10 of the EaSI ex post evaluation Staff Working Document.

[283]The calls for proposals for operating grants should be organised on a recurrent basis according to the EU Financial Regulation.

Table 35. EURES axis costs, benefits and potential for savings/burden reduction

Target groups		Jobseekers		Employers		Public authorities and bodies	
Costs and benefits/Types		Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary
Cost: **Posting of national job vacancies on the EURES Portal**	Economic. Recurring. Compliance cost. Changes in employment. Expected.	N/A	**No costs** No cost in relation to the transfer of job vacancies from national databases to the EURES portal for the jobseekers.	N/A	**No costs** No cost in relation to the transfer of job vacancies from national databases to the EURES portal for the jobseekers.	**Medium** The costs incurred in relation to the transfer of job vacancies to the EURES Portal depended on the existing infrastructure in each EURES country (for some countries there is any cost and for other there is a need to adapt the infrastructure).	**Medium** The ratio of job vacancies posted on the EURES Portal as a proportion of all job vacancies available in the participating countries increased from 48% in 2017 to 50% in 2920.
Cost: **Inefficiencies in the EURES Portal functioning (e.g. correct matching of job vacancies and CVs, job vacancies out-dated or incomplete)**	Economic. Recurring. Not expected.	**Medium** The automatic matching function is not sufficiently performant to provide the desired matches, which results in jobseekers having to spend additional time to check the results.	Unknown	**Medium** The automatic matching function is not sufficiently performant to provide the desired matches, which results in employers having to spend additional time to check the results.	Unknown	**Medium** Due to the insufficient performance of the automated matching, EURES staff in the participating countries must match manually several job vacancies with relevant CVs and vice versa.	Unknown

Target groups		Jobseekers		Employers		Public authorities and bodies	
Costs and benefits/Types		Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary
Cost: **EURES reporting and monitoring system**	Economic. One off and recurring. Compliance cost. Expected.	**Low** The jobseekers are asked several questions regarding their profile when interacting with EURES, for instance: level of skills and qualifications, work experience, sector of activity, motivation to find a job in another country and expected remuneration.	N/A	**Low** The employers are asked several questions regarding their profile when interacting with EURES. Questions asked typically refer to employers' financial and operational capacity, the positions they seek to fill, competences required to fill these positions and proposed remuneration.	N/A	**Medium** The costs incurred in relation to the development of a monitoring system depended on the already existing infrastructure in each EURES country. For some countries, there is any cost and for other there is a need to adapt the infrastructure).	**Medium** Most stakeholders consulted believe that reporting on EaSI activities is proportional to the benefices achieved.
Benefit: **Increased number of jobseekers and employers registered on the EURES Portal.**	Social. Recurring. Changes in employment. Expected.	**Medium** A greater number jobseekers and employers registered on the EURES Portal increases the possibility of successful matching.	The number of jobseekers registered on the EURES Portal increased from 190 000 in 2015 to almost 1,2 million in 2020.	**Medium** A greater number jobseekers and employers available on the EURES Portal increases the possibility of successful matching.	The number of employers registered on the EURES Portal increased from 6 000 in 2015 to almost 16 000 in 2020.	**Medium** Greater possibility for matching relevant job vacancies and CVs, which leads to increased placement at national level through EURES and higher customer satisfaction with placement services.	N/A

Target groups		Jobseekers		Employers		Public authorities and bodies	
Costs and benefits/Types		Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary
Benefit: **Placements achieved with the support of EURES**	Social. Recurring. Changes in employment. Expected.	**High** Better integration in the labour market.	The number of placements increased from 31 056 in 2014 to 36 154 in 2020.	**High** Diversification of skills and competences in enterprises, improvement of productivity.	The number of placements increased from 31 056 in 2014 to 36 154 in 2020.	**Medium** Increased customer satisfaction with multiplier effect on attracting future users. Nevertheless, the contacts became more costly over the time.	**Medium** The number of placements increased from 31 056 in 2014 to 36 154 in 2020. Upward trend in number of placements is paired with a downward trend (by 2.3 percentage points) in the share of placements resulting from contacts with jobseekers/employers in 2014 – 2020.
Saving: **General cost-saving generated by EURES activities as opposed to the national level**	Recurring.	**Low** Savings could be invested in activities benefitting to jobseekers.	N/A	**Low** Savings could be invested in activities benefitting to employers.	N/A	**High** Savings can be devoted to further national employment support or to other policy objectives.	**High** There were no other comparable sources of funding that could equally facilitate the transparent labour market information/advice and services for recruitment and placement at EU level.

Source: DG EMPL, based on Sections 4.1.5, 4.1.6, 4.1.10 and 4.3 of the EaSI ex post evaluation Staff Working Document and on the EURES Regulation ex post evaluation Staff Working Document.

Table 34. Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis and EPMF costs, benefits and potential for savings/burden reduction

Target groups		**Microcredit providers**		**Vulnerable groups**		**Micro-enterprises/Social enterprises**	
Costs and benefits		Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary
Cost: **EU support to access to and availability of microfinance**	Social. Economic. Recurring. Expected.	N/A	**No costs** No costs in relation to signing agreements between the EIF and the microcredit providers.	N/A	**No costs** No costs in relation to signing contracts between the microcredit providers and people receiving loans in the microfinance field.	N/A	**No costs** No costs in relation to signing contracts between the microcredit providers and micro-enterprises receiving loans.
Cost: **EU support to social entrepreneurship**	Social. Economic. Recurring. Expected.	N/A	**No costs** No costs in relation to signing agreements between the EIF and the microcredit providers.	N/A	**No costs** No costs in relation to signing contracts between the microcredit providers and people receiving loans in the social entrepreneurship field.	N/A	**No costs** No costs in relation to signing contracts between the microcredit providers and social entreprises receiving loans.
Cost: **EU support to capacity building of microcredit providers**	Economic. Recurring. Compliance cost. Expected.	N/A	**No costs** No costs in relation to signing agreements between the EIF and the microcredit providers.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Target groups		Microcredit providers		Vulnerable groups		Micro-enterprises/Social enterprises	
Costs and benefits		Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary
Benefit: **Increased access to and availability of microfinance**	Social. Economic. Recurring. Changes in employment. Expected.	**High** A greater number of agreements signed between EIF and the microcredit providers increased the possibility for the microcredit providers to support micro-enterprises and vulnerable people.	**High** The total number of operations signed with microcredit providers in the microfinance branch was 111. The EaSI total volume of loans in the microfinance branch resulted in a leverage effect of 13.9 while the EU contribution to EPMF gave a leverage effect of 5.	**Medium** A greater number of microloans provided by the microcredit providers to vulnerable people increased their possibility to launch or to develop a business. The proportion of women supported decreased by 6.7 percentage points between 2012 (EPMF) and 2020 (EaSI). Similarly, the proportion of unemployed decreased by 8.6 percentage points during the same period. The proportion of seniors supported doubled during the same period, while a significant increase can be observed in 2018 - 2020 for people coming from non-EU countries.	**High** The number of microloans provided grew from 0 (2010) when EPMF was launched to 60 435 (2020). For EaSI, the number of microloans increased from 31 895 (2014) to 97 271 (2020). The EaSI total volume of microcredits resulted in a leverage effect of 13.9 while the EU contribution to EPMF gave a leverage effect of 5.	**High** Greater possibility for micro-enterprises to develop their activity and to create jobs.	**High** The number of microloans provided grew from 0 (2010) when EPMF was launched to 60 435 (2020). For EaSI, the number of microloans increased from 31 895 (2014) to 97 271 (2020). The EaSI total volume of microcredits resulted in a leverage effect of 13.9 while the EU contribution to EPMF gave a leverage effect of 5.

Target groups		Microcredit providers		Vulnerable groups		Micro-enterprises/Social enterprises	
Costs and benefits		Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary
Benefit: **Increased access and availability of social finance**	Social. Economic. Recurring. Changes in employment. Expected.	**High** A greater number of agreements signed between EIF and the microcredit providers increased the possibility for the microcredit providers to support social enterprises.	**High** The total number of operations signed with microcredit providers in the social entrepreneurship branch was 40, fewer than in the microfinance branch, given the novelty of this support. The EaSI total volume of loans social entrepreneurship branch resulted in a leverage effect of 12.3 (less than in the microfinance branch).	**High** Diversification of skills and competences, job creation, improvement of services provided by the enterprises supported to vulnerable groups (most of them operating in human health and social work activities).	Unknown	**Medium** Increased customer satisfaction with multiplier effect on attracting future users. Nevertheless, the contacts became more costly over the time.	**High** The number of social enterprises supported increased from 63 (2016) to 3 337 (2020).

Target groups		Microcredit providers		Vulnerable groups		Micro-enterprises/Social enterprises	
Costs and benefits		Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary	Qualitative	Quantitative / monetary
Benefit: **Increased capacity of microcredit providers**	Economic. Recurring. Changes in employment. Expected.	**High** Qualitative improvement in the institutional capacity of the microcredit providers (both in the microfinance and social entrepreneurship fields) allowing them to acquire recognition, to support more enterprises and vulnerable groups, and to attract more support from the private and public sectors.	**High** More than 100 microcredit providers benefitted from the EU support in different ways by end-2020 (compared with 0 in 2014, given that this was a completely new activity under EaSI).	**High** Improved capacity of the microcredit providers (both in the microfinance and social entrepreneurship fields) allowing them to acquire to support more micro-enterprises, social enterprises, and vulnerable groups to launch or develop a business.	Unknown	**High** Improved capacity of the microcredit providers (both in the microfinance and social entrepreneurship fields) allowing them to acquire to support more micro-enterprises, social enterprises, and vulnerable groups to launch or develop a business.	**High** The number of microloans provided by EaSI microcredit providers to micro-enterprises and vulnerable people increased from 31 895 (2014) to 97 271 (2020). The number of social enterprises supported increased from 63 (2016) to 3 337 (2020).
Burden reduction: Reducing bureaucratic and administrative burden.	Recurring.	**High** Minimizing administrative obstacles and systematic reduction of administrative burden potentially allowed microcredit providers to support more enterprises and vulnerable groups.	Unknown	**High** Minimizing administrative obstacles and systematic reduction of administrative burden potentially allowed vulnerable groups to access more easily loans and develop their business.	Unknown	**Moderate** Minimizing administrative obstacles and systematic reduction of administrative burden potentially allowed enterprises to access more easily loans and develop their activity.	Unknown

Source: DG EMPL, based on Sections 4.1.7, 4.1.8, 4.1.9 and 4.1.10 of the EaSI ex post evaluation Staff Working Document.

ANNEX V. STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATIONS' SYNOPSIS REPORT

V.1 Objectives

This synopsis report presents the stakeholder consultation activities performed within the *ex post* evaluation of the European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) including the final evaluation of the European Progress Microfinance Facility (EPMF). The objective of the stakeholder consultations was to collect quantitative and qualitative data, experiences and views about EaSI and EPMF effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and EU added value – the five evaluation criteria under scrutiny.

The evaluation roadmap was published for stakeholders' feedback on the 'Have your say' web portal, and open between 8 October 2019 and 5 November 2019. Four (4) contributions were received. They were overall positive on the EaSI programme objectives and activities in matching beneficiaries' needs, meanwhile underlining the remaining societal and geographical imbalances and inequalities despite the Europe 2020 Strategy ambitions.

Suggestions notably included creating conditions for better access to and more visibility of funding opportunities at national level. Commission direct management implementation mode was seen as generally satisfactory. All four contributions preached for continuity of the programme. No comments were provided on the EPMF programme specifically.

The consultation strategy further identified the appropriate methods and tools by category of stakeholders to be consulted. The stakeholders targeted by the consultation activities were individuals and organisations that had 1) an interest in or received services provided by EaSI and EPMF; 2) expertise in the topics dealt by EaSI and EPMF; 3) run or been involved in running EaSI and EPMF activities.

The dedicated consultation activities were implemented by Ramboll Management Consulting, SEOR and Tetra Tech ('the Contractor') for DG Employment when conducting the study supporting the *ex post* evaluation of EaSI including the final evaluation of the EPMF. A final verification and validation seminar was organised by DG EMPL and the Contractor on 5 July 2022 to discuss the study's findings with the stakeholders involved in the consultations. Additional consultation activities of civil society organisations, social partners, and public authorities in five selected EU countries (Austria, France, Hungary, Italy and Lithuania) were carried out by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and drawn up in an EESC information report.

All consultation activities, including the evaluation supporting study validation seminar and the EESC's consultations, are documented in this synopsis report. A detailed analysis of each consultation activity was also included in the Technical Annexes of the supporting study.

V.2 Methods and tools

In line with the consultation strategy, various consultation methods and tools were used in order to ensure that views of relevant stakeholders groups on EaSI and EPMF are adequately captured. Table 36 below shows the main stakeholders groups targeted through all the consultation activities and the main reasons for consulting them.

Table 36. Types of stakeholders consulted.

Type of stakeholder	Interest
Citizens and organisations	To provide feedback on the support received, whether they corresponded to their needs and how they could be improved.
EaSI committee members	Insights into EaSI governance and activities as well as on their coherence with the national policies.
Public sector representative (ministries, multi-level public authorities)	Insights on how the programmes contributed to the areas related to employment and social inclusion at national level, but also on the coherence of the programmes with national initiatives/programmes.
Programme beneficiaries[284]	Feedback of their experience with EaSI and EPMF, notably on how they responded to their needs and on how they could be improved.
EU officials	Background on the EaSI and EPMF activities and on specific decisions taken during the programmes' implementation.
EIF officials	Background on the EaSI third axis and EPMF activities and insights on the programmes' implementation.
Social partners	Feedback on how to improve the involvement of the social partners in future actions.
Civil society organisations	Insights on the civil society inclusion in the planning and implementation of the two programmes.

Source: DG EMPL

Depending on the identified stakeholder group, dedicated methods and tools were used to conduct the consultation. One main method was the questionnaire-based online public consultation. All citizens and organisations from Member States and other participating countries were invited to contribute to this consultation: public authorities, EaSI committee members, policy committees' members, social partners, private organisations, social enterprises, financial intermediaries, EaSI beneficiaries (organisations involved and final beneficiaries), academia and individual citizens.

Additional consultation methods foreseen in the consultation strategy included semi-structured interviews, focus groups and targeted surveys with key stakeholders (EaSI committee members, EaSI programme's beneficiaries, public authorities, Commission officials). Within the evaluation process, these targeted consultations complemented data and information collected through the public online consultation and other methods, such as the secondary data analysis and case studies.

Aside, the European Economic and Social Committee ran dedicated consultations. The members of the EESC evaluation team collected the views of civil society organisations as well as of public authorities through two channels: five virtual fact-finding visits in the selected countries and a targeted online questionnaire (targeting the civil society organisations). Additionally, secondary data collection on the EESC's past work on the topic was also analysed. The EESC final report was shared with the European Commission as a contribution to its own evaluation exercise. It was also shared with the stakeholders consulted.

[284]Projects' implementers, EU-level NGO networks, projects' target groups/final beneficiaries, EURES network members, micro- and social finance providers.

V.3 Results of the consultations

Overall, 412 stakeholders representing public, private and civil society sectors provided feedback during the entire consultation process. Table 37 below presents the type of consultation activity, their timeframe as well as the number of respondents.

Table 37. Consultation activities, timeframe and number of respondents

Stakeholder consultation activity	Timeframe	Respondents
Online public consultation	October - December 2021	107
Semi-structured interviews	April 2021 - March 2022	46
EaSI beneficiaries survey	19 September - 19 October 2021	102
Financial intermediaries survey	19 August - 19 September 2021	39
Focus group with EaSI committee	8 March 2021	4
Focus group with EU-level ONG networks	9 December 2021	10
Focus group with the EIF officials	10 March 2021	6
EESC fact-findings visits	9 March - 30 March 2022	53
EESC online survey	9 March - 4 April 2022	33
Final validation seminar	5 July 2022	12[285]
Total		**412**

Source: DG EMPL

While the public consultation was advertised through the EaSI dedicated website, DG EMPL website and social media, direct mailing and meetings, the participants to the interviews, focus groups and targeted surveys were contacted via mailing, telephone and/or meetings.

The outcomes of all consultation activities are presented in the next sections, differentiating the views of categories of stakeholders consulted to the extent possible.

V.3.1 Online public consultation

The online public consultation ran between 5 October 2021 and 28 December 2021 on the 'Have your say' dedicated consultation page. Its purpose was to give a large number of stakeholders a say in the assessment of the EaSI and EPMF programmes. The questionnaire comprised closed and open questions and provided background information for those unfamiliar with the programmes. Respondents were overall more familiar with EaSI than with EPMF.

In total 107 responses were received from 28 countries[286]. This includes 23 countries out of the 27 EU Member States (Belgium, Italy, Spain, Latvia, France, Greece, Romania, Poland, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Germany, Czech Republic, Sweden, Slovakia, Netherlands, Croatia, Luxembourg, Ireland, Hungary, Finland, Estonia, Cyprus, Austria) and five non-EU countries (Albania, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia and Türkiye). The countries most represented among respondents were Belgium (17%), Italy (12%) and Spain (10%).

The largest number of responses came from public authorities (39) and NGOs (23), followed by EU citizens (14), company/business organisations (13), trade unions (3), academic/research institutions (3) and business associations (1). There were 11 responses from individuals who did not indicate the capacity in which they chose to reply, by selecting

[285]ISSG members from DG EMPL and of the contractor team participated and animated the seminar but they are not included in this result.
[286]The list of countries is presented from largest number of responses received to the smallest number.

"other". Cross tabulation with other responses indicates that the respondents who indicated "other" work in public and private sector organisations.

The majority of organisations that responded operate at the national level (21 respondents) followed by the local level (13) and the regional level (11). Three (3) respondents represented organisations working at the international level. As for the size of these organisations that respondents belong to, nearly half (39 out of 93) represented large organisations, followed by small organisations (21 respondents), medium (17) and micro-enterprises (16). The EaSI stakeholders involved in EaSI activities[287] were from all the 27 Member States as well as from 14 non-EU countries (Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo[288], Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, North Macedonia, Serbia, Switzerland, Türkiye and the United-Kingdom). Most of the actions took place in Belgium, Spain, Italy, Germany and France. Among those who had been involved directly or indirectly in the EaSI programme activities (71 respondents), the largest number of respondents had been involved in PROGRESS (35), followed by Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship (25) and EURES (21). It must be noted that 11 respondents were involved in multiple axes[289]. Most of respondents were involved as 'beneficiaries of funding', followed by 'applicants to EaSI calls' and 'stakeholders who attended an EaSI event'. Eighteen (18) respondents were involved in another capacity, for instance as consultant for EURES, as an associated partner or as a member of the EURES Spain Network.

The respondents were also asked whether different stakeholders had been sufficiently involved in the EaSI activities. Sixty (60) out of 97 respondents agreed that the "EU institutions" had been sufficiently involved, followed by "Public Employment Services" (58), "national authority/government body/ministry" (56), "NGO" (55), and "social enterprise/social company" (50). These findings indicate that EaSI has been actively involved with most of its key audiences (see an overview in the Figure 16 below).

A small number of respondents to the questionnaire (9 respondents) had been involved directly or indirectly in the EPMF activities[290]. They were involved in activities implemented in 39 countries of which 11 were outside the EU. Among these countries, Poland, Spain, Romania, Italy, France and Belgium are the most represented. Five (5) respondents were involved as financial intermediaries (e.g. microfinance institution, commercial bank) and the remaining four (4) selected 'other' (e.g. representative of the microfinance sector; EU level network). No respondents were involved as a final beneficiary (e.g. micro enterprise, self-employed). The respondents who were not involved in EPMF answered that the programme was 'not relevant to them or that they had no needs that the EPMF could fill' (24 out of 43), followed by nine (9 out of 43) who did 'not know what the programme was'.

[287]While the list EaSI eligible countries includes EU Member States, EFTA/EEA, EU candidate countries and potential candidates, responses to the question on the involvement in EaSI activities were received from stakeholders from other third countries as well. This was related to the fact that the question on involvement in EaSI was formulated in a large sense (including for instance also participants in different events): "Were you involved in the EaSI programme? Involvement refers to direct involvement (receiving funding) or indirect involvement (i.e. applicants to calls, participation in events or capacity building stakeholder supporting the participation of other stakeholders in the EaSI programme)".

[288]This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

[289]Number of respondents involved in multiple axes: four (4) in PROGRESS and EURES; three (3) in all three axis and four (4) in PROGRESS and Microfinance /Social Entrepreneurship.

[290]While the list EPMF eligible countries includes EU Member States, responses to the question on the involvement in EaSI activities were received from stakeholders from other third countries as well. This was related to the fact that the question on involvement in EaSI was formulated in a large sense (including for instance also participants in different events): "Were you involved in the EaSI programme? Involvement refers to direct involvement (receiving funding) or indirect involvement (i.e. applicants to calls, participation in events or capacity building stakeholder supporting the participation of other stakeholders in the EaSI programme)".

Figure 16. Given the target groups and EaSI objectives, do you think the stakeholders listed below have been sufficiently involved in EaSI? (n=97)



Source: Contractor, based on the results of the online public consultation

Eighty-seven (87) out of 97 respondents[291] - including all NGOs and public authority respondents except one - found that EaSI was a relevant programme to produce concrete, coordinated and innovative actions. Seventy-one (71) respondents confirmed EaSI relevance to its objective of supporting the development of adequate, accessible, and efficient social protection systems and labour markets, and 66 confirmed EaSI relevance to promote employment and social inclusion. The majority of those who expressed a view (25 out of 26) either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that EPMF had increased access to microfinance for micro-enterprises and people at risk of losing their jobs as well as actively promoted equal opportunities. Nevertheless, when respondents were asked if they had heard about results or impact of the EPMF, half (26 out of 52) responded 'do not know', 17 (33 %) hadn't heard and nine (17%) recalled having heard about the results.

The respondents found that EaSI was most effective at strengthening ownership among policy makers (60 respondents) and promoting employment and social inclusion by increasing accessibility to microfinance (60 respondents), as well as at developing adequate, accessible, and efficient social protection systems and labour markets (58 respondents). Seventy (70) out of 97 respondents confirmed that EaSI had generated positive changes that would not have occurred in the absence of its interventions. Sixty-nine (69) respondents gave specific examples related to: policy experimentation; research activities and innovation; scaling up of best practices at national and regional levels; increased access to finance and increased capacity building opportunities in the microfinance and social entrepreneurship

[291]Whilst there was a total of 107 respondents to the survey, these respondents were not obliged to answer each question. There were 97 responses to this question.

sectors; and specific benefits for target groups of beneficiaries (e.g. support to disadvantaged people in the labour market).

Out of 97 respondents[292], 56 did not know about the sufficiency of the EaSI budget, 19 considered the budget to be sufficient to achieve the intended results, while 20 believed that it was too low. Some respondents felt EaSI should fund more projects in order to have more impact on Europe's social, environmental and digital challenges. They indicated that there were still substantial growth opportunities and needs in the market, notably to support social enterprises. Project beneficiaries[293] were asked about the sufficiency of budgets for their EaSI-funded projects. Forty-one (41) out of 52 respondent project beneficiaries agreed that budgets were sufficient to achieve their intended results.

Financial intermediaries specifically (6 respondents) were asked how they benefitted from the EPMF. Five (5) out of 6 respondents felt the support provided by the EPMF contributed most to 'increasing their lending activities' (of which 4 respondents strongly agreed), 'meeting unserved demand', 'reaching out to groups who could not normally be served', 'mitigating credit risks' and 'providing improved financing terms at affordable pricing. Views were mixed about whether the EPMF had helped respondents to 'extend the financing terms' and 're-establish borrowers' trust in credit institution' with two (2) disagreeing, two (2) agreeing or strongly agreeing and two (2) not having an opinion.

In terms of internal coherence, 22 respondents out of 71 (31%) considered the merger of the three predecessor programmes had improved the consistency, complementarity and flexibility of the three EaSI axes resulting in higher efficiency, synergies and coordination between policy instruments, projects, microfinance and social experiments while nine (9) disagreed and 40 did not know. With respect to external coherence and complementarity with other EU programmes, EaSI was viewed by a large majority (64 out of 97 respondents, or 66%) as most complementary to ESF, and to a lesser extent to Erasmus (27), ERDF (25) and Horizon 2020 (24). Seventy (70) out of 97 respondents agreed that EaSI had complemented the actions of national programmes. Furthermore, 45 out of 97 respondents (46%) did not think the EaSI objectives had overlapped with objectives of national instruments. Forty (40) respondents out of 97 disagreed, while 49 had no opinion on whether nationally-funded initiatives were more efficient than EaSI.

Sixty-seven (67) respondents explained their responses (as above) on EaSI coherence with national initiatives. In their opinion, EaSI offered more flexibility and funding to experiment new policies and methods, notably by using a transnational/EU-level approach. Additionally, four (4) respondents found that EaSI covered gaps in national actions. For instance in Belgium, no national programmes financed social financing transaction costs like MF/SE axis did or actions similar to the Targeted Mobility Scheme proposed under EURES axis. Only two respondents identified overlaps saying that EaSI targeted many of the main policy areas of national initiatives.

Eighty (80) respondents out of 97 agreed that EaSI had added value to or supported existing actions or policy areas at EU level, notably by broadening existing actions at EU level and supporting groups that would not have otherwise received support (74). Forty-eight (48) respondents agreed that EaSI had added value by producing lessons learned that were applied elsewhere at EU level, and 40 respondents agreed that EaSI had added value by changing

[292]This group included, but was not limited to, respondents who were project beneficiaries.

[293]This question was addressed to the 52 project beneficiaries that participated in this online public consultation. Respondents were asked about the budget received for the project that they were involved in.

operational processes. Seventy-five (75) respondents agreed that EaSI had added value to existing actions at the national or regional level.

On the EPMF added value, 23 respondents out of 52 agreed that the 'EPMF programme had broadened existing action at EU level by supporting groups that would not have received support otherwise' and 24 respondents out of 52 admitted that 'the EPMF had added to existing action at EU level to increase access and availability of microfinance for vulnerable groups'. The remaining had no opinion (29 and 28 respondents respectively). When asked about the EPMF added value at the Member State/regional level, four (4) respondents disagreed to the fact that 'EPMF programme had broadened existing action at national/regional level by supporting groups that would not have received support otherwise' and two (2) respondents disagreed to the fact that 'the EPMF had added to existing action at national/regional level to increase access and availability of microfinance for vulnerable groups'.

Lastly, 38 of the 52 respondents (73%) did not know whether, in the absence of the EPMF, similar debt financing instruments could be found elsewhere, while the remaining replies were almost split between 'yes' (8) and 'no' (6). Five (5) respondents provided further detail on the added value of the EPMF debt financing. They noted the importance of debt financing instruments for microfinance institutions and for EPMF beneficiaries who cannot access bank financing (for instance in Lithuania). Respondents who selected 'yes' to the question explained similar schemes exist in countries like the Czech Republic and France as well as at EU level (e.g. ESF, InvestEU programme).

Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to provide further free comments. In total, 18 responses were given (5 from NGOs, 5 from public authority and 6 from business organisations. The remainder of responses came from trade unions or other types of stakeholders). One third (6) of these respondents commented on communication and planning (especially funding planning) of EaSI and related projects (these respondents were from public authorities, business organisations and an NGO). They believe that the communication on EaSI opportunities should be improved, with greater communication on upcoming EaSI calls and opportunities for potential beneficiaries. Two (2) of these respondents suggested greater standardisation of communication methods and platforms across the EU. Another respondent raised the need for greater integration between funding sources for different categories of beneficiaries, such as different vulnerable groups. Respondents requested simplifying the administrative burden for operators, anticipating that the new Funding & Tenders portal (the new Single Electronic Data Interchange Area introduced in 2021) will add bureaucratic burden.

Five (5) out of 18 of respondents who provided free comments (all NGOs), made observations related to Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis of EaSI, highlighting its benefits and making suggestions to improve EaSI contribution to supporting the microfinance sector. Among them, the need for more capacity-building activities, information-sharing events and funding for financial products were specifically mentioned. Three (3) other respondents highlighted the growing importance of microfinance in the mainstream economy and recommended that the EU continue to support this sector, also through the Social Economy Action Plan. They made additional specific suggestions, such as to increase the maximum amount of the guarantee for a single credit from EUR 500 000 to 1 million; to support the creation of a social economy taxonomy at EU-level; to ensure a consistent communication to improve the visibility and recognition of social economy organisations.

Five (5) other respondents out of 18 who provided free comments highlighted that EaSI should continue to focus on promoting social innovation and experimentation in the field of social inclusion and on supporting public authorities in this task (responses were from stakeholders involved in business organisations, NGOs and the public sector). They made specific suggestions related to the knowledge sharing between EaSI and ESF; ensuring that calls for proposals set requirements to plan projects' sustainability and further policy scale up; ensuring that projects are managed by partnerships that can have policy impacts. Giving more flexibility for original projects ('out of the box') to further experimentation was also suggested by one responded. Nevertheless, one other respondent pointed out that in addition to supporting social experimentation, structural support to upscaling of successful results is also needed.

The remaining three respondents (out of 18) provided ideas for specific improvements. For instance, one NGO representative suggested the creation of a database for social assistance users; another respondent from a public authority highlighted the need for more information on EaSI results in order to be able to make assessments; and lastly one respondent from a trade union hoped that the partial reallocation of EURES activities into ELA will allow for more efficient management.

V.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

This consultation activity was carried out between April 2021 and March 2022 totalling 46 interviews including in-depth interviews and case studies interviews both with Commission officials and external stakeholders.

A total of 14 interviews were conducted with the Commission officials (11 inside DG EMPL and 3 in other DGs), of which 4 exploratory interviews in the inception stage of the supporting study. These interviews supported the refinement of the study methodology, notably the evaluation matrix (see Annex III) and the intervention logic (see Section 2.2 and Annex II.2), and provided in-depth information on the programmes' coordination and implementation on the ground. A total of 32 interviews were carried out with external stakeholders, notably with EaSI beneficiaries (operational and action grants), financial intermediaries, former EaSI Committee members, EIB, EIF, EESC and SPC (Table 38).

Table 38. Interviews with external stakeholders

Interviewee type	In-depth interviews	Case study interviews	Total
Social Protection Committee	1	-	**1**
European Investment Bank	1	-	**1**
European Investment Fund	1	-	**1**
European Economic and Social	1	-	**1**
European Centre for Social	-	1	**1**
Financial intermediairies	-	8	**8**
Former EaSI Committee	-	2	**2**
EU-level NGO[294] networks	-	16	**16**
EaSI beneficiaries	-	1	**1**
TOTAL	**4**	**28**	**32**

Source: DG EMPL

Interviews were backward-looking and forward-looking. They intended to further explore and qualify data gathered through the desk research as well as evolutions since the mid-term evaluation, and to identify specific challenges and opportunities for the current ESF+ and

[294]Non-governmental organisations.

InvestEU programmes. The evidence collected through the interviews covered all evaluation criteria and the majority of the evaluation questions.

There was an overall consensus among the stakeholders interviewed that the EaSI programme met the needs of stakeholders although its level of relevance differed across the three axes. In the case of EPMF, interviewees acknowledged its relevance which was primarily seen through the increase in number and volume of microloans provided to the final beneficiaries.

In terms of effectiveness, there was a general agreement that both EaSI and EPMF had achieved their intended specific objectives. In the case of the PROGRESS axis, this was mainly seen through improved knowledge sharing and dissemination of good practices among/between Member States, and increased evidence-based policymaking. The EURES Portal, the promotion of social innovation and the roll out of new financial instruments under the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis of EaSI were among the key achievements perceived by the interviewees.

In terms of efficiency, while little substantial evidence could be collected, two (2) interviewees noted that merging the three previous programmes into the EaSI umbrella brought about reduced costs. In terms of inefficiencies, three (3) interviewees noted the lack of synergies between EaSI and ESF, mainly as regards the upscaling of social experimentations implemented under EaSI within the ESF framework.

No major gaps or inconsistencies were uncovered with regards to the EaSI programme's coherence with other comparable policies or funding instruments. Regarding the external coherence of the EPMF, one interviewee considered it was generally complementary to other EU policies and instruments.

One of the added values of the EaSI programme was the wide range of topics covered by the programme in the social field. Both for EaSI and EPMF, interviewees were of the view that without the support from the two programmes, achieving similar outcomes would have been challenging or not possible at Member States level.

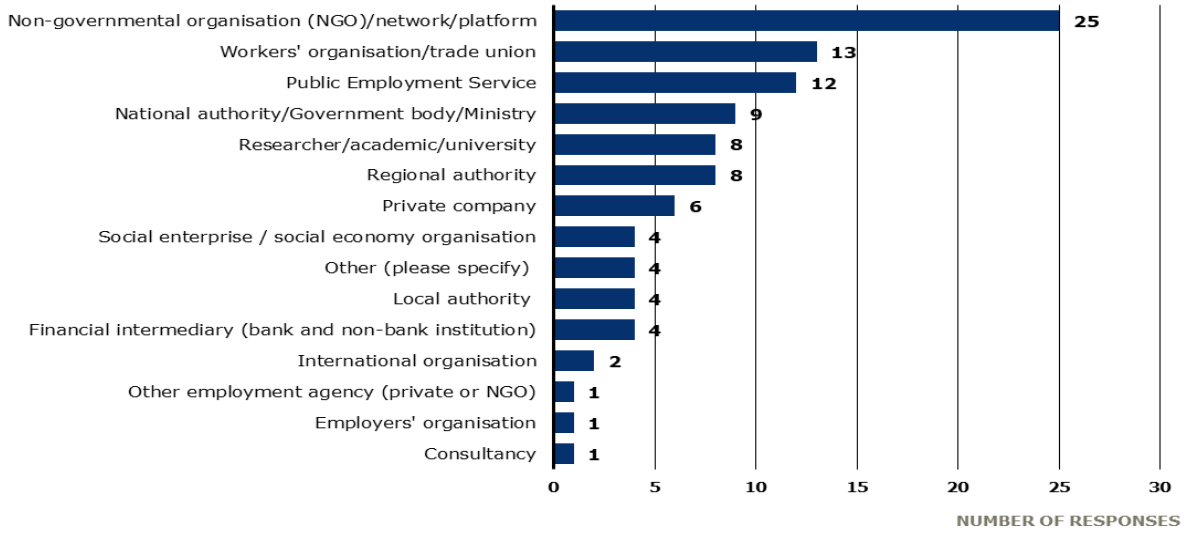
V.3.3 Targeted survey with EaSI beneficiaries

The targeted survey ran between 19 September 2021 and 19 October 2021. It was distributed to 280 EaSI grant beneficiaries across the EU and third countries that received EaSI grants (actions grants and operating grants) over the period 2014 - 2020. A total of 102 responses were received, with variations in the number of responses per question as respondents were able to skip questions not relevant to them.

The purpose of the survey targeting EaSI beneficiaries was to gather specific information notably to feed the case studies. More specifically, this survey enabled to gather an overview on the actions taken by EaSI beneficiaries to address horizontal issues as well as their views on the mitigation actions taken by the Commission to address exceptional circumstances such as the outbreak of COVID-19 and Brexit. The Figure 17 below presents the types of organisations that were represented in the survey, with the largest group being NGOs/ networks/ platforms (25)[295].

[295]For the four (4) respondents that answered "other", it was specified they represented respectively an "Incubator / Accelerator of start-ups", "not-for-profit European partnership of public health authorities", "training centre-public body" and a "university-associated to Tech Transfer/incubator".

Figure 17. Types of organisations represented in the survey with EaSI beneficiaries (n = 102)



Source: Supporting study, based on the results of the survey with EaSI beneficiaries

COVID-19 was found to have the greatest impact on respondents although the majority of respondents acknowledged that the Commission took sufficient actions to mitigate its effects. Respondents were of the view that their EaSI-funded actions considered the aspects of digitalisation and the (green) sustainable economy to some extent only.

In relation to the horizontal issues covered, the majority of activities focused on fighting poverty and social exclusion (63 out of 97) followed by activities to support vulnerable groups (60 out of 97). The activities carried out mostly targeted women (45 out of 97), young people (44 out of 97) and the long term unemployed (41 out of 97). Organising events, advocacy and social media campaigns focusing on horizontal issues were the main type of activity implemented by EaSI beneficiaries to address horizontal issues (44 out of 96) followed by producing awareness raising (43 out of 96).

According to the majority of respondents to the related question (18 out of 26), exchanges with the programme manager in the European Commission was perceived to be very useful.

V.3.4 Targeted survey with financial intermediaries

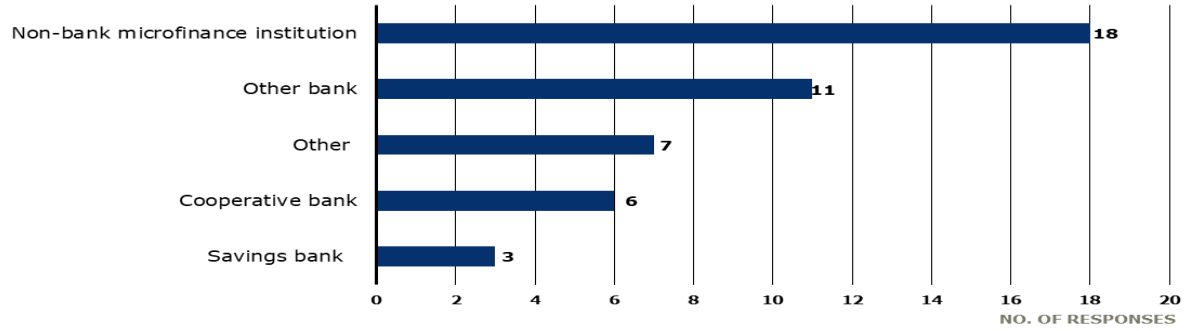
This consultation activity ran likewise between 19 August 2021 and 19 September 2021. The survey targeting financial intermediaries aimed at gathering their experience and views of the EPMF and its successor, Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis of EaSI.

The survey was distributed to 58 financial intermediaries across 24 countries in Europe[296], of which 39 completed it and 6 only partially[297]. Most of the respondents were EaSI beneficiaries (29), followed by beneficiaries of both EaSI and EPMF (13) and three EPMF beneficiaries only.

[296]Albania (1), Austria (1), Belgium (4), Bulgaria (3), Czech Republic (3), Denmark (1), Estonia (1), France (3), Germany (2), Greece (4), Hungary (2), Ireland (3), Italy (6), Latvia (2), Luxembourg (1), Montenegro (1), Netherlands (1), Poland (1), Portugal (3), Romania (8), Serbia (1), Slovakia (2), Spain (5), Sweden (1)

[297]In line with the Better Regulation Guidelines and Toolbox, the survey data was assessed for any entries that may be incomplete, contain duplicates, or contain errors. Thus, only completed responses (39) were considered in the analysis of the remaining sections of the survey. The 6 partial responses were taken into account in the analysis of the profiling questions but not included in the rest of the survey.

Figure 18. Types of organisations represented in the survey with the financial intermediaries



Source: Evaluation supporting study, based on the results of the survey with the financial intermediaries.

Figure 18 above shows that the main type of respondents were non-bank microfinance institutions (18), followed by other banks (11), other types of institutions[298] (7), cooperative banks (6) and saving banks (3). The largest group of respondents were from Romania (7) followed by Bulgaria (3), Greece (3), Italy (3) and Belgium (3). The survey results show that the guarantees provided by EPMF were relevant to a great extent, while seven (7) out of 14 respondents who were able to answer did not know whether loans were relevant for their needs. In relation to the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis under EaSI, seven (7) out of 11 of respondents reported that the financial instruments proposed under EaSI were relevant to the institution's needs to a great extent.

All respondents (14 out of 14) reported that EPMF was effective in helping their institution to meet demands for microfinance, which they did not have the capacity to meet before receiving funding from EPMF. Concerning MF/SE, out of all the options presented, seven (7) out of 12 respondents reported that the programme helped them to lower collateralisation requirements[299] to a great extent. Respondents also reported that the MF/SE axis had supported microenterprises in the start-up phase. Ten (10) out of the 14 respondents who were able to answer in relation to the EPMF reported that the collaboration and communication between their organisation and the EIF was sufficient and effective to a great extent. Five (5) out of 10 respondents reported that their microcredit portfolio developed as intended in terms of financial volume to certain extent and four (4) to a great extent.

According to 23 out of 37 respondents, the conditions for credits were positively affected by the support provided by the EaSI programme's Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis. 18 out of 36 respondents reported that the microcredit portfolio developed as intended in the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis guarantee agreement. Half of the respondents (11 out of 21 in the case of EaSI and 4 out of 8 in the case of EPMF) reported that the costs incurred had been proportionate to the benefits generated to a great extent.

V.3.5 Focus groups with EaSI committee members

The focus group with former EaSI Committee members took place on 8 March 2021. The main aim of this focus group was to gather feedback in relation to the experiences and satisfaction the former EaSI committee members had with the EaSI programme. It brought

[298]The respondents did not provide additional details regarding the type of institution they belong to.
[299]Collateralization is the use of an asset as collateral to secure a loan. If the borrower defaults on the loan, the lender may seize and sell the asset to offset their loss (https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/collateralization.asp).

together three former EaSI Committee members representing Latvia, Lithuania and Spain, and one observer representing Montenegro.

Overall, all the consulted members were satisfied with their involvement in the implementation of the EaSI programme. They acknowledged that the Commission listened to their feedbacks and that the Committee meetings were productive. Participants also reported that the EaSI Committee members' views were considered and taken on board by the Commission when setting up the annual programme.

They highlighted that all the actions funded under EaSI were mostly relevant, although the PROGRESS axis was perceived to be the most relevant axis. However, participants did not see the rationale behind bringing together the three axes of the programme under one umbrella programme. In their view, the axes should be managed separately as they have different priorities and financial allocations.

Concerns were raised in relation to the feasibility of making use of all the possibilities offered by the programme. For instance, the Lithuanian representative mentioned that his country did not have the appropriate ecosystem to implement the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis and to make use of the opportunities to implement social experimentations. Meanwhile EaSI programme contributed to kick start discussions on aspects such as social innovation role in policy making.

Another participant to the focus group (Montenegro's representative) indicated that the Montenegrin organisations could not participate in the EURES axis given the status of a candidate country. The same participant explained that Montenegro was not very active in the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis as there was not much awareness on how to participate and how to use available resources. However, the participant believed that the situation changed in the current period as there are more workshops, information sessions and events where candidate countries are invited.

The support provided under the current programming period (2021-2027) to establish National Contact Points was very positively perceived by all participants. According to the participants, this initiative can contribute to strengthened ownership among policy makers in ESF+/EaSI strand participating countries to produce innovative actions in their countries.

V.3.6 Focus groups with EU-level NGO networks

The focus group with EU-level NGO networks took place on 9 December 2021. The main objective of this focus group was to gain insights into the views of EU-level NGO networks and their experience as EaSI programme's operating grants beneficiaries.

Representatives of 10 networks participated to this focus group: Microfinance Centre (MFC), Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), European Network for Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE), European Food Banks Federation (FEBA), EUROCITIES, European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA), EURODIACONIA, COFACE Families Europe, EUROCHILD and SOLIDAR.

Overall, participants reported that the access to EaSI funds has improved the framework under which they operate. Due to the stable funding provided by the programme - enabling them to cover the operational costs - the networks can have a bigger impact by better structuring, consolidating and deepening their work as they have a longer timeframe to deliver. Ultimately, thi stable source of financing has boosted their capacity to participate in and influence decision-making/policy implementation to a greater extent. Notably, the networks' representatives mentioned that the programme had helped them to consolidate their position: while for the first ten years the focus was on building the agendas, now the

networks can focus on implementing them. Two (2) respondents also mentioned that EaSI funding had allowed them to move their office to Brussels and offer full-time contracts to their employees.

The EaSI funding has also contributed to build EU-level networks capacities at national level and to increase their visibility, which has allowed them to expand their membership. They reported that access to the EaSI programme has enabled them to provide better support to their members. For instance, one participant mentioned that the EaSI programme enabled networks to better support their members by providing them with more information (e.g. how to access European funding), and offering them more opportunities for mutual learning and knowledge exchange.

All respondents reported that the EaSI programme met the EU-level networks needs and emphasised the need to continue to implement this type of activity. Nevertheless, the main drawback associated with the EaSI funding was related to the fact that the networks needed to reapply for funding every year which generates a state of uncertainty (as it can potentially impact the planning and/or continuity of their work).

V.3.7 Focus groups with EIF representatives

The focus group with EIF representatives took place on 10 March 2021. This focus group was used to validate study findings to date and to fill identified information gaps. Five (5) EIF representatives took part in the focus group: a policy officer, an audit coordination officer, a senior member of the Microfinance team, a senior investment manager in the Inclusive Finance team, and the director of the EPMF Financial Inclusion and Coordination team.

In relation to the EPMF's key achievements, all of the representatives agreed that the EPMF had increased availability of microfinance to target groups, supported self-employed and social entrepreneurs. EPMF was also perceived to have increased the visibility of the European microfinance market among the stakeholders.

Participants noted the positive impact of the support provided to social enterprises under EaSI (a third of the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship portfolio was earmarked to the benefit of social enterprises), while EPMF identified this market need in this regard.

Participants also acknowledged that EaSI 'changed the game' by expanding the geographical scope to non-EU participating countries where emerged a high demand for microfinance from the market. As further concerns the geographical distribution of the EPMF, a participant also explained that the budget allocated to the Guarantee Instrument was limited and insufficient to serve all the countries under EPMF. By contrast, the EIF was able to reach more than 30 countries under EaSI thanks to the increased budget and the extended geographical scope.

Participants also discussed the impact on the survival rate and the revenues of companies which received microcredit. An example from the Netherlands was provided, where for start-up companies there was a positive effect on revenue, while already existing companies experienced less such an effect. Thus, the EPMF was seen to be more effective for start-ups than for already existing companies.

An issue related to the different legal frameworks existing in the countries covered by EPMF was also raised. The effectiveness of the EPMF was judged by participants to be dependent on the regulatory context in which it operated.

Participants were of the view that the governance of both EPMF and EaSI worked well; they highlighted the different governance measures in place between the guarantees and the loans. For the guarantee, the governance was handled bilaterally between the EIF and the

Commission. For the loans, the EIF cooperated with both the Commission and the EIB. However, one participant noted that, under EPMF, the governance structure was not flexible enough to allow changes during the implementation. For example, when changes were proposed in relation to the parameters in risk limits, this was not possible. Participants were not aware of any fraudulent activity being uncovered under the EPMF. Checks were consistently carried out to ensure compliance to contractual obligations. It was further noted that there were improvements in the level of scrutiny from EPMF to EaSI.

V.3.8 Final validation seminar

DG EMPL and the Contractor arranged a final verification and validation seminar on the study findings on 5 July 2022. The main objective was for the Contractor team to present study findings and to discuss them with the stakeholders consulted. Twelve (12) stakeholders' representatives attended this seminar: 7 EU-level NGO networks (PICUM, FEANTSA, RREUSE, EUROCHILD, ENSIE, EVPA and MFC), 3 other EU and international institutions/bodies (European Economic and Social Committee, European Investment Fund, European Investment Bank) and 2 beneficiaries (RIAC, EURES-TriRegio Deutschland). Representatives of the European Commission and Contractor's evaluation team participated and animated the seminar.

Participants agreed that the diversified and stable support provided by the EaSI programme enabled them to plan and support the core activities of their organisations. Thus, the operating grants provided by the programme were seen as one of the programme's key strengths, as also resulted from the supporting study findings.

The EU-level networks also appreciated the close contact with DG EMPL which gave them the opportunity to engage with and influence the EU policy agenda. One key element was the added value of EaSI in terms of knowledge sharing and the transnational component of the cooperation established among beneficiaries. One of the participants mentioned that the EaSI programme provided a platform to give visibility and recognition to certain topics. The participants also highlighted the funding of social experimentation projects as one of the key strengths of the programme.

There was consensus among participants that another key added value of the programme derived from the fact that EaSI provides funding for activities which are not funded by other programmes and/or at other levels. Notably, a participant working in the field of microfinance mentioned that EaSI was a good tool to respond to certain market needs (for instance the provision of microfinance) usually not covered at national level and/or by similar programmes; this ultimately lead to boosting the microfinance capacities and the social enterprise business model in Europe. The microfinance and social entrepreneurship components of the programme were perceived as an added value of the programme as EaSI brought these elements to the forefront and strengthened the microfinance market in Europe.

Participants meanwhile pointed out a lack of awareness regarding the EaSI programme at national level (as a potential area of improvement), noting that this leads to a suboptimal use of the programme. The need to measure the impact and to assess the quality of the work performed under EaSI as well as the reporting system was also mentioned as areas where improvement could be envisaged. According to the participants, the reporting is very quantitative, while reporting in qualitative terms should be also considered.

Participants saw a need to raise more awareness around the EaSI strand and the funding possibilities it has to offer at national level and to involve more local actors. In that respect the role of EaSI National Contact Points (NCPs) foreseen in the current funding period can

help. There was hawever a general consensus among participants that in the 2021 - 2027 programming period they have not yet observed changes and that it is too early to judge. Last but not least, participants reported that inequalities are still there and EaSI by itself is not enough to address those. They suggested that the EaSI strand needs to align with complementary policies at national level with similar objectives.

V.3.9 EESC consultations

The members of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) evaluation team collected the views of civil society organisations and social partners as well as of the public authorities on the coherence, effectiveness and inclusiveness of the EaSI programme, especially compared to other EU and national initiatives/programmes. Two channels were used: virtual fact-finding visits in five selected countries and a targeted online questionnaire. Contributions were summarised in an information report.

Stakeholders were invited to present their views on the effectiveness of the EaSI programme as well as on its perception at the national and regional level; on EaSI coherence with other EU-level initiatives and with other national initiatives/programmes; and on the opportunities for synergies and complementarity of EaSI and EPMF with EU and national funds, in particular with the ESF co-financed actions.

The fact-finding meetings

The virtual fact-finding meetings took place between 9 March 2022 and 30 March 2022. The semi-structured interviews were conducted via the *Interactio* online platform. The EU Member States selected for these five virtual fact-finding visits were: Hungary (9 March 2022), Lithuania (18 March 2022), Italy (21 March 2022), France (25 March 2022) and Austria (30 March 2022). The countries were selected based on two criteria: 1) *political spread* e.g. high/low level of implementation, application success rates, most/least affected by the legislative proposal/programme, etc. and 2) *geographical spread* i.e. by setting up five groups of Member States and choosing one from each group. During these five fact-finding virtual visits, the EESC delegation consulted in total 53 representatives of civil society organisations and public authorities.

The online survey

The questionnaire consultation[300] conducted on the EU Survey online portal was open from 9 March 2022 to 4 April 2022.

The aim of the questionnaire, using a combination of question formats (filter questions, closed and open-ended questions, a grid), was to complement the information obtained from the fact-finding meetings. Composed of 29 questions, the questionnaire was sent to organisations in the Member States selected for the fact-finding meetings (not only to those participating in the virtual meetings, but also to other relevant organisations).

A total of 33 contributions were collected, including from 6 representatives of the business sector (18%), 12 representatives of workers' organisations (36%) and 15 representatives of various interest stakeholders (45%). Regarding the origin of the respondents, 12% of the respondents came from Austria, 15% from France, 40% from Italy, 21% from Lithuania and 12% from Hungary[301].

[300]The methodological approach is explained in the Technical Annex of the EESC information report.

[301]For an overview of EaSI implementation in each of the five selected Member States, see the Technical Annex of the EESC information report (Section 2.1, pages 4 - 7).

Main findings of the EESC consultations

The analysis summarised below encompasses views of the 53 civil society organisations and public authorities consulted during the five country visits and the 33 responses collected through the online survey. Further detail by country and category of respondent is available in the EESC information report.

With respect to effectiveness, the majority of respondents felt that the EaSI programme has strengthened the objectives and coordination of action at national and EU level in the areas of employment, social affairs and inclusion. In particular, the employers' organisations considered that EaSI has achieved the objectives outlined above, the representatives of associations of various interests considered the programme to be positive, while fewer workers' organisations saw it as having a positive impact.

Overall, the respondents considered the PROGRESS axis as the best known and most widely used, followed by the EURES axis, while few respondents felt that the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis lied at the heart of their country's actions. Even though respondents believed the EaSI projects to be of high quality and relevance, they considered the lack of awareness and knowledge on the different axes of the EaSI programme as one of the main shortcoming. Organizations stressed that the programme was mainly known only by the project implementers and the information did not reach the final beneficiaries and citizens. They recommended that promotion and information should be improved in view of the new programming period. Several respondents strongly advised to increase the involvement of social partners in all the phases of the programme notably in the implementation phase of the activities. Another shortcoming identified by the respondents was the administrative process to receive EaSI funding, which they consider very bureaucratic. In terms of relevance, the majority of respondents emphasised the importance of working in synergy and ensuring consistency and complementarity with other EU programmes and funds, and in particular with the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) - with which a degree of overlap was underlined - and Erasmus+ as part of a national strategy rather than a piecemeal approach.

With regard to employers' organisations, half said they had not been consulted during the EaSI implementation. The vast majority of workers' organisations said they had not been consulted and half of the organisations representing various interests said as well they had not been consulted during the EaSI implementation. Some organisations underlined the importance to set up a national contact point for the EaSI programme involving civil society organisations on a regular basis notably with respect to provision of information on and opportunities of the EU programme. In particular, the vast majority thought a change in communication and information systems was necessary to ensure that the final beneficiaries are sufficiently informed.

It should be noted, however, that there was some disparity in the organisations consulted during the country visits and through the survey. This is because in some countries, national-level organisations with a cross-cutting approach to the use and objectives of the EaSI programme were consulted. Elsewhere, particularly in France, Lithuania and Austria, those consulted were mostly direct beneficiaries of the EaSI programme with direct knowledge of the programme and the means of accessing and using resources. These findings should be however used in combination with the other evaluation’s findings given that the data collected by the survey and country visits are not sufficiently comparable and uniform to give a complete picture of the programme's effectiveness and coherence as well as of its inclusion of civil society organisations.

ANNEX VI. TECHNICAL ANNEX

This annex includes detailed information (governance of the two programmes, implementation, examples of projects, financial information, results of the EaSI Stakeholders' Surveys carried out in 2014 - 2020, results of stakeholders' consultations carried out during this evaluation) complementing the information provided in Chapter 3 and supporting the findings presented in Chapter 4.

VI.1 Coordination, planning, monitoring and evaluation

This section presents information related to the governance of the two programmes.

VI.1.1 EaSI governance

EaSI was coordinated by DG EMPL 'Budget and planning cycle' unit, responsible for formulating the programme's scope, annual work programmes and funding, and for monitoring and evaluating. The unit was assisted by a network of EaSI coordinators from the operational units implementing the programme activities and by the EaSI Committee (established in line with Article 36 of the EaSI Regulation). The EaSI Committee was composed of a chair from the Commission (the head of unit 'Budget and planning cycle') and representatives from all EU Member States. In most cases, members of the EaSI Committee were delegates from the ministries in charge of labour and social affairs in their respective country. Other countries eligible under EaSI (EEA countries, candidate countries and potential candidates) were represented in the EaSI Committee as observers.

The Committee meetings took place twice or three times per year; in total 19 meetings were held in 2014 - 2020. Their main purpose was to discuss and to agree upon the EaSI annual work programmes, the EaSI Committee role being to give an opinion on the Commission's proposals in accordance with the examination procedure provided for in Article 32 of the EaSI Regulation. Another Committee's role was to give an opinion on the draft implementing acts to be adopted by the Commission, in accordance with the advisory procedure provided for in Article 35 (for instance criteria for evaluating the programme or the arrangements for disseminating the programme's results). Other issues were presented to the Committee for information, on the chair's initiative or at the request of a Committee member. Therefore, the meetings were also used to discuss practical matters related to the implementation of the programme and its monitoring/evaluation, including the impact of exceptional challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In terms of procedures, the Commission adopted implementing acts laying down annual work programmes (AWP) describing the actions to be financed, the procedures for selecting the actions to be supported, their geographic coverage, the target audiences and the indicative implementation time frame. As regards the financial instruments implemented under the EaSI third axis – in continuity with the Article 5 of the EPMF Decision – the Commission concluded agreements for their implementation with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Investment Fund (EIF).

The EaSI planned budget was implemented based on the annual Financing Decisions which are the legal acts adopted by the European Commission to authorise DG EMPL to spend from the EU budget. The Commission adopted Financing Decisions in accordance with the budgetary planning forecast at the end of each year. The Financing Decision constituted a budgetary envelope for EaSI, which was the basis for the funding of each individual action; this means that no agreement may be concluded without the prior adoption of the Financing Decision. The Financing Decisions were elaborated on the basis of the annual work

programmes issued by DG EMPL and that drew up the strategic objectives for the delivery of EaSI activities. The EaSI Committee members had a binding vote under the examination procedure, meaning that the Commission cannot adopt the EaSI annual work programmes without their approval.

EaSI implementation was supplemented with a performance measurement system, including regular monitoring and evaluation of programme implementation (Article 38). A contractor[302] was selected to assist the Commission in monitoring the EaSI programme (establishing the EaSI performance measure system, including the qualitative and quantitative performance indicators, and the baseline situation). The baseline situation was described for the first time in a baseline report drafted shortly after the launch of the EaSI Programme in 2014.

The updated baseline situation was presented in three subsequent reports in 2016, 2019 and 2021. To monitor the EaSI performance, the contractor regularly collected information on inputs, outputs and outcomes. As regards the financial inputs, data on planned commitments (extracted from the EaSI annual work-programmes) and actual commitments (implemented commitments) was regularly collected and analysed. Another contractor provided support for the EaSI mid-term evaluation carried out according to Article 38 of the EaSI Regulation prior to the current *ex post* evaluation[303].

The coordination of the two ESF+ strands is now assisted by two different technical working groups (one for direct management and one for the shared management); nevertheless synergies are currently facilitated between them. Aside regular separate meetings, joint meetings are taking place that should enhance awareness, coordination and cross-fertilisation between the two strands.

VI.1.2 EPMF governance

The European Progress Microfinance Facility and its two financial instruments (Guarantee Instrument and Funded Instrument) were implemented under the indirect management mode by the Commission that entrusted budget and tasks to the EIF.

Guarantee Instrument

Regarding the guarantee facility product, the Commission empowered and mandated the EIF to provide EU Guarantees (EPMF Guarantee Instrument or EPMF Guarantee Facility) in its own name but on behalf of and at the risk of the Commission, under a Fiduciary and Management Agreement (FMA) signed on 1st July 2010. The guarantee facility was implemented via direct guarantees and counter-guarantees. EPMF Guarantees provided risk coverage in the form of capped guarantees to selected financial intermediaries which developed a portfolio of loans targeting eligible final recipients (vulnerable persons and micro-enterprises).

From a technical point of view, the EIF was instructed to provide guarantees backed by the EU budget to financial intermediaries to cover a portion of expected losses of a portfolio of newly generated loans to self-employed and micro enterprises with a higher risk profile. The EIF was responsible for identifying, investigating, evaluating, and selecting the financial intermediaries (FI) by applying selection criteria and processes set out in Annex 1 of the Fiduciary and Management Agreement.

[302]The contractor (PPMI) was selected under the DG EMPL framework contract for monitoring and evaluation.
[303]The contractors for the mid-term evaluation (ICF) and for the *ex post* evaluation (Ramboll) were selected under the DG EMPL framework contract for monitoring and evaluation.

A total financial envelope of EUR 23 million was made available by the Commission for its implementation.

Funded Instrument

Regarding the funded instruments products, a so called "EPMF Fonds Commun de Placement – Fonds d'Investissement Spécialisé (EPMF FCP-FIS)" was established as a Dedicated Investment Vehicle (DIV) in the form of a Fund, which was a co-ownership of securities and other eligible assets. The EU Microfinance Platform (the "Fund") was structured as a Luxembourg "Fonds Commun de Placement – Fonds d'Investissement Spécialisé" (FCP - FIS) governed by the law of 13 February 2007 relating to specialised investment funds (the "2007 Law") and launched on 22 November 2010.

The FCP-FIS was managed by a Management Company - the European Investment Fund (EIF) - which was invested with the broadest powers to administer and manage the Fund and the sub-fund(s) in accordance with the Management Regulations and Luxembourg laws and regulations and, in the exclusive interest of the Unit-holders, to exercise all of the rights attaching directly or indirectly to the assets of the Fund. The EIF had the exclusive authority with regard to any decisions in respect of the Fund or any sub-funds, and acted with the diligence of a professional management company and in good faith in the exclusive interests of the Unit-holders.

The two founding investors of the Fund were the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) for a total investment of EUR 180 million out of which EUR 80 million of EU contribution (first loss piece) and EUR 100 million from the EIB (second loss piece). The EIF, in its role as the management company, evaluated, selected, and concluded the relevant loan agreements with the selected financial intermediaries. On their part, the selected financial intermediaries on-lent the received financing by developing loan portfolios aiming at specific target groups (self-employed persons, microenterprises).

EPMF had a comprehensive performance system, with regular monitoring (submission of annual and semi-annual implementation reports, annual impact evaluation report and evaluation[304] of programme implementation. The implementation reports were issued annually by EIF as referred to in Article 8 of the EPMF Decision. Data reported on yearly basis included: number of agreements with financial intermediaries, number and volume of loans, break-down of the final recipients by gender, age group, education, belonging to vulnerable groups; sectors of activity covered. According to Article 9 of the EPMF Decision, an EPMF interim evaluation was carried out after 4 years after the start of the Facility and the final evaluation - as current in this EaSI/EPMF joint evaluation - at the latest one year after the end of EPMF practical implementation.

The implementation of EPMF was followed by the EPMF Investors' Committee composed by members of the European Commission and the EIB, which alternated as chair every two years. The Committee convened twice a year until 2016 while from 2017 the meeting was held once a year.

[304]The interim evaluation of the Progress Micro-Finance Facility (http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7760) covering the period from its inception till end of June 2013- assessed progress made in the implementation, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, efficiency and complementarity of Progress Microfinance.

VI.2 Financial figures

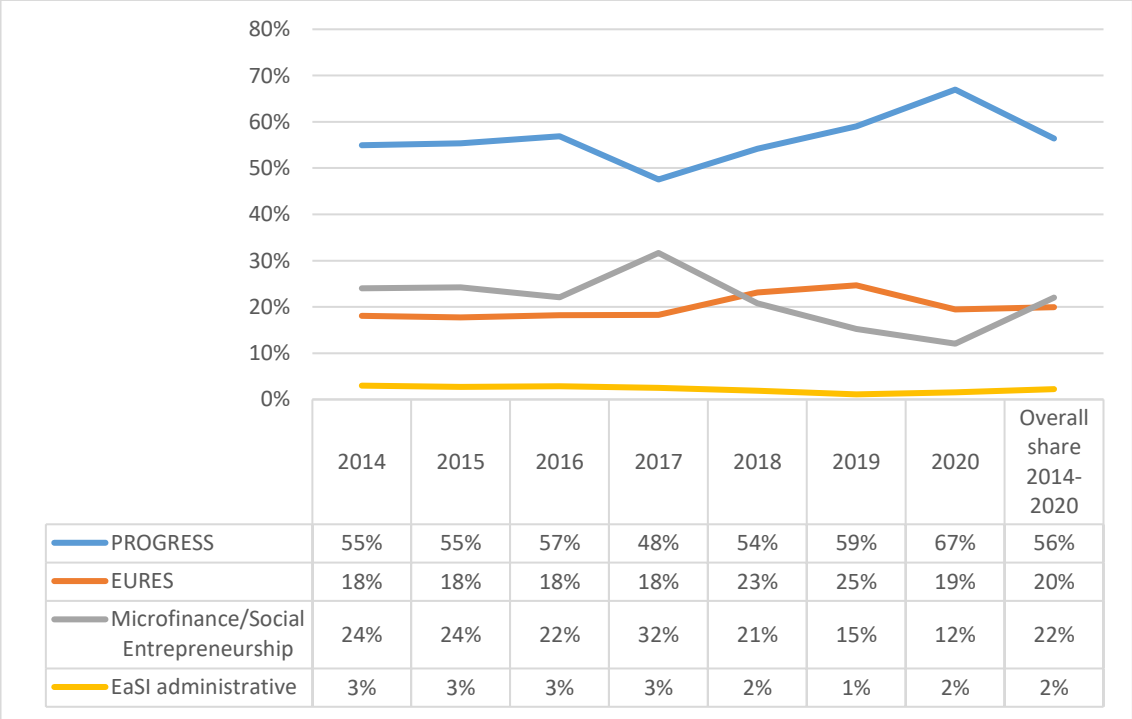
This annex complements the information provided in Chapter 3 and supports the analysis presented in Chapter 4. Table 39 below compares the original EaSI Regulation (2013) provisions as regards the budget allocation per axis and those established by the OMNIBUS Regulation (2018).

Table 39. The minimum indicative percentages by EaSI axis and thematic section

Axes/thematic sections	EaSI Regulation	OMNIBUS
PROGRESS	**61%**	**55 %**
a. employment, fight against youth unemployment	20%	20%
b. social protection, social inclusion, prevention of poverty	50%	45%
c. working conditions	10%	7%
Social policy experimentation (15-20%)	***15-20%***	***A significant share***
EURES (minimum 18%)	**18%**	**18%**
a. transparency of job vacancies and applications	32%	15%
b. targeted mobility schemes	30%	15%
c. cross-border partnerships	18%	18%
Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship (minimum 21%)	**21%**	**18%**
a. microfinance for vulnerable groups and micro-enterprises	45%	35%
b. social entrepreneurship	45%	35%

Source: DG EMPL, based on EaSI Regulation and OMNIBUS Regulation

Figure 19. Percentage share of funding per axis over years (2014 - 2020)



	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Overall share 2014-2020
PROGRESS	55%	55%	57%	48%	54%	59%	67%	56%
EURES	18%	18%	18%	18%	23%	25%	19%	20%
Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship	24%	24%	22%	32%	21%	15%	12%	22%
EaSI administrative	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	1%	2%	2%

Source: EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020

Table 40: Planned and actual commitments per EaSI axis in 2014

Axis	Planned	Actual	Share actual/total	Execution rate
PROGRESS	69 934 941,00	65 278 249,91	55%	91%
EURES	21 439 000,00	21 439 000,00	18%	100%
MF/SE	28 500 200,00	28 500 200,00	24%	100%
EaSI administrative	3 914 000,00	3 549 908,34	3%	91%
Total	**123 788 141,00**	**118 767 358,25**		96%

Source: EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020

Table 41: Planned and actual commitments per EaSI axis in 2015

Axis	Planned	Actual	Share actual/total	Execution rate
PROGRESS	72 554 890,00	71 836 540,60	55%	99%
EURES	23 090 525,00	23 024 481,86	18%	100%
MF/SE	31 479 000,00	31 427 570,00	24%	100%
EaSI administrative	4 426 420,00	3 537 533,76	3%	80%
Total	**131 550 835,00**	**129 826 126,22**		99%

Source: EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020

Table 42: Planned and actual commitmes per EaSI axis in 2016

Axis	Planned	Actual	Share actual/total	Execution rate
PROGRESS (>55%)	74 281 165,00	71 500 435,22	57%	96%
EURES (>18%)	22 900 000,00	22 865 150,32	18%	100%
MF/SE (>18%)	27 849 770,00	27 744 070,32	22%	100%
EaSI administrative	4 857 074,00	3 621 471,00	3%	75%
Total	**129 888 009,00**	**125 731 126,86**		97%

Source: EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020

Table 43: Planned and actual commitmes per EaSI axis in 2017

Axis	Planned	Actual commitments	Share actual/total	Execution rate
PROGRESS (>55%)	65 610 397,00	65 315 596,64	48%	100%
EURES (>18%)	€25 128 906,00	25 128 868,00	18%	100%
MF/SE (>18%)	€43 509 266,00	43 497 384,00	32%	100%
EaSI administrative	4 000 000,00	3 454 699,44	3%	86%
Total	**138 248 569,00**	**137 396 548,08**		**99%**

Source: EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020

Table 44: Planned and actual commitments per EaSI axis in 2018

Axis	Planned	Actual	Share actual/total	Execution rate
PROGRESS (>55%)	72 137 318,00	71 415 291,66	54%	99%
EURES (>18%)	31 207 002,00	30 459 785,85	23%	98%
MF/SE (>18%)	27 361 387,00	27 356 263,00	21%	100%
EaSI administrative	3 400 000,00	2 504 071,00	2%	74%
Total	**134 105 707,00**	**131 735 411,51**		**98%**

Source: EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020

Table 45: Planned and actual commitments per EaSI axis in 2019

Axis	Planned	Actual	Share actual/total	Execution rate
PROGRESS (>55%)	80 750 408,00	80 728 270,45	59%	100%
EURES (>18%)	33 761 331,00	33 755 332,72	25%	100%
MF/SE (>18%)	20 843 726,00	20 843 726,00	15%	100%
EaSI administrative	3 400 000,00	1 510 040,88	1%	44%
Grand total	**138 755 465,00**	**136 837 370,05**		**99%**

Source: EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020

Table 46: Planned and actual per EaSI axis in 2020

Axis	Planned	Actual	Share actual/total	Execution rate
PROGRESS (>55%)	79 777 390,00	79 172 352,10	67%	99%
EURES (>18%)	23 018 174,00	23 001 378,12	19%	100%
MF/SE (>18%)	14 254 929,00	14 254 929,00	12%	100%
EaSI administrative	2 500 000,00	1 805 425,00	2%	72%
Grand total	**119 550 493,00**	**118 234 084,22**		**99%**

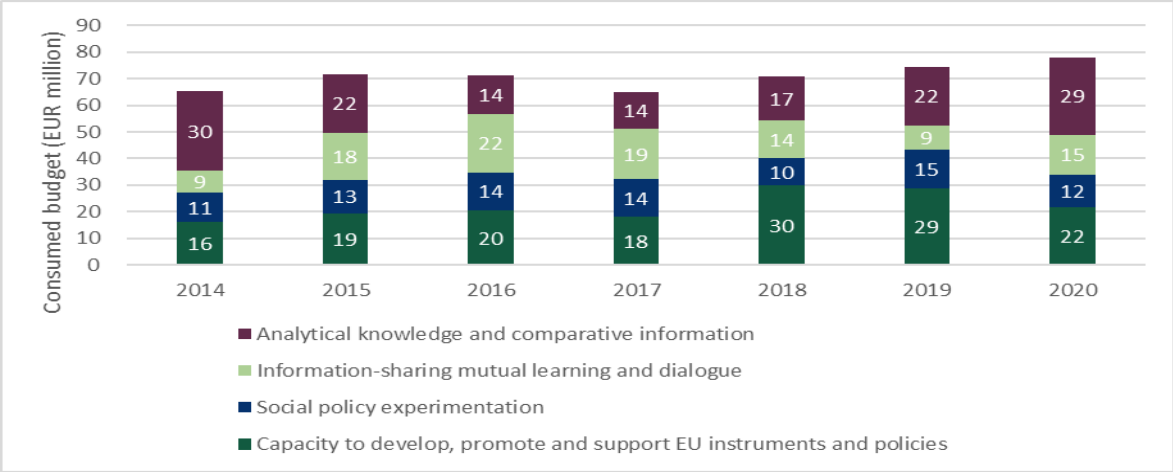
Source: EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020

VI.3 EaSI implementation

VI.3.1 PROGRESS axis

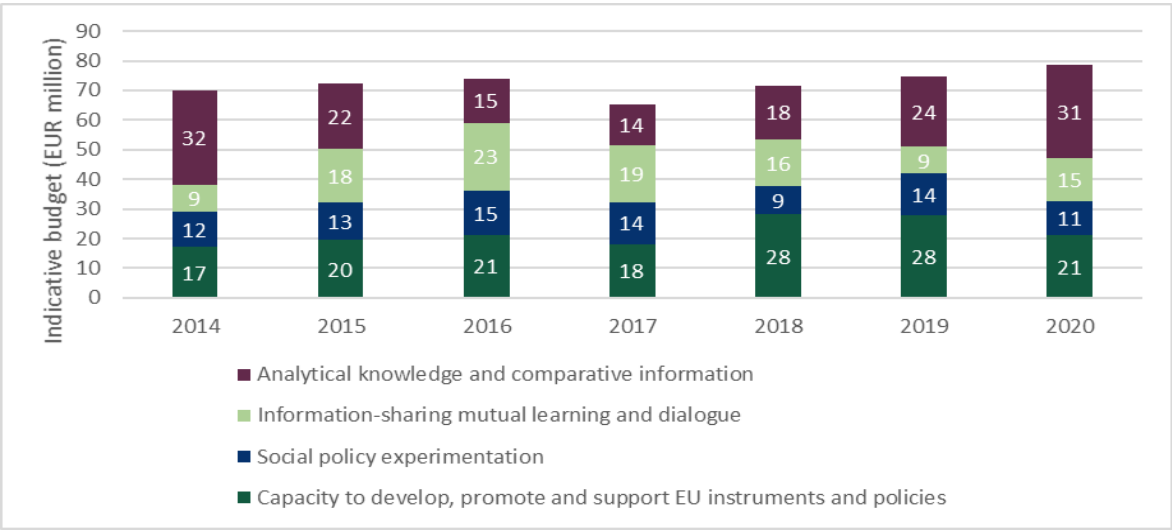
The PROGRESS axis funded four types of activities supporting the achievement of the first four specific objectives. The budget committed each year for each type of action is presented in the Figure 20, while the Figure 21 presents the planned budget per group of activities. The remaining amount (up to EUR 505 million total committed in 2014 - 2020) was committed to transversal activities.

Figure 20. Committed budget per specific objective under the PROGRESS axis



Source: Contractor based on FINAP and ABAC data (supporting study, page 279)

Figure 21. Planned budget per specific objective - PROGRESS axis



Source: Contractor based on FINAP and ABAC data (supporting study, page 279)

Bellow, each category is detailed and illustrated with examples.

Analytical knowledge and comparative information activities.

This category included exchanges and dissemination of good practice, innovative approaches and experience, peer reviews, benchmarking, mutual learning at EU level; Council Presidency events, conferences and seminars; training of legal and policy practitioners; guides, reports

and educational material and measures relating to information, communication and media coverage of initiatives supported by EaSI; information and communication activities; development and maintenance of information systems. In 2014 - 2020, an amount of EUR 148 million was committed to these activities. Among the most preeminent are: the Labour Force Survey as source of information about the situation and trends in the EU labour market; the Classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO); the Tax-benefit microsimulation model for the European Union (EUROMOD); the Mutual Information System on Social Protection (MISSOC); and the European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics (ESSPROS). It also supported the set-up of the Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI) and contributed to the Annual Employment and Social Developments in Europe (ESDE) reports.

Information sharing, mutual learning and dialogue activities

They included exchanges and dissemination of good practice, innovative approaches, and experiences; peer reviews and mutual learning activities at EU level; Council Presidency events, conferences and seminars; training of legal and policy practitioners; guides, reports and educational material; information and communication activities. In 2014 - 2020, an amount of EUR 106 million was committed to these activities.

Notable examples of events are peer reviews of the Mutual Learning Programme which are key instruments of the Social Open Method of Coordination (OMC); events organised by the Public Employment Service Network, the European Alliance for apprenticeship (EAfA); funding for events related to the Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI); thematic seminars and review workshops in the framework of the European Platform Tackling Undeclared Work; and support for the meetings of the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC).

Social experimentation

These activities are included in the EaSI Regulation in the analytical activities category; however, given their pre-eminence among the EaSI activities, they were considered and analysed separately in this evaluation. In 2014 - 2020, a total of EUR 89 million was allocated to the implementation of the activities related with social experimentation. The largest share was allocated to the social experimentation projects (EUR 57,7 million). Forthy-four (44) projects were funded through 7 calls for proposals. The topics of the calls for proposals were aligned to the European Commission's policy priorities, i.e. integrated delivery of social services (2014); integration of people into the labour market (2015); integration in the labour market of asylum seekers, refugees and their family (2016); work life balance (2018), access to social protection and national reform support (2018); long-term care (2019), testing innovative approaches in implementing minimum income schemes (2020).

The remainder of the funding was committed to dissemination and capacity building activities, including direct grants to the Council of Europe to build up capacity at the local level for the integration of Roma; a practical guide on designing and implementing initiatives to develop social finance instruments and markets as part of the study that reviewed results of a series of pilot projects across Europe on social innovation through social business and young entrepreneurship; and awareness-raising activities on work-life balance, active inclusion and social innovation.

Stakeholders' capacity-building activities

They included actions to develop, promote and support EU instruments and policies. A budget of EUR 154 million was committed to this type of activities. Around EUR 90 million

was committed to operating grants for EU-level NGO networks and a total of 23 recurrent networks were supported.

The remaining funding was committed for capacity building of national administrations and specialist services responsible for promoting geographical mobility; organisation of working groups of national officials to monitor the implementation of Union law; networking and cooperation among relevant stakeholders at EU level; funding of European-level observatories; exchange of personnel between national administrations; and support to financial intermediaries, both in the microfinance and in the social enterprise finance segments.

This type of support was done through the EaSI Technical Assistance for microfinance implemented by two service providers (MFR and a consortium led by the Frankfurt School); and the EaSI Technical Assistance for social enterprise finance implemented by a consortium led by the European Centre for Social Finance at the Munich Business School assisted by a network of 25 experts. Different types of support were delivered to the financial intermediaries, for instance workshops and seminars on microfinance and social entrepreneurship topics; tailored training; promotion of best practices; as well as advice related to the 'European Code of Good Conduct for Microcredit Provision' through trainings and evaluation of its implementation by microcredit providers.

Additional examples of the PROGRESS axis funded activities are presented in the tables below.

Table 47. EaSI PROGRESS axis calls for proposals, 2014 - 2020

Reference	Call title	Type of activity
VP/2014/006	EaSI-PROGRESS: Call for proposals for support for social protection reforms	Action grants – Analytical activities
VP/2014/007	EaSI-PROGRESS: Posting of workers: enhancing administrative cooperation and access to information	Action grants – Support activities
VP/2014/008	EaSI-PROGRESS: Call for proposals for social policy innovations supporting reforms in social services	Action grants – Analytical activities (social experimentation)
VP/2014/009	Call open to EU-level NGOs networks having signed a Framework Partnership Agreement for 2014-2017 and being active in the promotion of social inclusion and poverty reduction or active in the promotion of microfinance and social enterprises	Operating grants – Support activities
VP/2014/012	EaSI-PROGRESS: European Sector Skills Councils	Action grants – Support activities
VP/2014/014	EaSI-PROGRESS: Promoting the contribution of private savings to pension adequacy	Action grants – Support activities
VP/2015/005	EaSI-PROGRESS: Information sharing and outreach activities to young people about Youth Guarantee offers	Action grants – Mutual learning, awareness, dissemination activities
VP/2015/007	EaSI-PROGRESS: Posting of workers: enhancing administrative cooperation and access to information	Action grants – Support activities
VP/2015/009	EaSI-PROGRESS: Mobility for Employees	Action grants – Analytical activities
VP/2015/010	EaSI-PROGRESS: Call for Proposals for Operating Grants Open to EU-Level NGO Networks Having Signed a Framework Partnership Agreement for 2014-2017 and Being Active in the Area of Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction or Microfinance and Social Enterprise Finance	Operating grants – Support activities
VP/2015/011	EaSI-PROGRESS: Call for proposals for social policy innovations supporting reforms in social services	Action grants – Analytical activities (social experimentation)
VP/2016/006	EaSI-PROGRESS: Posting of workers: enhancing administrative cooperation and access to information	Action grants – Support activities

Reference	Call title	Type of activity
VP/2016/007	EaSI-PROGRESS: Actions to boost the demand and supply side of the finance market for social enterprises	Action grants – Support activities
VP/2016/008	EaSI-PROGRESS: Information sharing and outreach activities to young people about the Youth Guarantee	Action grants – Mutual learning, awareness, dissemination activities
VP/2016/012	Call for proposals for operating grants open to EU-level NGO networks having signed a framework partnership agreement for 2014-2017 and being active in social inclusion and poverty reduction or microfinance and social enterprise finance	Operating grants – Support activities
VP/2016/015	EaSI-PROGRESS: Fast track integration into the labour market for third country nationals targeting exclusively asylum seekers, refugees and their family members	Action grants – Analytical activities (social experimentation)
VP/2017/003	EaSI-PROGRESS: Posting of workers: enhancing administrative cooperation and access to information	Action grants – Support activities
VP/2017/005	EaSI-PROGRESS: Activities in the field of undeclared work	Action grants – Analytical activities (social experimentation)
VP/2017/011	EaSI-PROGRESS: Awareness-raising activities on "Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults"	Action grants – Mutual learning, awareness, dissemination activities
VP/2017/015	Establishment of 4-years framework partnership agreements to support EU-level networks active in the areas of social inclusion and poverty reduction or microfinance and social enterprise finance & Operating grants for 2018	Framework contract agreement for operating grants
VP/2018/003	EaSI-PROGRESS: Call for proposals on social innovation and national reforms - Access to Social Protection and National Reform Support	Action grants – Analytical activities (social experimentation)
VP/2018/005	EaSI-PROGRESS - Innovative work-life balance strategies to facilitate reconciliation of professional and caring responsibilities	Action grants – Analytical activities (social experimentation)
VP/2018/008	EaSI-PROGRESS: Support for the deployment of skills assessments in the implementation of "Upskilling Pathways"	Action grants – Support activities
VP/2018/011	EaSI-PROGRESS: Posting of workers: enhancing administrative cooperation and access to information	Action grants – Support activities
VP/2018/012	EaSI-PROGRESS: In the field of undeclared work	Action grants – Analytical activities
VP/2018/016	Operating grants to support EU level networks having signed a framework partnership agreement for 2018-2021 and being active in the areas of social inclusion and poverty reduction, or microfinance and social enterprise finance – 2019 work programme	Operating grants – Support activities
VP/2019/003	Call for proposals on social innovation and national reforms - Long-term care	Action grants – Analytical activities (social experimentation)
VP/2019/005	EaSI-PROGRESS: Supporting the development of tailored learning provision in the implementation of "Upskilling Pathways"	Action grants – Support activities
VP/2019/008	EaSI-PROGRESS: Posting of workers: enhancing administrative cooperation and access to information	Action grants – Support activities
VP/2019/012	Call for proposals for the SLIC campaign 2020-2022	Action grants – Support activities
VP/2019/013	Operating grants 2020 to EU level networks having signed a framework partnership agreement for the period 2018-2021 and being active in the areas of social inclusion and poverty reduction, or microfinance and social enterprise finance	Operating grants – Support activities
VP/2019/015	Actions to boost the development of finance markets for social enterprises	Action grants – Support activities
VP/2019/017	Incubators for inclusive and social entrepreneurship	Action grants – Support activities
VP/2020/003	Establishing and testing integrated interventions aimed at supporting people in (the most) vulnerable situations	Action grants – Analytical activities (social

Reference	Call title	Type of activity
		experimentation)
VP/2020/005	Operating grants 2021 to EU level networks having signed a framework partnership agreement for the period 2018-2021 and being active in the areas of social inclusion and poverty reduction, or microfinance and social enterprise finance	Operating grants – Support activities
VP/2020/007	Posting of workers: enhancing administrative cooperation and access to information and collection of evidence basis	Action grants – Support activities

Source: Supporting study, based on DEFIS database and EaSI monitoring reports.

Table 48. Examples of the use of information acquired during EaSI-funded events (national level)

Examples of how stakeholders used the information acquired for policymaking
Participants to the **workshop on 'Delivering longer working lives and higher retirement ages'** (12 - 13 November 2014, Brussels) reported the results of the event to the Ministers of Labour. To the best of his knowledge, the information will be considered during the preparation of the new pension reform.
Participants to the **conference 'Moving beyond GDP in European economic governance'** (10 October 2014, Brussels) claimed that they have promoted the use of non-GDP-based indicators among the relevant national actors.
Participants to the **EaSI conference on the 'Social Policy Innovation'** (19 - 20 May 2014, Brussels) indicated that they have advocated for creating a playground for children with disabilities who also cannot afford to pay for any other similar activities. Many others claimed to have used the information received during an event to either design operations to be co-funded by ESF or to prepare the application for the EaSI social policy experimentation project. Some of the respondents claimed that they have already submitted applications for projects to be co-funded by EaSI.
Participants to the **expert conference "Employment and Social Developments in Europe Review 2013"** (18 February 2014, Brussels) write a national report on the social situation in Slovenia.
Participants to the **conference "Occupational safety and health (OSH) – OSH policy in the future"** (16 - 17 June 2014, Athens) claimed that the event was very useful for their day-to-day work.
Participants to the **Eurocarers annual meeting** (2 - 3 September 2015, Gothenburg) stated that the information gained through this **event** was useful for development of the new National Careers Strategy in the UK.
Participants to the **MISSOC network meeting** (15 - 16 October 2015, Luxembourg) declared that the discussions during the event have helped to improve the website of the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy website. Furthermore, the information regarding the organisation of the social protection of people with disabilities contributed to improve the ongoing reform of the invalidity pensions in Bulgaria.
Participants to the **peer review on "Approaches to integrate long-term unemployment persons"** (13 - 14 October 2016, Berlin) claimed that all the materials and recommendations on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market were integrated into the National Employment Action plan for 2017 in Serbia.
Participants to the **conference of the 'ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers'** (3 - 4 December 2015, Sofia) stated that the **conference** was a good start towards strengthening the further commitment of Bulgaria to the ASEM dialogue and cooperation in the labour and employment area. The information and experience gained during the event also helped in organising future events in this area of ASEM dialogue and cooperation.
Examples of **mutual learning activities organised by PES Network** (2015 and 2016): • Insights provided the Spanish PES with examples to encourage their regional PES to develop a common and coherent customer satisfaction measurement system. • The Greek PES will introduce changes to their online registration tool, based on discussions with the UK PES on customer satisfaction measurement. • The Lithuanian PES has integrated performance management in their strategic planning. They were inspired to introduce a new incentives scheme, and review how local and central PES can better work together to achieve common targets. • For the Portuguese PES, useful insights about customer satisfaction measurement included deepening their knowledge of useful methodologies, statistical models, treatment of data and how to disseminate results both internally and externally.
Participants to the **12th European Research Conference on Homelessness 'Changing Profiles of Homelessness:**

Examples of how stakeholders used the information acquired for policymaking
Implications for Services' (Barcelona, 22 September 2017) indicated that the research shared at the event informs their advocacy efforts in their countries, such as using and collecting data on homelessness, developing Housing First projects, including targeted measures at youth. Other participants found the information gained through this event useful for the development of the Portuguese National Strategy to Fight Homelessness and evaluation of the Housing First programme in Spain.
Participants to the **country exchange visit on "Approaches to Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Promotion in Stockholm and in the European Union"** (Stockholm, 30-31 October 2017) used the knowledge acquired during the event to prepare the Mental Health Plan in Slovenia.
Participants to the **EURES Coordination Group** (Brussels, 14 June 2017, and 22-23 February 2018) noted that the information helps their institutions to better enforce the EURES Regulation in the national context.
Participants to the **'International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection Commission' meeting** (2017) noted that the knowledge gained during the event significantly facilitated the development of guidelines for limiting health hazards of non-ionizing radiation exposure.
Participants to the **Mutual Assistance Project event (MAP) on 'Improving the Performance of The Slovak National Labour Inspectorate in Tackling Undeclared Work'** (24-26 September 2018) stated that the knowledge acquired during the event triggered cooperation of the National Labour Inspectorate and the Social Insurance Agency on tackling undeclared work.
Participants to the **final seminar of the project SIPA - FESTI'JOB** (19 June 2019) used information obtained during the event 'in the construction of a European project with a consortium of actors on the identification of NEET audiences and their remobilisation to create online courses (Massive Open Online Course - MOOC) for employment professionals'.
Participants to the **seminar "Developing a European campaign for Declared Work"** (12 June 2019) indicated that they used information obtained during the event for the preparation of an information campaign for declared work at the national level.
Participants to the **Prezenční Listina – Homelab Národní Workshop** (Olomouc, 28 May 2019) shared that they used the arguments presented at the workshop in dialogue with the Polish ministries concerning the development of a social rental agency in Poland.
Participants to the **meeting of the "Acceleration of Labour Market integration of Immigrants through mapping of skills and Training (ALMIT)" project** (Belgrade, Serbia, 19 March 2019) indicated that the information shared during the event helped them develop and provide better learning courses for refugees.
Participants to the **staff exchange visit between Bulgaria and Estonia** (11-12 June 2019) indicated that they used information acquired during the visit to develop a strategy for tackling the envelope wages in Bulgaria and to reduce the tax-insurance gap from the underreported remuneration.
Participants to the project **ALMIT: National Advisory Group (NAG) meeting** (11 June 2020), indicated that during the event within the ALMIT project many experts shared their opinions, knowledge, and experience regarding migrant issues. The participants will use the information acquired for policymaking, resolving potential problems.
Participants to the **training meeting within the project "Fast-track Action Boost (FAB) for integration in the labour market of migrants and asylum seeker"** (Belgrade, Serbia, 30 December 2020) already used the information by improving services for beneficiaries with granted international protection.
Participants to the **event "Work-Life Balance under the project Master Parenting in Work and Life"** (Brussels, Belgium, 21-22 February 2020) indicated that the information acquired will be used to better orient the reconciliation and territorial welfare policies and by proposing adjustments to the labour policy measures.
Participants to the **final conference (23 November 2020) of the project "Regional Integration Accelerators (RIAC)"** indicated that the information will help them to create a supportive network and enhance the employment opportunities for youth as well as design learning programmes that fit the market employability measures, especially in the technology sector.

Source: Supporting study, based on EaSI monitoring reports 2014 (p. 31-32), 2015 - 2016 (p. 36-37), 2017 - 2018 (p. 32-34), 2019 - 2020 (p. 39-40)

Table 49. Examples of the use of information acquired during EaSI-funded events (EU level)

Policy	Events
Country-specific Recommendations 2014/2015 in the framework of the European Semester	• Conference "Labour economics after the crisis: what theoretical lessons to draw from policy experience?" • Peer Reviews in the framework of the Mutual Learning Programme • Activities of the PES network.
Country-specific Recommendations 2014/2015 in the framework of the European Semester and the implementation of the Social Investment package	• Peer Review in Italy: Innovative practices with marginalised families at risk of having their children taken into care, 11-12 December 2014; • Peer Review in Austria: The political adequacy of quantitative impact assessment in the social field by means of micro-simulation models, 4-5 December 2014; • Peer Review in Slovenia: Long-term care – the problem of sustainable financing, 18-19 November 2014; • Peer Review in Belgium: Health System Performance Assessment, 19-20 May 2014; • Peer Review in Spain: Harnessing ICT for social action, a digital volunteering programme, 25 March 2014; • Peer Review in Belgium: The Belgian Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion EU 2020, 14-15 January 2014; • Conference "The Europe 2020 Poverty Target: Lessons learned and the way forward", Brussels (Belgium), 9 October 2014; • Workshop on delivering longer working lives and higher retirement ages, Brussels (Belgium), 12-13 November 2014; • Regular meetings of the Expert Group on Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion; • Meetings of the Social Protection Committee, its sub-groups and ad-hoc working groups.
Implementation of the Social Investment Package	• Peer Review in Poland: The Active Ageing Index and its extension to the regional level, 15-16 October 2014; • Conference on Social Policy Innovation, Brussels (Belgium), 19-20 May 2014; • Fourth Annual Convention of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, Brussels (Belgium), 20-21 November 2014; • Regular high-level meetings of EU policy officials with Member States, stakeholders, international organisations, MEPs on private sector engagement in EU 2020 initiatives.
Implementation of the Youth Employment Package of 2012 / Implementation of the Youth Guarantee	• Learning Exchange on Cooperation at Local Level in the Fight Against Youth Unemployment, Dordrecht (Netherlands), 28 October 2014; • Peer Review on Youth Guarantee, Helsinki (Finland), 18-19 September 2014; • Conference "Youth Guarantee: Making It Happen", Brussels (Belgium), 8 April 2014.
Policy and legislation development in the area of working conditions	• European Labour Law Network, 7th Annual Legal Seminar "New Forms of Employment and EU Law", The Hague (The Netherlands), 27-28 November 2014; • Meeting of working group in the field of labour law; • 3 meetings of Committee of experts on posting of workers; • Meeting of TREND (Expert Group on the Transposition of the Enforcement Directive of the Posting of Workers Directive); • Meetings of Directors Generals for Industrial Relations; • Conference on Working Conditions, Brussels (Belgium), 28 April 2014.
Policy and legislation development in the area of health and safety at work	• 66th Meeting of Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC) and Thematic day, Athens (Greece), 26-27 May 2014; • 67th Meeting of Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC) and Thematic day, Rome (Italy), 13 November 2014; • Presidency conference "Occupational safety and health (OSH) – OSH policy in the future", Athens (Greece), 16-17 June 2014.

Source: Supporting study, based on EaSI monitoring reports 2014, 2015 - 2016, 2017 – 2018, 2019 - 2020

Table 50. Social experimentation calls under the EaSI programme (2014 - 2020)

Call reference	Topic	Number of projects	Allocated budget (EUR)
VP/2014/008	Integrated delivery of social services	7	10 489 387.51

Call reference	Topic	Number of projects	Allocated budget (EUR)
VP/2015/011	Integrated social services for the integration in the labour market	8	10 528 298.70
VP/2016/015	Fast-track integration into the labour market for third-country nationals, targeting exclusively asylum seekers and refugees	5	9 177 891.35
VP/2018/005	Innovative work-life balance strategies	4	4 270 675.87
VP/2018/003	Access to social protection and national reform support	4	4 751 940.29
VP/2019/003	Social innovation and national reforms – long-term care	7	8 870 942.05
VP/2020/003	Establishing and testing integrated interventions aimed at supporting people in vulnerable situations	9	9 604 717.00
Total		**44**	**57 693 852.77**

Source: DG EMPL, based on DEFIS database[305]

Table 51. Examples of upscaling/transfer of EaSI-funded social experimentation projects.

Examples of upscaling	Examples of transfer
EQW&L: EQW&L used ESF for upscaling; the project team is organising the same activities and using the toolkit to facilitate access to the labour market of unemployed persons and methodology of the project to help all the PES in Italy. **ESTI@**: The city of Athens was able to win ESF funding for scaling the model of integrated and comprehensive service provision to reintegrate beneficiaries into society by guiding them into employment and into sustainable housing up. The project team are certain that mainstreaming the ESTI@ model would not have been possible without the additional EUR 6 million in ESF funding. Upscaling through other funding sources **RESISOR** (REgional SIngle SOcial Record): successful in transitioning from mainstreaming to embedding and subsequently expanding its social innovation by integrating new services into it. **FIER**: the project team established a partnership with the German region of Baden-Württemberg. Together, they have managed in cooperation with the local social partners to further develop fast-track training concepts, curricula and company networks, with positive results. The regional government of Baden-Württemberg has financially supported the continuation of the activities and FIER modules are now embedded in regular training programmes.	**SIPA**: the project shared its results and tools with NGOs, social partners and other stakeholders in Spain, Belgium and Italy. This gave birth to another ERASMUS+ project, 'RESOLUTION' with Spanish, Belgian, Hungarian, French and Italian partners, to create a new common methodology and a toolkit for involved professionals, while turning all the tools and lessons from SIPA into teaching material via tutorials and massive online open courses on 'the new forms of remobilisation'. **FAB**: The developed 'Transfer & Adaptation Plan' (TAP) methodology was simultaneously implemented by city administrations across six countries, which was a key step to establishing cross-border and transnational cooperation and ensuring the project outputs' uptake in some of the participating countries.

Source: Supporting study, based on INOVA+ study, notably box 13 (p. 61) and box 14 (p. 63).

Table 50. Examples[306] of social experimentations' results being used for national policymaking

Examples of how the social EaSI social experimentations were used for policymaking
The EaSI-funded project '**ERSISI**' (2016-2019) aimed to design and test a new care/activation model for unemployed, vulnerable populations based on coordinated intervention of social and employment services in Spain. ERSISI

[305]Before the launching of the eGrants system (2021), DG EMPL used an internal application named DEFIS for the evaluation of the applications to the calls for proposals and the monitoring of the projects funded.

[306]Other examples of EaSI-funded projects were included in the brochure Social Innovation: inspirational practices supporting people throughout their lives presenting 27 examples of social innovation initiatives across the European Union, one from each Member State. It highlights the diversity and success of social innovations in Europe, showcasing initiatives that facilitate transitions, integrate disadvantaged groups, redesign business models, empower people, build partnerships and deliver public policies, in new and creative ways. Innovators include NGOs, social enterprises, local, regional and national authorities, social partners and the private sector, often working in partnership. Its goal is to inform Member States, organisations and other actors about existing good practices on social innovation, facilitating learning exchange and transnational cooperation, particularly in the context of the future European Social Fund Plus.

Examples of how the social EaSI social experimentations were used for policymaking
experimentation has led to a greater adaptation of the public service to reality, based on a comprehensive socio-labour assessment of each individual situation. The project advanced further in improving coordination between social and employment services, allowing to develop more complete and inclusive socio-labour inclusion and job integration itineraries. The project concluded with a report on the Transferability of the components of the implemented project. As a result, the Social Rights Department of the Government of Navarra in Spain has committed to up-scale some elements of the ERSISI in their own strategies. Moreover, the SIDIS application, developed during the project, is ready to be used in all social service offices and is interoperable with the application of the employment agencies.
Between 2015 and 2019, the EaSI-funded project '**Regional Single Social Record**' aimed to unify existing systems that contain various types of personal social records and establishing a single channel of communication in the Spanish region of Andalusia. The project resulted in the creation of a one-stop-shop system for social records – the Electronic Single Social Record of Andalusia (ESSR). As a result of this project, the White Book[307] of the ESSR was undertaken by Regional Ministry of Equality and Social Policies and Agency for Social Services and Dependency of Agency for Social Services and Dependency of Andalusia. The policy document outlines the future of the ESSR in Andalusia, following the setting up, the background and baseline of the ESSR.
The EaSI-funded project 'Employment enhancement and Social services integration in Athens Municipality (**ESTI@**)' (2016-2019) aimed to assist Greek citizens in achieving re-integration/re-inclusion in society through social innovation and examine the existent landscape. The Municipality of Athens utilised the conclusions derived from the project and designed three new Single-Entry Points that adopt the model and integrated approach of the ESTI@ project. The Municipality also carried out an 'Impact Study of ESTI@ project in the Municipality of Athens and sustainability Guide of the Patissia SEP'. The results of the study improved ways of addressing vulnerable populations and enriched the overall Municipal social policy and strategy.

Source: Supporting study, based on EaSI monitoring reports 2017-2018 (p. 74 - 76), 2019 - 2020 (p. 91).

Table 52. The EU level networks that received EaSI-PROGRESS operating grants.

Name of organisation	Period of funding	Policy area
Caritas Europa	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Fighting poverty and social exclusion
Confederation of family organisations (COFACE Families)	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Family
Euclid Network	2018 - 2021	Social entrepreneurship
Eurocarers	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Informal care
EUROCHILD	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Improving the quality of life of children and young people
EUROCITIES	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Reinforcing the role of local and municipal governments
European Federation for Diaconia (Eurodiaconia)	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Poverty and social exclusion, social and health care services
EuroHealthNet	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Health and health equity
European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Fighting against poverty and social exclusion
European Associations of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities
European Federation of National organisations working with the homelessness (FEANTSA)	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Tackling homelessness and its effects
European Food Banks Association (FEBA)	2018 - 2021	Fighting hunger and food waste throughout Europe
European Microfinance Network (EMN)	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Microfinance
European Network of Social Integration Enterprise (ENSIE)	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Work integration social enterprises

[307] Junta de Andalucía (see White Book: Electronic Single Social Record of Andalusia).

Name of organisation	Period of funding	Policy area
European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR)	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Providing rehabilitation services to people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups
European Social Network (ESN)	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Local public social services
European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA)	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Social investment and venture philanthropy
Fundacja Microfinance Centre (MFC)	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Microfinance
Platform of International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Promoting respect for the human rights of undocumented migrants within Europe
Re-use and Recycling European Union Social Enterprises (RREUSE)	2018 - 2021	Representing social enterprises active in re-use, repair and recycling
Solidar	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Social policy, international cooperation, education, migration
Ergo Network	2013 - 2017 2018 - 2021	Roma inclusion
European Confederation of Workers' Cooperatives, Social Cooperatives and Social and Participative Enterprises (CECOP)	2018 - 2021	Democracy and solidarity to the workplace, sustainable economic growth and social cohesion

Source: Supporting study, based on EaSI monitoring reports.

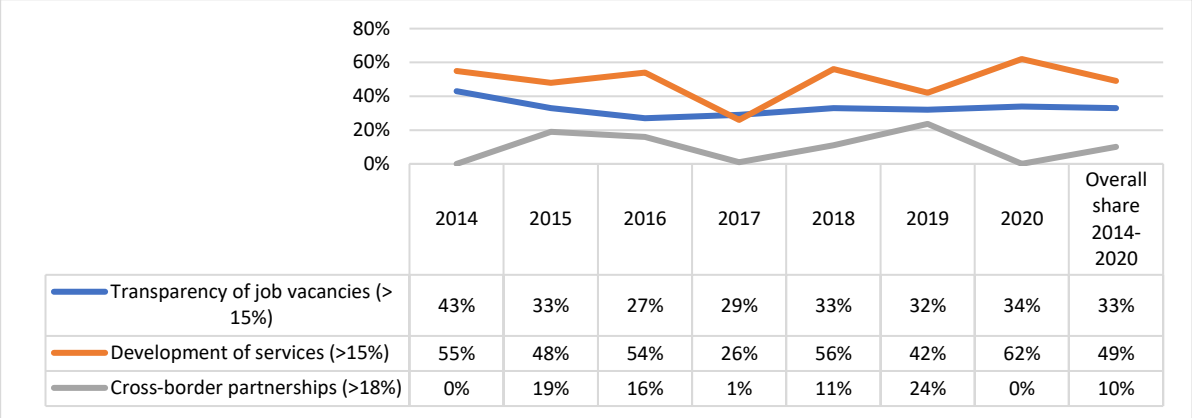
VI.3.2 EURES axis

The activities supporting the achievement of the fifth and sixth specific objectives were funded under the EURES axis. Two types of actions were funded:

- activities to induce transparency of job vacancies and applications (the multilingual EURES European Job Mobility Portal; information and communication activities to raise awareness of the benefits of geographical and occupational mobility; and mutual learning among EURES actors and training of EURES advisers); and
- activities to facilitate the recruitment and placing of workers in employment (through targeted mobility schemes and cross-border partnerships).

Figure 22 below shows how the funds committed to implement each type of activity evolved in 2014 - 2020.

Figure 22. Annual and overall shares of funding per thematic section of the EURES axis



	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Overall share 2014-2020
Transparency of job vacancies (> 15%)	43%	33%	27%	29%	33%	32%	34%	33%
Development of services (>15%)	55%	48%	54%	26%	56%	42%	62%	49%
Cross-border partnerships (>18%)	0%	19%	16%	1%	11%	24%	0%	10%

Source: EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020 (p. 11)
Note: With any remainder allocated to one or more of the thematic sections referred to above or to a combination of them (cross-cutting issues).

EURES Portal

It aimed to contribute to transparent information on job vacancies and applications and support EURES's main stakeholders. An overall share of 33% of the total financial envelope committed under the EURES axis (Figure 22) representing around EUR 60 million was allocated to the activities related to the EURES Portal.

Over the implementation period, the number of unique visitors to the Portal decreased substantially (see discussion on Section 4.1.5). The Single Market Scoreboard report (2020) noted that at the end of 2020, around 50% of all vacancies in 20 countries were published on the EURES Portal, notably for: Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Sweden.

Targeted mobility schemes

The targeted mobility schemes were actions that aimed to help EU nationals that need tailored assistance to find a job, traineeship or apprenticeship opportunity in another EU country (Norway or Iceland), and to support employers to find qualified workers. An overall share of 49% of the total financial envelope committed under the EURES axis (Figure 22) representing around EUR 88 million was committed to this category of actions. Drawing on

experience from the implementation of Your First EURES Job Preparatory Action[308], the Targeted Mobility Schemes (TMS) provided tailored services to mobile workers. The support was provided in the form of targeted allowances, along with language courses, recognition of qualifications, travel and subsistence expenses. The TMS were implemented through grants awarded following calls for proposals; during 2014 - 2020, there were 6 calls for proposals, resulting in the award of 14 grants covering 26 countries. The main countries that benefitted from targeted mobility schemes as either a coordinator or co-beneficiary were Spain (12), Portugal (9), Ireland (8) and Italy (7). Seven (7) countries did not participate at all (Austria, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, and Poland).

Cross-border partnerships

The cross-border partnerships involved EURES members[309] and partners[310] working together across borders to support the mobility of workers and employers[311]. An overall share of 10% of the total financial envelope committed under the EURES axis (see Figure 21 above) representing around EUR 18 million was allocated to this category. In 2014 - 2020, an average of 11 recurrent cross-border partnerships per year involving 20 countries received EaSI funding. Countries which benefitted the most from cross-border partnerships were Germany (25) and Belgium (21). Ten (10) Member States were not involved in cross-border partnerships at all (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, and Romania).

Additional examples on the EURES axis funded activities are presented in the tables below.

Table 53. EaSI EURES axis calls for proposal, 2014-2020

Call reference	Call title	Type of activities
VP/2020/ 009	EaSI - EURES Targeted Mobility Scheme	Targeted mobility scheme
VP/2019/006	EaSI-EURES: Cross-border partnerships and support to cooperation on intra-EU mobility for EEA countries and social partners	Cross-border partnership
VP/2019/009	EaSI EURES: Targeted Mobility Scheme	Targeted mobility scheme
VP/2019/010	EaSI-EURES: Support to national classification inventories and innovative national online services for mobile workers	
VP/2018/007	EaSI-EURES – Cross-border partnerships and support to cooperation on intra-EU mobility for EEA countries and social partners	Cross-border partnership
VP/2018/009	EaSI–EURES: Targeted mobility scheme "Your first EURES job"	Targeted mobility scheme
VP/2017/006	EaSI–EURES: Cross-border partnerships and support to cooperation on intra-EU mobility for EEA countries and social partners	Cross-border partnership
VP/2016/005	EaSI-EURES: Cross-border partnerships and support to cooperation on intra-EU mobility for EEA countries and social partners	Cross-border partnership
VP/2016/009	EaSI–EURES: Targeted mobility scheme "Your first EURES job"	Targeted mobility scheme
VP/2015/006	EaSI-EURES: Targeted Mobility Scheme - Your first EURES job	Targeted mobility scheme
VP/2015/008	EaSI-EURES: Cross-border partnerships and support to cooperation on intra-EU mobility for EEA countries	Cross-border partnership
VP/2014/011	EaSI-EURES: Cross-border partnership and support to cooperation on intra-EU mobility for social partners and EEA countries	Cross-border partnership

[308]Between 2011 and 2013, Your First EURES Job Preparatory Action facilitated nearly 4 300 placements and achieved around 90 % of its overall placement goal.
[309]Public employment services from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.
[310]Partners usually include social partners (trade unions and employers' organisations) as well as organisations such as universities, business associations, trade unions and chambers of commerce4.
[311]Organisations that are not part of the EURES network can also participate if they are relevant within the regional job mobility market.

Call reference	Call title	Type of activities
VP/2014/013	EaSI-EURES: Your first EURES job - Targeted mobility scheme	Targeted mobility scheme

Source: Supporting study, based on EaSI calls for proposal.

Table 54. EaSI EURES axis funded targeted mobility schemes, 2014-2020

Call reference	Grant reference	Title of grant
VP/2014/013	VS/2014/0582	Your first EURES job - Targeted Mobility Scheme (YfEj 4.0)
	VS/2014/0584	Targeted Mobility Scheme - Your first EURES job (TMS-YfEj)
VP/2015/006	VS/2015/0251	Your first EURES - a Tool for Mobility
	VS/2016/0200	Your first EURES job Germany
VP/2016/009	VS/2016/0380	"Your first EURES job" - YfEj TMS 5.0
	VS/2016/0381	Targeted Mobility Scheme - Your first EURES job
	VS/2016/0383	Your first EURES job - a tool for mobility - second step
VP/2018/009	VS/2018/0450	Targeted Mobility Scheme - Your first EURES job
	VS/2018/0470	Your first EURES job Germany
	VS/2018/0473	TMS Your first EURES job - YfEj 6.0
VP/2019/009	VS/2019/0435	Targeted Mobility Scheme
	VS/2019/0438	Targeted Mobility Schemes Germany 2019
VP/2020/009	VS/2020/0512	Targeted Mobility Schemes Germany 2020
	VS/2020/0520	EURES Targeted Mobility Scheme (EURES TMS)

Source: Supporting study, based on EaSI calls for proposal and awarded grants.

Table 55. Beneficiary countries of EURES targeted mobility schemes, 2014 - 2020

Country	Number of actions coordinated	Number of actions involved in as co-beneficiary	Total
Austria	0	0	0
Belgium	0	2	2
Bulgaria	0	3	3
Croatia	0	5	5
Cyprus	0	6	6
Czech Republic	0	1	1
Denmark	0	4	4
Estonia	0	2	2
Finland	0	4	4
France	2	3	5
Germany	4	2	6
Greece	0	4	4
Hungary	0	0	0
Ireland	0	8	8
Italy	4	3	7
Latvia	0	0	0
Lithuania	0	0	0
Luxembourg	0	0	0
Malta	0	0	0
Netherlands	0	5	5
Poland	0	0	0
Portugal	0	9	9
Romania	0	6	6
Slovakia	0	2	2
Slovenia	0	4	4
Spain	0	12	12
Sweden	4	0	4
United Kingdom	0	2	2

Source: Supporting study, based on overviews of grants awarded.

Table 56. EaSI-EURES funded cross-border partnerships, 2014 - 2020

Call reference	Contract reference	Project title
VP/2014/011	VS/2015/0062	Euradria 2015

Call reference	Contract reference	Project title
	VS/2015/0065	EURES Crossborder Galicia-North Portugal annual plan 2015
	VS/2015/0066	EURES-T Bayern-Tschechien, Arbeitsplan 2015
	VS/2015/0068	EURES Cross border Øresund 2014-2015
	VS/2015/0072	EURES-T Oberrhein-Rhin Supérieur 2015
	VS/2015/0073	ETUC Coordination in the EURES Network
	VS/2015/0082	Activity plan Eures Scheldemond 2015
	VS/2015/0084	EURES in Grenzregionen Rhein-Waal (ERW), euregio-rhein-maas-nord (ermn),
	VS/2015/0095	EURES-TriRegio 2015
	VS/2015/0096	EURES Cross Border Partnership Ireland/Northern Ireland January 2015 -
	VS/2015/0101	EURES Grande Région 2015
	VS/2015/0111	Tätigkeitsplan der grenzüberschreitenden österreich-ungarischen EURES-T
	VS/2015/0188	Support to cooperation on intra-EU mobility in the EEA countries
VP/2015/008	VS/2015/0266	EURES-TriRegio 2016
	VS/2015/0268	EURES-T Pannonia Cross-Border Partnership's Activity Plan for 2016
	VS/2015/0269	Support to cooperation on intra-EU mobility in the EEA countries
	VS/2015/0271	EURES activity plan 2016 - Iceland
	VS/2015/0272	EURADRIA 2016
	VS/2015/0277	EURES Grande Région 2016
	VS/2015/0278	EURES Cross border Øresund 2016
	VS/2015/0279	EURES Crossborder Galicia-North Portugal annual plan 2016
	VS/2015/0281	EURES in den Grenzregionen Rhein-Waal, rhein-maas-nord, Maas-Rhein 2016
	VS/2015/0283	Ireland/Northern Ireland EURES Cross Border Partnership 2016
	VS/2015/0284	EURES-T Bayern-Tschechien; Arbeitsplan 2016
	VS/2015/0285	Activity plan Eures Scheldemond 2016
	VS/2015/0287	EURES-T Beskydy Activity Plan 2016
	VS/2015/0314	EURES-T Oberrhein-Rhin Supérieur 2016
VP/2016/005	VS/2016/0310	EURES-T Oberrhein - Rhin Supérieur 2017
	VS/2016/0311	EURES-t Grande Région 2017
	VS/2016/0312	EURES-TriRegio 2017
	VS/2016/0315	Ireland/Northern Ireland Cross Border Partnership 2017
	VS/2016/0317	EURES in den Grenzregionen Belgien, Deutschland, Niederlande
	VS/2016/0318	EURES Crossborder Partnership Andalucía-Algarve
	VS/2016/0319	EaSI - Eures Crossborder partnership Scheldemond 2017
	VS/2016/0320	EURES Crossborder Galicia-North Portugal annual plan 2017
	VS/2016/0321	EURADRIA 2017
	VS/2016/0323	Crossborder Cooperation Extremadura-Alentejo.Project: "La Raya sin frontera" "A
	VS/2016/0325	ETUC Coordination in the EURES Network
	VS/2016/0326	Support to cooperation on intra-EU mobility in the EEA countries
	VS/2016/0327	EURES activity plan 2017 - Icleand
VP/2017/006	VS/2017/0388	Support to cooperation on intra-EU mobility in the EEA countries
	VS/2017/0390	EURES activity plan 2018 - Iceland
	VS/2017/0392	EURES Crossborder Galicia-North Portugal annual plan 2018
	VS/2017/0394	EaSI - Eures cross border partnership Scheldemond 2018
	VS/2017/0395	EURES-TriRegio 2018
	VS/2017/0396	EURES Ireland/Northern Ireland Cross Border Partnership 2018
	VS/2017/0398	EURES-T Oberrhein-Rhin Supérieur 2018
	VS/2017/0400	EURES Cross border Øresund 2018
	VS/2017/0416	EURES in den Grenzregionen Belgien, Deutschland, Niederlande
	VS/2017/0417	EURES Cross-border Andalucía-Algarve
	VS/2017/0438	EURES Cross-border Extremadura-Alentejo Partnership 2018
VP/2018/007	VS/2018/0435	EURES Cross-border Alentejo-Extremadura Partnership 2019
	VS/2018/0436	EaSI-EURES cross-border partnership Scheldemond 2019
	VS/2018/0437	Support to cooperation on intra-EU mobility in the EEA countries
	VS/2018/0438	ETUC Coordination in the EURES Network
	VS/2018/0439	EURES activity plan 2019
	VS/2018/0440	EURES Transfrontalier Grande Région 2018-2019

Call reference	Contract reference	Project title
	VS/2018/0442	EURES-TriRegio 2019
	VS/2018/0443	EURES Cross Border Partnership Ireland - N Ireland 2019
	VS/2018/0448	EURES Crossborder Galicia-North Portugal annual plan 2019
	VS/2018/0454	EURES in den Grenzregionen Belgien, Deutschland, Niederlande
	VS/2018/0457	Cross-border Øresund 2019
	VS/2018/0468	EURADRIA 2019
	VS/2018/0469	EURES Cross-border Andalucía-Algarve
	VS/2018/0478	EURES-T Oberrhein-Rhin Supérieur 2019
VP/2019/006	VS/2019/0398	EURADRIA 2020/2021
	VS/2019/0399	Support to cooperation on intra-EU mobility in the EEA countries
	VS/2019/0402	ETUC Coordination in the EURES Network 2020-21
	VS/2019/0414	EURES-TriRegio 2020 -2021
	VS/2019/0419	EaSI-EURES cross-border partnership Scheldemond 2020 & 2021
	VS/2019/0420	EURES-T Oberrhein-Rhin Supérieur 2020-21
	VS/2019/0422	EURES-t Grande Region 2020-2021
	VS/2019/0427	EURES Grenzregionen Belgien, Deutschland, Niederlande 2020-2021
	VS/2019/0428	EURES activity plan 2020-2021
	VS/2019/0433	EURES Cross Border Partnership Ireland - N Ireland 2020
	VS/2019/0437	EURES Crossborder Galicia-North Portugal Activity Plan 2020-2021

Source: Supporting study, based on EaSI calls for proposals and awarded grants

Table 57. Beneficiary countries of EURES cross-border partnerships, 2014 - 2020

Country	Number of actions coordinated	Number of actions involved in as co-beneficiary	Total
Austria	0	2	2
Belgium	4	17	21
Bulgaria	0	0	0
Croatia	0	1	1
Cyprus	0	0	0
Czech Republic	0	9	9
Denmark	4	0	4
Estonia	0	0	0
Finland	0	0	0
France	7	4	11
Germany	18	7	25
Greece	0	0	0
Hungary	2	0	2
Ireland	3	3	6
Italy	5	0	5
Latvia	0	0	0
Lithuania	0	0	0
Luxembourg	0	0	0
Malta	0	0	0
Netherlands	6	6	12
Poland	1	6	7
Portugal	3	9	12
Romania	0	0	0
Slovakia	0	1	1
Slovenia	0	5	5
Spain	9	3	12
Sweden	0	4	4
United Kingdom	3	3	6
Norway	6	0	6
Iceland	5	0	5

Source: Supporting study, based on EaSI calls for proposals and awarded grants.

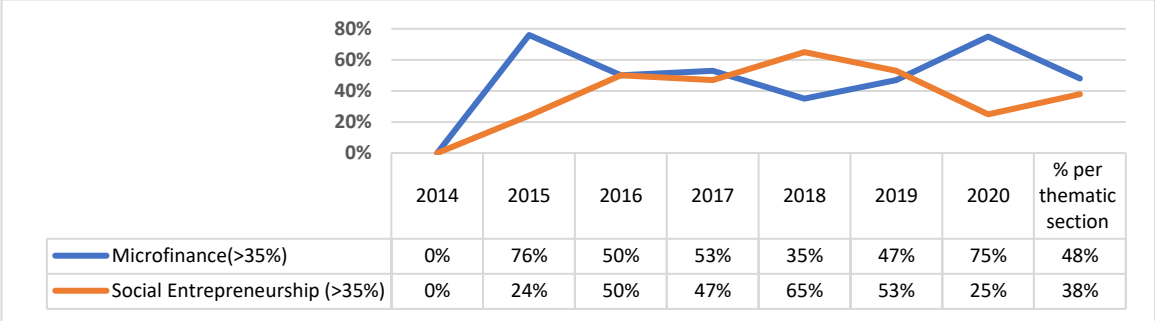
VI.3.3 Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis

The activities supporting the achievement of the seventh, eighth and nineth specific objectives were funded under its:

- **microfinance branch:** EaSI supported microcredit providers through financial products, such as guarantees, counter-guarantees and loans, thereby providing them with partial credit risk protection for newly originated loans to eligible final recipients and with liquidity;
- **social entrepreneurship branch**: EaSI supported investors in social enterprises through various financial products, that included guarantees (predominantly), debt instruments, quasi-equity instruments.

Figure 23 below shows how the shares committed for the two thematic branches (microfinance and social entrepreneurship) evolved in 2014 - 2020.

Figure 23. Annual and overall shares of funding per thematic section of the EaSI third axis



	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% per thematic section
Microfinance(>35%)	0%	76%	50%	53%	35%	47%	75%	48%
Social Entrepreneurship (>35%)	0%	24%	50%	47%	65%	53%	25%	38%

Source: EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020 (page 12)
Note: With any remainder allocated to one or more of the thematic sections referred to above or to a combination of them (cross-cutting issues).

The total financial envelope of EUR 193 million allocated from EaSI to the implementation of the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis was topped up with EUR 300 million from European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and with an additional contribution from repayments from the EPMF as per Article 30(4) of the EaSI Regulation (the amount of reflows was about EUR 69 million). The support under the EaSI third axis (both to microfinance and social finance) was delivered through three financial instruments:

EaSI Guarantee Instrument

The EaSI Guarantee Instrument became operational in 2015 with the end date of implementation set at 1st January 2024. By this date, the EIF can sign guarantee agreements with financial intermediaries. The financial intermediaries can include loans in their portfolio after this date until at the latest 31 December 2027.

The EaSI contribution to Guarantee Instrument amounted to EUR 131 million, out of which EUR 91 million were allocated to the microfinance branch and EUR 40 million to the social entrepreneurship branch. From the overall financial envelope of EUR 91 million, EUR 1 million was earmarked for the implementation of the Business Development Services Support pilot (BDS) which was an additional component embedded in the EaSI Guarantee Instrument. The purpose of BDS Support was to partially offset the costs incurred by Financial Intermediaries benefitting from an EaSI Microfinance Guarantee in view of offering Business Development Services to final recipients who qualify as Refugees and/or Migrants. Despite being considered as an ancillary service to the guarantee instrument, the BDS was funded

under EaSI PROGRESS. Guarantee Instrument was topped up by the EFSI resources and repayments from EPMF (see above). At the end of 2020, the cumulative value of guarantee agreements signed with financial intermediaries amounted to EUR 388 million[312].

The EIF offered through the EaSI Guarantee Instrument guarantees and counter-guarantees to financial intermediaries, thereby providing them with a partial credit risk protection for newly originated loans to eligible beneficiaries. Financial intermediaries were selected after an application under a call for expression of interest followed by a due diligence process. Once selected by the EIF, these partners act as financial intermediaries and start originating loans to eligible beneficiaries within the agreed availability period.

The due diligence process assesses whether applicants comply with relevant rules and regulations (in relation to tax compliance, transparency and integrity, absence of links to illegal activities such as money laundering, financing of terrorism, tax crimes and/or tax avoidance). Table 58 below summarises the types of products offered under the Guarantee Instrument and the related target groups (microcredit providers and the end-beneficiaries).

Table 58. Products and beneficiaries of the EaSI Guarantee Instrument

Items	Microfinance	Social Entrepreneurship
Products offered	Portfolios of loans and certain other debt financing products up to EUR 25 000.	Portfolios of loans and certain other debt financing products up to EUR 500 000.
Eligible beneficiaries (microcredit providers)	*Public and private bodies* established on a national, regional or local level in one or several EaSI participating countries, authorised to provide microcredit for persons and micro-enterprises, for example financial institutions, microfinance institutions/microcredit providers, leasing companies, guarantee schemes, guarantee institutions or other institutions authorised to provide microfinance loans/guarantees or risk-sharing structures according to the applicable legislation.	*Public and private bodies* established on a national, regional or local level in one or several EaSI participating countries, authorised to provide financing for social enterprises, e.g. financial institutions, guarantee schemes, guarantee institutions, foundations, family offices, social investment funds or other institutions duly authorised to provide loans/guarantees or risk-sharing structures according to the applicable legislation.
End-beneficiaries (target groups)	*Micro-borrowers*: vulnerable persons who have lost or are at risk of losing their job, or have difficulty in entering or re-entering the labour market, or are at risk of social exclusion, or are socially excluded, and are in a disadvantaged position with regard to access to the conventional credit market and who wish to start up or develop their own micro- enterprises. *Micro-enterprises:* micro-enterprises in both start-up and development phase, especially micro-enterprises that employ persons as referred to in the above-mentionsend it back to youed definition of micro-borrowers.	*Social enterprises:* enterprises with either an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 30 million or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 30 million, which are not themselves a collective investment undertaking.

Source: Supporting study, based on the EIF website, EaSI Guarantee Instrument.

Table 59. EaSI Guarantee Instrument financial implementation (in EUR)

Items	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total EU contribution	59 799 200	9 000 000	13 423 472	27 502 400	0	21 274 928
Total fees and management costs	2 310 758	4 023 790	2 001 409	1 468 697	1 569 031	1 763 108
Total amount of operations[313]	27 181 627	32 230 623	45 698 619	73 649 988	91 631 201	120 486 087
Microfinance	23 644 027	26 707 462	25 350 506	53 625 988	44 522 515	70 716 473
Social Entrepreneurship	3 537 600	5 523 161	20 348 113	20 024 000	47 108 686	49 769 614
Total guarantees called		552 551	3 341 952	8 276 226	10 402 230	13 400 292

[312]This amount includes both the EaSI budget and the EFSI top-up.
[313]The total includes also amount for terminated contracts.

Items	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Microfinance		552 551	3 303 522	7 658 841	9 051 285	12 010 796
Social Entrepreneurship		0	38 430	617 385	1 350 944	1 389 496
Total recoveries and claw-backs		0	20 777	22 446	1 835	279 017
Microfinance		0	20 777	22 446	1 835	279 017
Social Entrepreneurship		0	-	0	0	0
Net guarantees called		552 551	3 321 175	8 253 780	10 400 395	13 121 275
Microfinance		552 551	3 282 745	7 636 396	9 049 451	11 731 779
Social Entrepreneurship		0	38 430	617 385	1 350 944	1 389 496

Source: Supporting study, based on data provided by the EIF on the EaSI Guarantee Instrument, 2015 - 2020

The majority of the operations signed were for microfinance (111 operations), covering a cumulative total amount of EUR 242 million; fewer operations were signed for social entrepreneurship (40 operations), covering a total cumulative amount of EUR 146 million.

Table 60. EaSI Guarantee Instrument implementation

Items	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total number of operations signed	**11**	**29**	**22**	**38**	**19**	**31**
• of which active contracts					19	30
• of which terminated contracts					1	1
• of which for Microfinance (active contracts)	10	23	16	26	9	26
• of which for Social Entrepreneurship (active contracts)	1	6	6	12	10	5
Total number of financial intermediaries who signed operations	**10**	**27**	**16**	**23**	**9**	**25**
• of which for Microfinance	10	23	11	18	5	22
• of which for Social Entrepreneurship	1	6	5	11	6	4
Number of participating countries covered[314]	**2**	**17**	**3**	**5**	**2**	**1**
• of which for Microfinance	2	17	3	2	1	1
• of which for Social Entrepreneurship	0	3	3	10	1	0

Source: Supporting study, based on data provided by the EIF on the EaSI Guarantee Instrument, 2015 - 2020
Note: The sum of microfinance intermediaries and social entrepreneurship intermediaries does not equate to the total number of financial intermediaries as there are several financial intermediaries which fall under both categories.

EaSI Funded Instrument

The EaSI Funded Instrument became operational in September 2019 and its implementation period runs until 16 October 2023. By this date, the EIF can provide loans to financial intermediaries. The financial intermediaries can include loans in their portfolio after this date but the duration of the loans to final beneficiaries cannot go beyond 31 December 2031.

First under EPMF and later under EaSI, the EIF provided under this type of financial instrument senior and subordinated loans to eligible financial intermediaries to increase their capacity to provide financing to micro-enterprises and social enterprises, as well as mobilising their own resources to grow their microfinance or social entrepreneurship portfolios.

Under the EaSI Funded Instrument, the EIF issued senior loans, subordinated loans (financing subordinated to senior creditors), risk-sharing loans (senior loans combined with risk participation in the microcredit portfolio) and equity participation (direct or indirect equity in the form of investments in ordinary or preferred shares).

A total amount of EUR 67 million (EUR 46,9 million for microfinance and EUR 21,1 million for social entrepreneurship) was earmarked by the Commission from the EaSI programme for its implementation (in addition to the EUR 133 million from the EIB Group), thus conducting

[314]Where eligible final recipients received financing.

to a total financial envelope of EUR 200 million. By the end of 2020, three (3) agreements were signed. Two of them were with financial intermediaries in Romania and one with a financial intermediary in Serbia. All three were in the microfinance sector.

EaSI Capacity Building Investments Window

Through the EaSI Capacity Building Investments Window launched in December 2016 with a budget from EaSI of EUR 45 million (EUR 29 million for microfinance and EUR 16 million for social entrepreneurship), EIF provided funding to financial intermediaries mainly through subordinated loans[315].

Table 61. Products and beneficiaries of the EaSI Capacity Building Window

Items	Capacity Building Window
Products	Investments that can be used for: • Supporting organisational development and expansion, including branch expansion, scaling up or developing IT infrastructure (e.g. mobile banking), or investments in human resources such as recruitment and training of staff; • Strengthening operational and institutional capabilities, including, but not limited to, investments in working capital and in improving the strategic/governance capabilities of the financial intermediary in order to maintain a balanced business, financial sustainability and social performance focus; • Seed financing support of newly created intermediaries with a strong social focus.
Eligible beneficiaries	Entities such as banks, non-bank financial institutions/organisations, established on a national, regional or local level in one or several EaSI participating countries, operating in the microfinance or social enterprise finance market, including greenfield financial intermediaries in need of seed financing/risk capital.

Source: Supporting study, based on data provided by the EIF

The last agreements with financial intermediaries were signed in 2021; the overall budged was fully deployed by end of 2021. The objective of this instrument was to build up the institutional capacity of financial intermediaries that had not yet reached sustainability or needed risk capital to sustain their growth and development. Up to the end of 2020, 14 capacity building contracts were signed, covering 9 countries, with a budget from EaSI of EUR 45 million. For the microfinance branch, these countries were Belgium, Romania (3 intermediaries), Luxembourg, Italy, Spain, Lithuania, Netherlands and Serbia. For the social entrepreneurship branch, the countries covered were Belgium, France (2 intermediaries), Italy and Netherlands[316].

Table 62. Financial implementation of the EaSI Capacity Building Investment Window (EUR)

Items	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total EU contribution	12 725 384	10 000 000	-	3 274 616	19 000 000
Total fees and exceptional expenses	-	-	100 000	426 250	642 260
Total amount of operations signed	-	-	3 107 000	18 205 504	8 863 740
• Microfinance	-	-	2 485 600	10 005 504	8 863 740
• Social Entrepreneurship	-	-	621 400	8 200 000	-
Total amount committed	-	-	5 000 000	18 205 504	8 885 311
• Microfinance	-	-	4 000 000	10 005 504	8 880 997
• Social Entrepreneurship	-	-	1 000 000	8 200 000	4 314
Total disbursed amount	-	-	776 750	15 425 540	6 345 414
• Microfinance	-	-	621 400	10 026 980	3 789 244
• Social Entrepreneurship	-	-	155 350	5 398 560	2 556 170

[315]The subordinated loan (also known as a subordinated debts) is an unsecured loan or bond that ranks below other, more senior loans or securities with respect to claims on assets or earnings. Subordinated debentures are thus also known as junior securities. In the case of borrower default, creditors who own subordinated debt will not be paid out until after senior bondholders are paid in full (see more information here).

[316]EaSI monitoring report (page 103).

Source: Supporting study, based on data provided by the EIF

Table 63. Investments signed under the EaSI Capacity Building Investment Window

Items	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Number of EaSI Capacity Building Investments signed	**0**	**0**	**2**	**10**	**3**	**15**
• Microfinance	0	0	1	6	3	10
• Social Entrepreneurship	0	0	1	4	0	5
Number of financial intermediaries who signed investments	**0**	**0**	**2**	**10**	**3**	**14**
• Microfinance	0	0	1	6	3	10
• Social Entrepreneurship	0	0	1	4	0	5
Number of additional participating countries	**0**	**0**	**2**	**9**	**2**	**13**
• Microfinance	0	0	1	5	2	8
• Social Entrepreneurship	0	0	1	4	0	5

Source: Supporting study, based on data provided by the EIF

Table 64. Geographical distribution of funding in the Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship axis

2018	2019	2020
France (46.1 %)	France (39.3 %)	France (37.3 %)
Spain (20.8 %)	Italy (22.6 %)	Italy (23.3 %)
Italy (14.8 %)	Spain (21.0 %)	Spain (22.5 %)
Poland (5.2 %)	Belgium (4.4 %)	Netherlands (4.3 %)
Austria (3.4 %)	Netherlands (2.7 %)	Belgium (3.9 %)
Netherlands (2.4 %)	Poland (2.6 %)	Poland (2.0 %)
Belgium (2.4 %)	Austria (2.1 %)	Austria (1.5 %)
Slovakia (1.9 %)	Slovakia (1.7 %)	Denmark (1.3 %)
Hungary (0.7 %)	Denmark (1.1 %)	Slovakia (1.2 %)
Serbia (0.6 %)	Czech Republic (0.7 %)	Hungary (0.9 %)
Denmark (0.5 %)	Hungary (0.7 %)	Czech Republic (0.7 %)
United Kingdom (0.5 %)	Serbia (0.5 %)	Serbia (0.4 %)
Czech Republic (0.3 %)	United Kingdom (0.3 %)	Finland (0.3 %)
Slovenia (0.2 %)	Croatia (0.1 %)	United Kingdom (0.2 %)
Romania (0.1 %)	Slovenia (0.1 %)	Croatia (0.2 %)
Croatia (0.1 %)		Slovenia (0.1 %)

Source: EaSI monitoring report (page 102), based on annual reports for the EaSI Financial Instruments

VI.4 EPMF implementation

The European Progress Microfinance Facility (EPMF) provided resources for increasing access to and availability of microfinance to persons socio-economically at risk or vulnerable and to micro-enterprises. EPMF was launched to increase the availability of microcredit (loans below EUR 25 000) for setting up or developing a micro-enterprise. It had a particular focus on, but is not restricted to, groups with limited access to the conventional credit market, for instance female entrepreneurs, young entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs belonging to a minority group, entrepreneurs with a disability or sole traders.

The EPMF did not directly finance entrepreneurs, but enabled selected microcredit providers in the EU to increase lending, by issuing guarantees, thereby sharing the providers' potential risk of loss. In addition, the European Commission provided support for building the capacity of selected financial intermediaries, both in the microfinance and in the social entrepreneurship space. The microcredit providers may be private or public banks, non-bank microfinance institutions and not-for-profit microcredit providers. The list of EPMF participating countries was limited to the EU Member States according to Article 4 of the

Commission Decision 2009/340[317]: "The Facility shall be open to public and private bodies established in the Member States which provide microfinance to persons and micro-enterprises in the Member States."

The Decision No 283/2010 states that the financial contribution period is until 2013, but does not describe until when the EIF is entitled to sign agreements with third parties or until when the loans under the EPFM guarantee are covered. The implementation period of the EPMF Guarantee Instrument is defined in the Fiduciary and Management agreement (FMA) signed between the EC and the EIF. The implementation period of the Fonds Commun de Placement (FCP) instruments is defined in the Management Regulations.

- Under the EPMF Guarantee Instrument, the EIF could sign guarantee agreements with financial intermediaries until the end of the *Project Signing Period* (7 April 2016) defined in the *Fiduciary and Management Agreement* (FMA, pages 6 - 7). The implementation period end-date of the EPMF Guarantee Instrument is set until the end of its term (31 December 2020), which is also defined in FMA (Article 17, page 18). In conclusion, the guarantee coverage of the loans and therefore the implementation of the EPMF Guarantee Instrument extended until 31 December 2020.
- The Fonds Commun de Placement (FCP) - which is the EPMF subfund – is reffered in this Staff Working Document as the 'EPMF Funded Instrument'. It can invest in financial intermediaries until the end of the Investment Period (7 April 2016) which is defined in page 48 of the Management Regulations. The implementation period end-date of the EPMF FCP subfund is set until the end of its term (30 April 2020) which is defined in the Management Regulations (Article 2.1.3, page 59).

Based on the above, the end-date of the implementation period of the EPMF as a whole (including the EPMF Guarantee Instrument strand and the EPMF FCP subfund strand) is 31 December 2020. The EU total contribution for 2010 - 2020[318] for both EPMF strands (guarantees and funded instruments) – amounted to EUR 103 million. This contribution - initially amounting to EUR 100 million[319] - was increased to EUR 103 million by including an additional amount of EUR 3 million from the EPPA (European Parliament Preparatory Action).

The EPMF totalled 86 agreements with 63 unique financial intermediaries across 22 European countries, reaching a loan volume of EUR 516 million. On average, a microloan had a value of around EUR 8 500. The value of the microloans disbursed under the Guarantee Instrument was on average higher than the value of the loans disbursed under the Funded Instrument. In total, more than 60 000 microloans were disbursed to more than 55 000 final beneficiaries.

Below, more details are provided on the EPMF Guarantee Instrument and the EPMF Funded Instrument, both implemented through indirect management by the EIF:

EPMF Guarantee Instrument

[317]Decision COM(2009) 340 amending Decision No 1672/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (PROGRESS, 2007 - 2013): https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0340:FIN:EN:PDF.

[318]The EPMF Decision did not specify until when the EIF was entitled to sign agreements with third parties, nor until when the loans provided would be covered. The overall timeline considered in the present report is then 2010 - 2020 given that 31 December 2020 was the final date until which the EU financial contribution could be used to implement the EPMF.

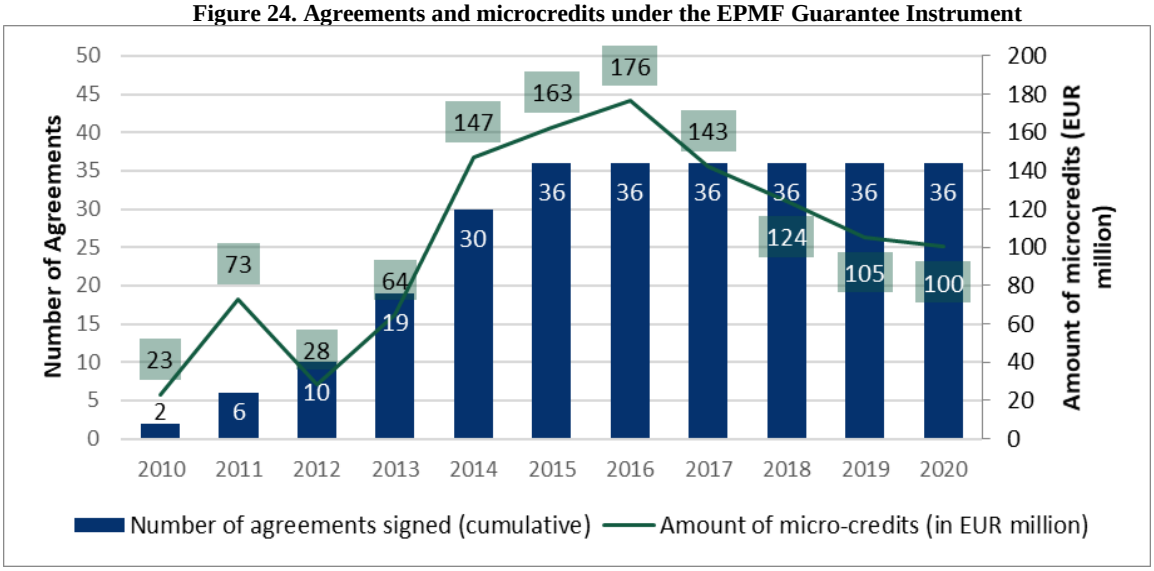
[319]Article 3 of the EPMF Decision.

The aim of the EPMF Guarantee Instrument was to provide additional security to financial intermediaries to increase access to, and availability of microfinance. A total financial envelope of EUR 25 million was made available by the Commission for its implementation[320].

Under this Instrument, the EIF could issue guarantees to microcredit providers to cover their portfolio losses; and counter-guarantees to guarantee institutions, which in turn issue guarantees to cover the microloan portfolios of microcredit providers.

The EPMF Guarantee Instrument became operational in 2010. By the end of 2020, a total of 36 agreements had been signed with financial intermediaries (Figure 24), across 18 countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom. In total, this helped 19 470 final beneficiaries access microfinance.

Figure 24. Agreements and microcredits under the EPMF Guarantee Instrument



Source: Supporting study, based on EIF Annual Implementation Reports 2010 - 2020.

Table 65 below presents the number of final beneficiaries and employees of micro-enterprises which were supported by the EPMF guarantee instrument.

Table 65. Beneficiaries of the EPMF Guarantee Instrument

Item/year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of final beneficiaries	2 836	6 748	14 448	18 490	19 713	19 749	19 756	19 756	19 740
Number of employees of micro-enterprises supported	3 677	5 390	13 250	33 222	37 038	37 220	37 219	37 217	37 187

Source: Contractor based on EIF Annual Implementation Reports 2010 - 2020

EPMF Funded Instrument

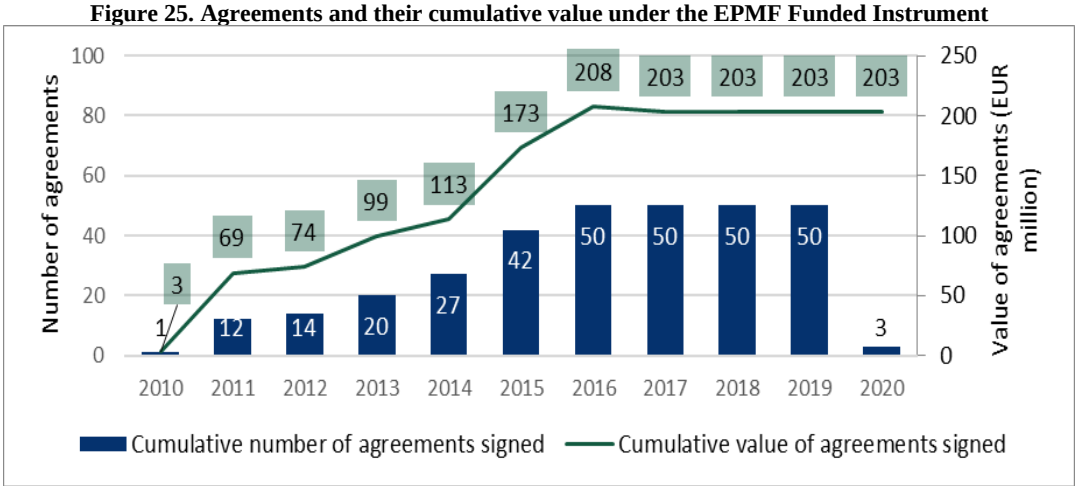
A financial envelope of EUR 80 million was made available by the Commission for the implementation of the EPMF Funded Instrument. An additional investment of EUR 100

[320]European Commission (2011). Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Implementation of the European Progress Microfinance Facility — 2010. Brussels, 11.4.2011 COM (2011) 195 final.

million was made by the EIB, thus creating a total financial envelope of EUR 180 million[321]. Under this instrument, the EIF issued senior loans, subordinated loans (financing subordinated to senior creditors), risk-sharing loans (senior loans combined with risk participation in the microcredit portfolio) and equity participation (direct or indirect equity in the form of investments in ordinary or preferred shares).

The EPMF Funded Instrument became operational end-2010. By end-2020, a total of 50 agreements (47 had been terminated and 3 were still running at that time) had been signed with financial intermediaries (Figure 25), across 16 countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and United Kingdom. The countries that received the largest commitments to financial intermediaries were Romania, Bulgaria and Italy. In total, this helped 35 940 final beneficiaries access microfinance.

Figure 25. Agreements and their cumulative value under the EPMF Funded Instrument



Source: Supporting study, based on the EIF Annual Implementation Reports 2010 - 2020

Table 66 below presents the number of financial intermediaries and employees of micro-enterprises which were supported by the EPMF Funded Instrument.

Table 66. Beneficiaries of the EPMF Funded Instrument

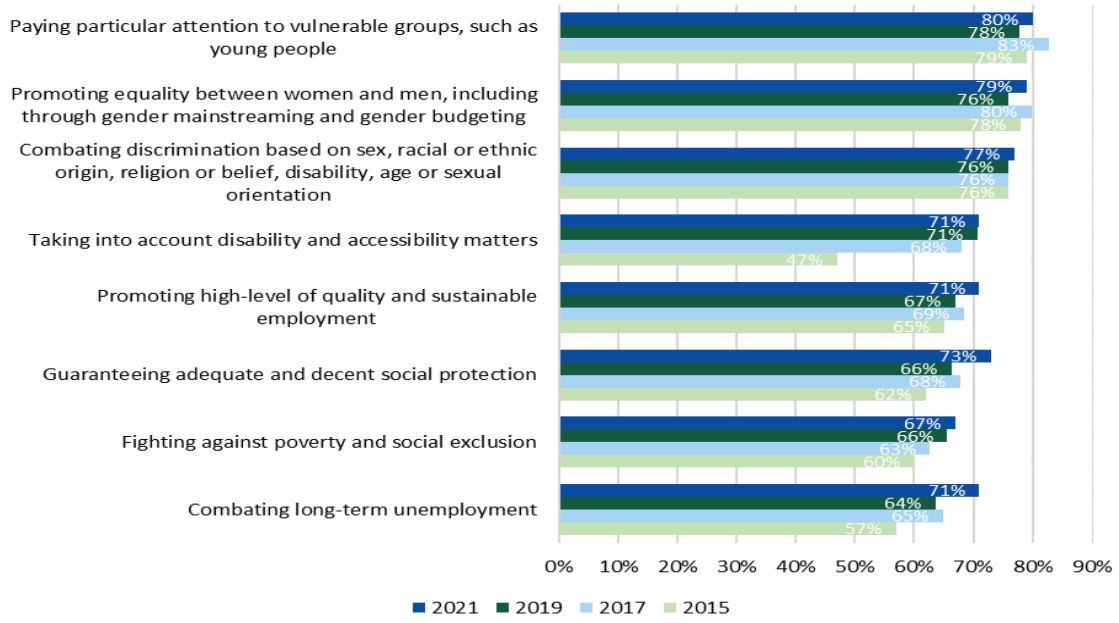
Number/year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of final beneficiaries	3 253	5 942	16 025	24 841	32 428	35 352	35 919	35 940	35 940
Number of employees of micro-enterprises	5 544	8 275	17 704	41 111	56 860	65 247	67 205	67 288	67 288

Source: Contractor based on EIF Annual Implementation Reports 2010 - 2020.

[321]European Commission (2011). Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Implementation of the European Progress Microfinance Facility — 2010. Brussels, 11.4.2011 COM (2011) 195 final

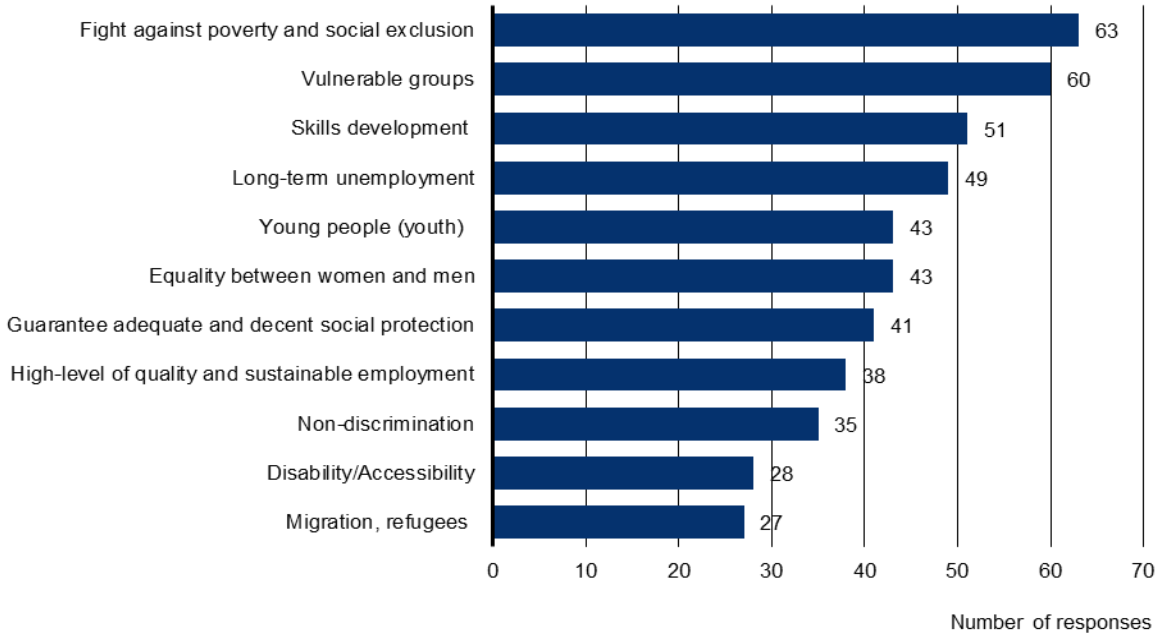
VI.5 Other figures and tables

Figure 26. Share of stakeholders stating that the EU contribution to the integration of the following horizontal objectives into their respective policy area



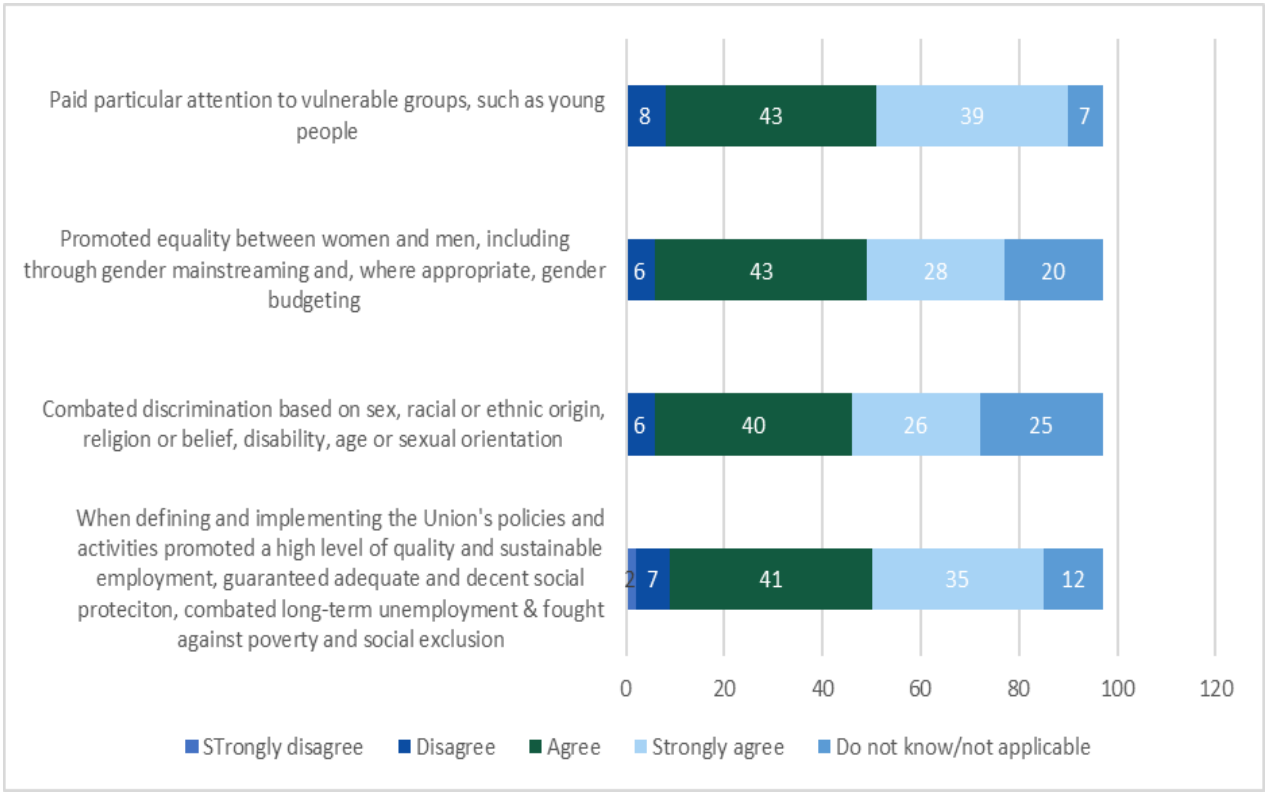
Source: Supporting study, based on EaSI monitoring report 2019 - 2020 (page 126).

Figure 27. Extent to which the EaSI activities focused on 'horizontal issues' (n=106)



Source: Supporting study, based on results from online survey targeted at EaSI grant beneficiaries (see Annex V).
Note: There were 94 responses, but some respondents had been involved in projects in more than one axis.

Figure 28. Online public consultation results related to EaSI horizontal objectives.



Source: Supporting study, based on results from online public consultation results.

Table 67. EaSI Microfinance/Social Entrepreneurship financial overview 2014 - 2020 (EUR)

Year	Guarantee microfinance (MF)	Guarantee social entrepreneurship (SE)	Capacity Building	Equity Pilot project	Call on transaction cost support for social enterprises	Funded Instrument	EaSI contribution	Reflows from EPMF
2014	18 816 464,00	9 583 736,00	-	-	-	-	28 500 200,00	-
2015	27 225 136,00	4 173 864,00	-	-	-	-	31 427 570,48	-
2016	9 000 000,00	-	12 725 384,00	6 000 000,00	-	-	27 744 070,32	-
2017	13 227 178,00	9 740 000,00	10 000 000,00	7 500 000,00	3 000 000,00	-	43 453 918,13	21 716,00
2018	456 294,00	16 502 400,00	-	-	3 109 699,54	9 153 649,46	27 323 876,00	2 401 756,00
2019	-	-	3 274 616,00		341 362,80	38 846 350,54	20 811 339,00	21 335 385,85
2020	21 274 928,00		19 000 000,00			19 000 000,00	14 235 000,00	45 072 659,17
Total	**90 000 000,00**	**40 000 000,00**	**45 000 000,00**	**13 500 000,00**	**6 451 062,34**	**67 000 000,00**	**193 495 973,93**	**68 831 517,02**
out of which								
MF	90 000 000,00		29 000 000,00			46 900 000,00	**63%**	
SE		40 000 000,00	16 000 000,00	13 500 000,00	6 451 062,34	20 100 000,00	**37%**	

Source: DG EMPL

ANNEX VII. GENERAL OBJECTIVE "MODERNISATION AND EFFECTIVE APPLICATION OF EU LAW"

Based on the EaSI monitoring reports, this annex details how EaSI-supported outputs were instrumental each year in contributing to improvement and better application of EU law in the social and employment field (the headline indicator for this general objective).

2014

Various studies and data-gathering exercises were funded by the programme in the area of health and safety at work. For example, a 'Non-binding guide to good practice on the minimum health and safety requirements regarding the exposure of workers to the risks arising from physical agents (electromagnetic fields)' was finished in November 2014. It helped the relevant national actors to implement the provisions of Directive 2013/35/EU on the minimum health and safety requirements regarding the exposure of workers to the risks arising from physical agents (electromagnetic fields) (20th individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16(1) of Directive 89/391/EEC) and repealing Directive 2004/40/EC. An EaSI-supported ad-hoc module of the Labour Force Survey on accidents at work and work-related health problems was also instrumental in this regard.

Furthermore, EaSI-supported networking activities helped the relevant stakeholders to exchange views ad discuss relevant issues in the area of health and safety at work as well as more general issues in the area of working conditions. As examples, the 66th and 67th meetings of the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC) and Thematic Days could be mentioned. They were organised as Council Presidency activities. The first event focused on workers' involvement in the management of Occupational Safety and Health (OHS) in small enterprises (SEs) by highlighting what works and its implications for the strategies and practices of labour inspection. The second meeting discussed non-standard work and its effect on occupational safety and health.

EaSI-supported activities were also instrumental in contributing to the improvement and application of EU labour law. First, the contribution of the European Labour Law Network (ELLN) was major in this regard. Its 7th Annual Legal Seminar discussed new forms of employment and their impact on the EU labour law. The discussions focused on the need and feasibility of legislating on new forms of employment at EU level. While some participants warned against lumping together all new forms of employment, others offered the view that a higher degree of regulation may only lead to more advanced attempts of evasion. Some participants advocated undertaking further empirical as well as legal studies to develop a clearer picture of new forms of employment and their pervasiveness in the Member States. Legal uncertainties regarding identifying an employment relationship were mentioned as constituting a major problem in many national systems. In 2014, ELLN also developed quarterly and ad-hoc flash reports on labour law in the Member States.

In addition to ELLN activities, EaSI also provided financial support to the organisation of meetings of working groups and experts' groups in the field of labour law. Furthermore, a Social Europe Guide on labour law and working conditions was issued in February 2014. The key objective of the guide was to provide an exhaustive overview of EU labour law and initiatives taken in the area of working conditions. It also explained the rationale for EU involvement in this area.

2015 - 2016

Various studies and data-gathering exercises were funded by the programme in the area of health and safety at work (including occupational diseases) in order to improve and implement existing directives, and, more generally, to prevent occupational diseases and new or emerging risks. For example, by supporting the IARC the EaSI programme has continued to provide authoritative, up-to-date evaluations of environmental and occupational exposures that may present carcinogenic hazards to human beings. This activity supported the Commission in collecting up-to-date scientific information on occupational carcinogens and will underpin further amending of Directive 2004/37/EC on carcinogens.

A study produced a contribution to the international Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection supports Directive 2013/35/EU on Electromagnetic Fields. Moreover, a non-binding guide to good practice for implementing this directive, including a practical guide, case studies and a guide for SMEs, helps employers and national labour inspectors to implement its provisions in practice. This guide is available in all EU languages and has reportedly been very useful at the local level.

Furthermore, EaSI-supported networking activities have helped relevant stakeholders to exchange views and discuss the issues of health and safety at work as well as more general issues in the area of working conditions. As examples, biannual SLIC meetings and thematic day conferences could be mentioned. They were organised as Council Presidency activities.

EaSI-supported activities were also instrumental in contributing to the improvement and application of EU labour law. Flash reports on labour law and country reports by the European centre of expertise in the field of labour law, employment and LMP (ECE) has provided the Commission with relevant information regarding the application of EU law in the Member States. On the practical side, the 8th Annual Legal Seminar "Digitalisation and Labour Law" organised by the European Labour Law Network in the Hague in November 2015 explored what impact digitalisation will have on regulating working conditions, information, consultation and the mobility of EU workers/services. An expert seminar in December 2016 highlighted current challenges and possible solutions in the application of EU legislation on collective redundancies and restructuring.

EaSI also funded two studies: a study to prepare the REFIT evaluation of the Written Statement Directive (Directive 91/533/EEC) and a study to prepare the evaluation of the Recast Directive on European Works Councils (Directive 2009/38/EC). Both studies helped the Commission to map the transpositions rules and assess the concrete application of the specific directives.

EaSI also contributes to the EU's effort to reduce undeclared work and contribute to the fair posting of workers within the EU. To this end, the European Platform on Undeclared Work was launched in May 2016 and its first plenary meeting took place in Brussels in October 2016. The platform aims to enhance cooperation between Member States, improve their capacity to tackle undeclared work, and increase public awareness of the issue.

A study "Posting of Workers Directive - Current Situation and Challenges" published in June 2016 provided an overview of the directive, focusing on the current situation and major patterns regarding the posting of workers in the EU, major problems and challenges and how these patterns have translated political, as well as jurisdictive, debates and proposals to improve the regulation of this specific form of employment and service provision. With the Commission's view on the proposal published on

8 March 2016, to revise the directive, the study aimed to provide the EMPL Committee with an assessment of the proposal considering both the key challenges addressed and the previous resolutions and requests made by the European Parliament.

Finally, by launching annual calls for proposals in the field of posting of workers, the EaSI programme has funded the development of transnational initiatives to enhance the implementation, application and enforcement of Directive 96/71/EC concerning the posting of workers in the framework of provision of services in practice and its Enforcement Directive 2014/67/EU. The proper functioning of administrative cooperation among Member States and improved access to information on applicable terms and conditions of employment in a transparent and accessible manner, are essential. In the monitoring period, eight projects in the field of posting of workers were completed (funded by the predecessor PROGRESS programme). Their descriptions are available in monitoring reports on projects funded by the EaSI programme (four projects in volume III, two projects in volume IV, and two projects in volume VI)[322].

"Rights without borders - RIDE" was a project implemented by the Italian General Confederation of Work and its partners from Romania, Belgium, Hungary and Slovenia in the period 2013-2015. As a result, 75 trade unionists from partner countries received training on issues related to transnational posting of workers and control procedures. The project allowed data on the issues of social dumping and unfair competition in the four Member States involved to be updated. An operating manual for control and reference for each Member State involved was published on a newly created multilingual web platform. It included information on standards, contracts and procedures of the respective countries. Finally, a research report was presented during the project's final conference and made available on the websites of the project's partners.

2017

EaSI funded a study to support the impact assessment on the review of the Written Statement Directive. This study was the key evidence base to inform the Commission's Proposal for a Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions, which is a direct follow-up to the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The new Directive will aim to set new rights for all workers, particularly addressing insufficient protection for workers in more precarious jobs, while limiting burdens on employers and maintaining labour market adaptability. The EaSI-funded study was instrumental in carrying out an in-depth comparison of all possible policy options and selecting the most effective and efficient one.

The EaSI programme funded as well as a study to gather the information necessary to further amend Directive 2004/37/EC, which has informed the related impact assessment. The study was the major analytical report that supported the Commission's Proposal to amend Directive 2004/37/EC on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work. The amendment of the Directive will improve workers' health protection by reducing occupational exposure to five carcinogenic chemical agents, provide more clarity for workers, employers and enforcers, and contribute to a level playing field for economic operators.

The EaSI programme continued funding the plenary meetings and thematic days of the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC). The SLIC committee has a mandate to provide its opinion to the Commission on all problems relating to the enforcement by the

[322]The reports are available online on: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1081&langId=en&furtherPubs=yes

Member States of the EU law on health and safety at work. The following topics were discussed during Presidency meeting of the SLIC committee in 2017 - 2018: new forms of work and occupational safety and health; safeguarding the occupational health and safety of labour inspectors; fine-tuning interventions through better targeting of labour inspection; carcinogenic substances – old and new challenges.

The European Commission continued to fund the meetings of the Committee of Experts on Posting of Workers. This group of experts, *inter alia*, supports and assists Member States in identifying and exchanging experience and good practice, promotes the exchange of relevant information, examines any questions and difficulties which might arise in the practical application of the posting of workers legislation, as well as its enforcement in practice.

An EaSI-funded Peer Review meeting on the transposition, implementation and enforcement of EU occupational safety and health (OSH) legislation was hosted by the Danish Working Environment Authority and the Danish Ministry of Employment On 19-20 June 2018. The event was attended by Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Ireland, Malta, Slovenia and Sweden as well as representatives from the European Commission, the Senior Labour Inspectors' Committee (SLIC) and the social partners. The host country, Denmark, presented its model of 'orchestration' where different actors operate in a fully integrated system to ensure the most effective cooperation at all levels. The Danish Implementation Committee and Implementation Council presented their working method in guaranteeing that EU OSH legislation is effectively transposed and implemented, considering the national context and avoiding unnecessary administrative burdens. Participants in the Peer review discussed their OSH governance systems and presented different practices in transposing, implementing and enforcing (EU) OSH legislation. The discussion also focused on sharing examples and good practices on different enforcement practices and the use of new data-driven models underpinning inspection strategies. The EU OSH legislation consists of a Framework Directive and almost 30 related directives, which together guarantee minimum safety and health requirements for workplaces throughout Europe. The importance of enforcement and efficient transposition and implementation of OSH legislation at the national level was also stressed in the 2017 OSH Communication and by the results of the *ex post* evaluation of the EU Framework Directive and 23 related directives.

The EaSI programme continued to fund the European centre of expertise in the field of labour law, employment and labour market policies (ECE). Among other matters considered, the ECE centre provides the Commission with a stable and continuous capacity in legal analysis, in the form of a network of labour law experts. In 2017-2018, the network of labour law experts has continued to produce flash reports on labour law as a regular evidence base for the Commission and other players in the area. Furthermore, the 2017 Annual Conference of ECE was devoted to labour law issues and called 'The Personal Scope of Labour Law in Times of Atypical Employment and Digitalisation'. The conference took place on 28 April 2017 in Frankfurt, Germany

The EaSI programme has also continued to fund projects through calls for proposals in the area of 'Posting of workers: enhancing administrative cooperation and access to information'. These projects were funded with the view to enhancing the implementation, application and enforcement of Directive 96/71/EC on the posting of workers. The projects are expected to promote the exchange of information, best practices and training among the officials of competent public authorities and relevant social partners, as well

as to increase the accessibility and transparency of relevant information. They addressed the following issues:

- Strengthening transnational administrative cooperation between national competent bodies and social partners.
- Increasing the accessibility and transparency of relevant information to support posted workers in need.
- Improving knowledge and building the capacity of employees, employers and trade unions, on issues related to posting of workers and the legal frameworks, European directives.
- Contributing to the development of posted workers' directives (96/71/EC and 2014/67/EU) and their correct application.

All projects completed in 2017-2018 were presented in separate biannual reports on EaSI-funded Projects and Organisations.

2018 - 2020

EaSI funded the project 'Posting of workers in Eastern Europe (EEPOW)', which proactively addressed the issue of posting of workers at its pre-accession stage by assisting Eastern European countries, especially the four candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, in implementing the Directive on the Posting of Workers (96/71/EC) before it actually comes into force. EEPOW increased the awareness for needs and gaps in the directive. As a result of this project the participating Member States have addressed the issues of protection of workers, access to information, equal pay enforcement, and occupational safety and health in various ways by combining EU and national legislation.

EaSI also funded the project 'TIDE POWER - Trade unions In DEfence of POsted WorKERs', which contributed towards improving the protection of workers' rights and full implementation of the Directive 96/71/EC on the posting of workers in the framework of a transnational provision of services; and of the Directive 2014/67/EU giving the trade unions: a role of legality defender through tasks such as the correct information of workers; the monitoring of employment conditions; and the engagement of proceedings aiming at enforcing the obligations under the above-mentioned directive. The project collected good practices at European level on the protection and representation of posted workers. The practices were shared with trade union officials in charge of assisting posted workers. Trade unionists highlighted how the international federation tools of European trade unions are very active in lobbying with the European Commission and the European Parliament.

The project 'TRANSposition – reconciliation between the freedom to provide [EB1] services in the EU and the social rights of posted workers in transport sector' (2018-2019) aimed to improve the effectiveness of the implementation of the EU Posting of Workers Directive and its Enforcement Directive. The project worked towards including social partners and workers in the transport sector in the discussion on the revision of the EU Posting of Workers Directive. The project resulted in data being collected on stakeholder attitudes towards the revision of Enforcement Directive 2014/67/EU. For the time being, it is planned to use the data towards the revision of Enforcement Directive 2014/67/EU.

In 2019 EaSI funded the action '(Re)connect: EU4you' which supports the implementation of the European Association of Services Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) strategy '2018-2021 Comit! Delivering the support services of

Tomorrow'. The activities implemented under the action grant aim to reduce the gap between the European and the grassroots level by building better communication tools and developing a stronger performing support services sector. With financial support from the EaSI Programme, the EASPD directly contributed to the implementation of the European Disability Strategy, prepared a global report on the European Semester and the European Pillar of Social Rights 'Disability Support Services in the EU: A Reality Check'.

EaSI funded the action 'Roma included in Social Europe 2019, which was coordinated by the European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network (ERGO). The work carried out by ERGO fed directly into the development of the Post 2020 EU Roma Strategic Framework. The organisation also provided evidence-based input to the EU institutions and the Member States on the implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS). Case studies were produced covering different aspects of NRIS implementation, particularly in education, funding, employment and poverty. ERGO also provided evidence-based input and recommendations to the EU institutions and the Member States for the adoption of the Post 2020 EU Roma Strategic Framework.

Glossary/table of abbreviations

Term or acronym	Meaning
ABAC	Accrual-based Accounting
BCP	Banco Comercial Portugues
BRG	Better Regulation Guidelines
CEA	Cost-Effectiveness Analysis
CIE	Counterfactual Impact Evaluation
CIP	Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (2007-2013)
C-MISE	City Initiative on Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe
COSME	Programme for competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Country-specific recommendation
DG	Directorate-General
DG EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
DG JUST	Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers
EAfA	European Alliance for Apprenticeship
EaSI	Employment and Social Innovation Programme
ECSF	European Centre for Social Finance
EEA	European Economic Area
EEPO	European Employment Policy Observatory
EES	European Employment Strategy
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EESSI	Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIF	European Investment Fund
ELA	European Labour Authority
EMN	European Microfinance Network
ENSIE	European Network for Social Integration Enterprises
EP	European Parliament
EPMF	The European Progress Microfinance Facility
EPMF FCP-FIS	EPMF Fonds Commun de Placement – Fonds d'Investissement Spécialisé
EPPA	European Parliament Preparatory Action
EPSCO	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council configuration
EPSR	European Pillar for Social Rights
ERSISI	Enhancing the Right to Social Inclusion through Service Integration
Erasmus	European Union Programme for education, training, youth and sport
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESDE	Employment and Social Developments in Europe
ESCO	European Classification of Skills, Competencies, Qualifications and Occupations
ESF	European Social Fund
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESMA	European Securities and Markets Authority
ESSR	Electronic Single Social Record of Andalusia
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
EU	European Union

Term or acronym	Meaning
EUR	Euro
EURES	EURES axis of EaSI
EURES	EURES network
EVPA	European Venture Philanthropy Association
EQM	Evaluation Questions Matrix
FCP - FIS	Fonds Commun de Placement - Fonds d'Investissement Spécialisé
FEAD	Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived
FEANTSA	European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless
FEBA	European Food Banks Federation
FIER	Fast track integration in European Regions, an EaSI-funded project
FINAP	Financial application used by DG EMPL
FMA	Fiduciary and Management Agreement
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
Horizon 2020	The EU's research and innovation funding programme from 2014-2020
ISSG	Inter-Services Steering Group
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
JASMINE	Joint Action to Support Microfinance Institutions
JEREMIE	Joint European Resources for Micro to Medium Enterprises
JRC	Joint Research Centre
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MFC	Microfinance Centre
MF/SE	Microfinance and Social Entrepreneurship axis of EaSI
MAPP	Multi-Annual Programming and Planning
MISSOC	Mutual Information System on Social Protection
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
MoveS	Free Movement of Workers and Social Security Coordination network
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NCP	National Contact Point
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLAF	European Anti-Fraud Office
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
OPC	Online Public Consultation
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PES	Public Employment Services
PICUM	Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants
PMF	Performance Monitoring Framework
PROGRESS	Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007 - 2013)
PROGRESS	PROGRESS axis of EaSI (2014 - 2020)
PSCI	Programme for Social Change and Innovation
RESISOR	Regional Single Social Record project
SIP	Social Investment Package
SLIC	Senior Labour Inspectors Committee
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SPC	Social Protection Committee

Term or acronym	Meaning
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis
TMS	EURES Targeted Mobility Scheme
USD	United States Dollar
YfEJ	Your first EURES Job