



Ex post evaluation of the 2000-2006 ESF support to the Open Method of Coordination in Social Protection and Social Inclusion

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Acronyms

CSF Community Support Framework

EC European Commission

ESF European Social Fund

EU European Union

High coherence and complementarity: when the cross references between ESF and national objectives are present with great emphasis.

Low coherence and complementarity: when a form of complementarity and coherence is present but it is very partial

MA Managing Authority

Medium coherence and complementarity: when the cross reference between ESF and national objectives are present with medium emphasis

MS Member State

NAP National Action Plan

NSR National Strategic Report

Null coherence and complementarity: when there is no cross reference

OMC Open Method of Coordination

OMC1 First Overarching SPSI Objective: a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion

OMC2 Second Overarching SPSI Objective: adequate and sustainable pensions

OMC3 Third Overarching SPSI Objective: accessible, high-quality and sustainable healthcare and long-term care

OP Operational Programme

Policy field A Developing and promoting active labour market policies

Policy field B Promoting equal opportunities for all in accessing the labour market, with particular emphasis on those exposed to social exclusion

Policy field C Promoting and improving training, education and counselling as part of a lifelong learning policy

Policy field D Promoting a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce, innovation and adaptability in work organisation, developing entrepreneurship and conditions facilitating job creation, and enhancing skills and boosting human potential in research, science and technology

Policy field E Specific measures to improve women's access to and participation in the labour market, including their career development, their access to new job opportunities and to starting up of businesses, and to reduce vertical and horizontal segregation on the basis of sex in the labour market

SPC Social Protection Committee

SPSI Social Protection Social Inclusion

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REPORT SUMMARY

Evaluation Objectives and Approach

With the creation of the Lisbon strategy the EU triggered a process that interconnects social protection and social inclusion policies (based on OMC Social Protection Social Inclusion) with those for employment and growth: “the interaction between the OMC and the revised Lisbon process should be a dual one – social protection and inclusion policies should support growth and employment objectives, and growth and employment objectives should support social objectives”¹.

The main objective of this evaluation is to assess the support ESF during the 2000-2006 programming period provided to the SPSI OMC at four levels: objectives, interventions, stakeholders/target groups and indicators. The assumption of this evaluation is that these two tools, in order to be efficient, need to be coherent at all 4 levels. ‘Support’ is assessed in relation to two key criteria: *coherence* (defined as a measure of the correspondence and consistency between ESF and SPSI OMC) and *complementarity* (defined as a measure of reciprocity between the ESF and SPSI OMC). The evaluation seeks to understand if the ESF is or could be made to be a more (within the existing framework) suitable tool for supporting the SPSI OMC, and if yes to provide operational recommendations for the new programmes (2007-2013) and the next round of Structural Funds (post 2013), in particular the ESF as well as the next cycle of OMC, the Lisbon Strategy (EU 2020) and the future Social Policy Agenda.

The evaluation methodology involves ‘triangulation’ of different data sources and methodologies, reflecting the different ‘voices’ of the various stakeholders involved. It includes desk research and a literature review; interviews with Commission officials and national/regional stakeholders; a mapping exercise of ESF Programmes and SPSI OMC national documents; an on-line survey with managing authorities; case studies; and a stakeholder validation and learning workshop. Full details of the approach and methods as well as the detailed evaluation results are provided in Annexes to this Final Report.

Structure of this Report

This Report is split into two main sections. The first section presents the main results of this evaluation based on all the evaluation activities. The key findings are organised according to the overarching evaluation questions 1-4 in the Terms of Reference.

The second section presents answers in terms of suitability of the ESF and operational recommendations on the present and future linkages between ESF and SPSI OMC (questions 5a and 5b), detailing how ESF as an instrument can be improved to ensure a better coherence and complementarity with the SPSI OMC in the next programming period.

SECTION 1: Key Evaluation Findings

This section presents the main evaluation findings at the four levels of objectives, interventions, stakeholders/target groups and indicators. These evaluation findings have been derived from a synthesis of the data collected and analysed through the different evaluation methods applied. The data sources and rationale for each evaluation finding are set out in detail in Table A of this Report (page 19).

Coherence and complementarity at the level of objectives - evaluation question 1

- Coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC is significantly greater at the level of objectives (in the programming phase) than at the other three levels (interventions, target groups and indicators).
- There is significantly greater coherence and complementarity between ESF programme objectives and SPSI Overarching Objectives in the social inclusion strand of SPSI OMC (OMC1) compared with the other

¹ Council of the European Union, *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion*, 7294/06, 13th of March 2006, page 6, http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2006/cs2006_7294_en.pdf.

two strands (OMC2 – social protection – and OMC3 – health and long term care). The ESF objectives grouped under Policy Field A (active labour market) show consistently high levels of coherence with OMC1 - eradicating poverty and social exclusion, but a high degree of coherence was also measured between this objective and policy Field E (Gender equality) and B (social inclusion). Coherence was also identified between the national policy objective of facilitating access to resources and services and Policy Fields A and B (especially through, in both cases, employment services). Similar patterns were found in the Equal projects analysis². The strong coherence and complementarity between the ESF and OMC1 can be seen primarily as a reflection of the emphasis placed on facilitating participation in employment, notably for groups facing difficult labour market access in national policy objectives.

- With regard to the OMC2 - social protection - the strongest coherence is between the national policy objective of ensuring adequate and sustainable pensions and ESF objectives under Policy Field C (Training and Education). All the other national policy objectives show no coherence with ESF objectives. The analysis of the ESF national objectives showed that coherence and complementarity with national policies can be seen at the level of sustainability, referring not only to balancing contributions and benefits in an appropriate and socially fair manner and promoting the affordability and the security of funded and private schemes, but also to supporting longer working lives and active ageing. Concerning EQUAL projects almost no coherence has been detected in the projects selected with regard to the second strand of SPSI OMC Objectives.
- Coherence with regard to the OMC3 - healthcare and long-term care - was found for just 5 countries (Greece, Finland, Poland, Portugal, and Sweden), and it has been associated with the ESF objectives aimed at supporting the modernisation of healthcare sector through training. In particular low coherence was identified between the national policy objective 7 - Ensuring accessible and high quality health and long term care - and the ESF objective under Policy Field D - Adaptability in work organisation. Concerning EQUAL projects almost no coherence has been detected in the projects selected with regard to the third SPSI OMC Objectives.
- The degree and nature of coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC varies significantly across member states and mainly according to the relative importance of ESF within the wider programming schemes supporting social inclusion initiatives.

Coherence and complementarity at the level of interventions - evaluation question 2

- The evaluation of coherence and complementarity at the level of interventions mirrors, to a large extent, the conclusions of the analysis of objectives, outlined in the previous sub-section: strong coherence and complementarity has been found with regard to labour market and social inclusion issues and weak coherence and complementarity has been found in the field of social protection and also healthcare and long-term care.
- The majority of ESF operational programmes and national interventions in fact do support OMC1 – the social inclusion component of SPSI OMC. Coherence and complementarity is strongest for ESF Policy Fields A (Active Labour Market), B (Social Inclusion) and E (Gender Equality). The emphasis has been on measures to increase the employability of specific target groups through increasing the labour market supply of better-qualified people, supported by measures to improve the quality of education and training for disadvantaged groups. A mapping and analysis of the interventions carried out for the Operational Programmes of member states shows that, for those that support OMC1 – social inclusion - the largest proportion is in the ‘Assistance to persons’ category. The main interventions within this category are training, integrated pathways for re-integration into the labour market, counselling and orientation and work experiences. This reflects a strategy of tailoring actions to support the needs and personal circumstances of a range of disadvantaged target groups.
- In the EQUAL Programmes, the highest level of coherence and complementarity with the OMC Social Inclusion strand was identified in interventions in four thematic fields: Combating racism, Business

² For more details on the coherence between Equal Thematic Fields and OMC strands of Work (Objectives), please see Table 6 in the Annex 3D (Fiches D) of this Report.

creation, Reconciling family and Professional life, Reducing gender gaps and De-segregation. Areas where “social inclusion” issues are not so explicit in programme were less used.

- As with ‘objectives’, there is little evidence of coherence and complementarity between ESF and the OMC2 and OMC3 when ‘interventions’ are considered. In OPs no reference is made to the modernisation of social protection, or access to healthcare, as these categories of interventions were effectively outside the scope of ESF, and so not surprisingly, no or very little coherence can be reported. In fact over the period covered by the evaluation (2000-2006) it was only in the latter years (2004 for health care issues and 2006 for social protection ones) that specific requirements were introduced for Member States to include in the documents (NAPs/NSRs) the issues of social protection and health-care. There is only evidence of some support for OMC2 through interventions facilitating lifelong learning for older people, and through measures to address early retirement.
- Evidence of some support for OMC3 through interventions has been found in the development of health programmes for vulnerable categories such as the long-term ill, and disadvantaged people in general, and on measures to reduce geographical disparities of care supply.
- Also referring to EQUAL, a very low level of coherence and complementarity has been observed concerning OMC2, in most of the cases referring to Life long learning interventions. Whilst for OMC3 coherence and complementarity between the EQUAL interventions and the NAPs/NSR are reported only in projects on Social economy, Reconciling family and professional life and Integration and reintegration to labour market.
- Strong differences between countries can be identified. There seems to be a correlation between differences observed and differences in “political-institutional and cultural” approaches: for example, Nordic countries have a longer tradition in attributing a strong role to the State with regard to social inclusion policies, while in the Southern countries the role of family is emphasised. The differences can be observed for example in the use of incentives both to persons/families and to companies and with regard to the use of the integrated pathways towards employment inclusion and business start-ups. Incentives are used to a high degree by Southern Countries, but are employed very rarely in the Nordic countries; whilst in contrast integrated pathways are prevalent in Nordic countries, but have very limited use in Southern countries. Moreover the ways in which different government departments collaborate, and the extent to which different units responsible for ESF and SPSI OMC respectively co-operate within the same department appear as possible factors explaining the difference in the relative importance ESF funding assumes in different national programmes.
- An evolution during the 2000-2006 period has been observed, with a greater degree of integration in terms of interventions observed towards the end of the programme period. This reflects a trend towards the extension of the breadth and scope of interventions more in line with the broader agenda of SPSI OMC.
- Referring to the typology of interventions, the largest category of interventions is comprised of “Assistance to persons” (54,2%) followed by “Assistance to structures and systems” (30,9%) and by “Accompanying measures” (14,9%). This distribution varied slightly across the five ESF Policy Fields. Policy Fields B and E (social inclusion and gender equality) showed a higher percentage of “Assistance to Persons” interventions (respectively 59,6% and 57,2%). This reflects the ‘individualistic’ orientation of the two policy fields: actions within Policy Field B are aimed at tailoring support to the needs of a range of disadvantaged target groups (disabled, immigrants, etc.). Similarly, Policy Field E tends to be characterised by interventions that focus on the personal circumstances of women in situations of economic and social exclusion.
- With respect to “Assistance to persons”, training, counselling and orientation and integrated pathways for labour market insertion are the main interventions used to implement activities to support social inclusion. As reflected by the results of the on-line survey, managing authorities think that these kinds of ‘assistance to persons’ interventions have the greatest impacts in achieving social inclusion. In contrast, managing authorities attributed minor impacts to mediation, incentives, and pathways for business start-ups and employment aids. The latter finding suggests that to fund or to facilitate a business start-up is not enough to achieve an impact on the participation and/or on the maintenance of disadvantaged people in

the labour market; rather “individual preparation” through training and prolonged “individual support” given by experts has a greater impact.

- Referring to “Assistance to structures and systems” networking between different systems/services, training and education systems development, employment services development (especially if considered together with advisory and orientation development) and studies research are the interventions most often used to implement activities to support social inclusion. Networking between different systems/services is well represented across all the ESF Policy Fields but particularly within ESF Policy Field A and B (respectively addressing unemployment and long-term unemployment and social exclusion).
- Accompanying measures show wide variation in terms of the type of intervention adopted within different ESF policy fields. Awareness raising interventions, support for adapting work organizations, and guidance services are the interventions most often employed to implement activities to support social inclusion (in particular in relation to women and immigrants). For Policy Field B (social inclusion), training instruments for disabled people and transport interventions are well represented. In Policy Field E (gender equality) care for dependents and aids for adapting work organisations are the biggest category of interventions. In Policy Field A (Active Labour Market) the largest category is represented by interventions aimed at supporting disabled in transport. The survey of managing authorities indicates that managing authorities think that the kinds of Accompanying Measures that achieve major impacts are guidance services, mentoring, and awareness-raising initiatives. According to managing authorities, networking is beginning to play a significant role in raising awareness of the multi-dimensional nature of social inclusion and of the importance of using multi-modal strategies to address exclusion (this finding was also confirmed during the stakeholder dialogue).

Coherence and complementarity at the level of stakeholders - evaluation question 3

- The policy focus of both SPSI OMC and ESF shows a commitment to a participatory approach. The partnership principle was introduced in ESF with the 1998 structural funds reform, and further strengthened during the 2000-2006. In the OMC case, the Lisbon Council emphasized the active involvement of the European Union, the Member States, the regional and local levels, as well as the social partners and civil society using variable forms of partnership.
- The results of the mapping and analysis of national policy documents (NAPs/NSRs), the literature review of the main stakeholder groups involved in the programming phase, and the survey of the managing authorities, show that a wide spectrum of stakeholders have been actively involved in support of SPSI OMC. However, the degree and nature of involvement has been variable.
- “Institutional actors” such as National Ministries for national policy documents and Regional/Local Government for ESF are the most actively engaged with regard to all three SPSI OMC Objectives (Social Inclusions, Social Protection and Health care). NGOs and civil society organisations make up the second biggest group of stakeholders, except with respect to OMC2 – social protection – where employers associations and trade unions are more numerous. Employers associations and trade unions are broadly equally represented across the three SPSI OMC strands. Development Agencies and Public Employment Services are the least well-represented of the stakeholder groups. They are recorded only within OMC1 – social inclusion.
- Overall, patterns of participation vary from country to country largely depending on the particular ‘political culture’ of different member states, depending for example on the degree of centralisation/decentralisation of decision-making. The role of stakeholders, and their contribution to supporting the SPSI OMC varies across different countries influencing the degree of coherence ESF may have with regard to SPSI OMC, however, the analysis does not allow for the development of a clear cut typology of different Member States.
- As for objectives and interventions, cohesion and complementarity between ESF and the SPSI OMC at the level of stakeholder involvement in the programming phase is much stronger for OMC1 – social inclusion than for OMC2 – social protection – and OMC3 – health care and long term care. For OMC1, ministries and regional/sub-regional authorities are equally highly involved in NAP/NSR and in ESF. Employers’

representatives and Trades Unions are particularly active in ESF and less active in NAP/NSR. NGOs and civil society are particularly active in NAP/NSR and less active in ESF. This pattern also holds true for OMC2. For OMC3, ministries and then NGOs and civil society are the most active within NAP/NSR, but there is virtually no engagement by any stakeholder group in ESF. However, it should be borne in mind that few member states engaged through ESF in this field.

- According to the results of the survey of managing authorities, and the case studies, stakeholder involvement is broader and less differentiated at the implementation phase compared with the programming phase. With the exception of national ministries, all stakeholder groups play a more active role in the implementation of programmes and projects than at the programming stage; this is true also referring to social interest actors representing the ‘voice’ of disadvantaged people in the programming phase.
- With respect to participation as members of Monitoring or Steering Committees, it was found that ‘civil society’ played virtually no role at all, although one of the essential elements of OMC is the involvement of civil society. The stakeholder dialogue³ suggested that the contribution of civil society to defining what to observe in the description and addressing of social exclusion at national and local level, would have provided added value to the process.

Coherence and complementarity at the level of indicators - evaluation question 4

- Although outcomes and impacts targets are set for both ESF and the SPSI OMC, they differ in terms of aims, objects measured, and level of analysis.
- ESF indicators are primarily intended to monitor and evaluate programme implementation at different stages in its development, while SPSI OMC indicators are primarily intended to describe and analyse broader structural phenomena, processes and trends. ESF indicators are primarily pitched at the level of actions/interventions at national or regional level, whilst SPSI OMC indicators are at the level of the member state.
- As a result, there is limited coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC indicators. In general, national ESF indicators are not systematically integrated or aligned with SPSI OMC monitoring systems and indicators. This is particularly the case where indicators covering Poverty, Healthcare, Long term care and Social Protection are concerned. A medium–high level of coherence can be seen with respect to the Labour market.
- However, the evaluation shows ‘slow but steady progress’ towards creating a system of measures and benchmarks that is beginning to help policy makers, programme managers and other stakeholders assess the extent to which ESF and SPSI OMC Objectives and interventions converge. The online-survey shows a growing awareness amongst managing authorities of the need for convergence between ESF and SPSI OMC common targets and indicators. The majority of the respondents consider it to be essential or at least useful to enhance their coherence and complementarity for all three SPSI OMC strands, but with a particular emphasis on the first one, and with a specific focus on measures to assess poverty.
- In addition this evaluation has found examples of a positive evolution occurring in the 2000-2006 period, towards an increasing coherence between SPSI OMC indicators and ESF ones. One example is increased collaboration between Social Inclusion and ESF Units within the Employment DG. Another example is the revision of indicators after the mid-term review in some member states to be more in line with the SPSI OMC indicators.

³ See Annex 6 of this Report: Stakeholders dialogue main conclusions.

SECTION 2: Overall conclusions and recommendations

ESF suitability as a tool to progress for delivery on the common social objectives of the SPSI OMC – Evaluation question 5A

It should be noted that the evidence from this ex-post evaluation of the suitability of the ESF as a tool to progress delivery on the common objectives of the SPSI OMC is based on an assessment of the 2000-2006 programming cycle. Following the mid-term review, convergence and complementarity between the two instruments has increased significantly. This underlines the fact that both ESF and the SPSI OMC are evolving processes. Indeed, the 2007-2013 ESF programming cycle represents a very different policy environment from before, and both ESF and the SPSI OMC now operate in a very different political, social and economic world. Nevertheless, the evaluation has highlighted the following conclusions.

- It is clear that there is a certain degree of coherence and complementarity between the ESF and the SPSI OMC and that, particularly following the mid-term review, this *coherence and complementarity has increased*. Complementarity and coherence has tended to be stronger with regard to the social inclusion objectives and weaker with regard to the social protection and healthcare ones.
- Concerning the OMC strands, *the ESF financial instrument is a suitable tool* to progress delivery of the social inclusion strand within the SPSI OMC overarching Objectives. This study finds that the ESF eligible interventions and typologies offer a wide spectrum of instruments to tackle the manifold disadvantages of target groups. The case study analysis in particular shows the ability of ESF as a financial instrument that is able to cope with the multidimensional nature of social exclusion.
- *The possibilities that ESF offered to tackle social inclusion, were generally utilised by Member States*. However, it can be said that not all the possibilities offered by ESF eligible intervention typologies were adequately explored⁴ by all. This is particularly true with regard to ESF Policy Fields or EQUAL thematic fields in which social inclusion issues were more “hidden” and therefore it required a greater capacity for “inventiveness” by managing authorities. Member States typically experienced to a considerable degree difficulty in thinking beyond their *modus operandi*, in relation to fields where social exclusion is least visible or rather most challenging to extricate. For example Policy Field C that may include within its target groups typology, people at risk of social exclusion (such as young school drop-outs) could have also been used to promote pathways of integration between different systems of education and training, not just as a tool to increase flexibility, but also as a tool to combat social exclusion.
- With regard to the OMC2, the three objectives of the Pension OMC (Adequacy, sustainability and modernisation) were not considered eligible under ESF and this means that *ESF suitability in the light of the 2nd SPSI OMC Overarching Objective can only be seen in an indirect way* supporting longer working lives and active ageing within ESF Policy Field. Amongst managing authorities surveyed⁵ the consensus around the potential and appropriateness of ESF to support these fields is much lower than in the case of social exclusion. The key message is that there is less confidence and agreement with the suggestion that ESF should in the future function as a support to the SPSI OMC in relation to the areas of pension; and if these concerns are to be addressed through ESF it will be only in a limited, partial or indirect capacity. The same conclusion is also consistent with the findings of the interviews with Commission officials and stakeholders⁶ also considering the lack of EU competence in this strand.
- Finally with regard to the OMC3, the findings of the evaluation study *showed a very low degree of both direct and indirect coherence and complementarity with the ESF*: it was assessed to be a suitable tool to progress the delivery of this overarching objective only with regard to developing continuous training in the workplace. Nevertheless, the evaluation study also concludes that *there is the possibility to enlarge the scope of ESF in the case of health care*: there is certain potential for raising awareness and proposing solutions for interventions that take advantage of the existing scope within the ESF regulatory framework for linking inclusion and health. The case studies conducted in this field demonstrate that there is the

⁴ For more details on which were the interventions typologies that were more used and, on the contrary, which were those less used, please, refer to the Paragraph 1.2 of this Report and to Annex 3: Mapping exercise analysis and main results.

⁵ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

⁶ See Annex 2 of this Report: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity.

possibility of extended synergy between ESF and health related issues (in the specific case occupational health), but that ESF is not entirely equipped to deal with them⁷.

Recommendations – how ESF can be improved to ensure better coherence and complementarity with SPSI OMC. Evaluation question 5B

Overall the study findings and conclusions mainly show that the level of coherence between ESF and SPSI OMC could be better enhanced and explored by both ESF managing authorities and member states. This is particularly true for the 2nd and 3rd SPSI OMC Strands (where coherence was assessed as modest), but in some way, also for the 1st SPSI OMC Strand, even if in this case coherence already proved to be high.

Amongst the managing authorities surveyed⁸ there is a wide consensus that it will be more and more important to use the ESF as an instrument to reinforce social inclusion policies in their country/region: this view is expressed in particular by the overwhelming majority of the respondents from Eastern and Southern Europe (respectively 83% and 81%), but only by 40% of the respondents from northern Europe (where in addition 21% disagree and 39% only partially agree). With regard to social protection issues (2nd SPSI OMC Strand) 50% indicated that ESF should intervene more in this area. Finally, with regard to healthcare issues, 40% of the on-line survey respondents⁹ believed that in the future ESF should support significantly the modernisation and improvement of healthcare. In all cases differences between countries are consistent, as is the case of OMC1.

The study finds that in order to exploit the full potential of the ESF, relevant changes are needed in the governance and in the regulation going even further than what was defined in the ESF 2000-2006 Regulation¹⁰ and also than what has already been achieved in the 2007/2013 programming period¹¹.

Below the main recommendations for improving ESF to ensure better coherence and complementarity with SPSI OMC are summarised. A full set of recommendations, together with suggestions for implementing them in practice, is provided in Table B of this Final Report (page 67).

Improving the governance system

- *Better coordination of the SPSI OMC and ESF based on greater political commitment:* this implies in the first instance the need to raise the political saliency of the issue and commitment at the Member States level, but also at the EU level. There are a number of mechanisms through which this objective could be addressed. The following are two examples:
 - ✓ A pan European conference exploring the actual and potential impact of ESF on SPSI OMC in relation to the three different Strands.
 - ✓ Common guidelines drafted by Commission Units involved in SPSI OMC and ESF reinforcing the attention of Member States and ESF Managing Authorities to use ESF to support social inclusion, social protection and healthcare. In particular focused on specifying the need to address the multidimensional nature of social exclusion, identifying the specific areas in which ESF can make a difference in improving the sustainability of the pension system and the functioning of healthcare and long term care services, and exploring possibilities of 'ring fencing' ESF financial allocations to the different OMC strands
- *Better coordination of the SPSI OMC and ESF based on more effective collaboration between the units in charge in the administrations:* there is a need to improve in the Member States the channels of

⁷ See Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

⁸ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

⁹ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

¹⁰ The Regulation (EC) N° 1784/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 1999 on the European Social Fund identify within ESF task that of promoting equal opportunities for all in accessing the labour market, with particular emphasis on those exposed to social exclusion.

¹¹ The suitability of ESF as a tool for promoting SI OMC has been further developed in the 2007/2013 programming period as evidenced by the Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion¹¹, and by the Joint Report 2010.

communication and collaboration between agencies, departments and individuals who are currently separately responsible for ESF and SPSI OMC respectively. This can be done, for example, through:

- ✓ Improving co-operation and collaboration (regular meetings, dissemination and knowledge sharing events, etc.) between the agencies responsible for ESF and SPSI OMC in member states especially for those SPSI OMC Objectives (like the 2nd and 3rd) that until now have had less opportunity for joint working with ESF.
- ✓ Exploring the possibilities by the agencies responsible for ESF and SPSI OMC in member states of drafting an integrated strategy.

This implies developing a *multi-level governance framework*, with clearly defined roles amongst the different levels of governance and/or public-private stakeholders, along with identification of the policy objectives to be implemented at the regional, national and European levels.

- *Improving the involvement of civil society/NGOs:* NGOs have a ‘grounded knowledge’ that other stakeholders involved in the design and programming of SPSI OMC and ESF often do not have. Ways of further involving NGOs and civil society especially at national and regional level, could for example, encompass:
 - ✓ Extensive consultation at the stage when the programming documents are still in a preliminary version, with NGOs representatives in order to use them as a sounding boards for grass roots needs;
 - ✓ Developing and implementing some sort of “representative bodies” of the NGOs, in order to enable a continuous exchange of views and experiences with the public institutions. This could take the form of “user committees” to work both at the ministerial level to participate in the preparation of NSRs and at the Operational Programmes level in order to provide continuous advice;
 - ✓ Guidelines for consultation practices and cross-border dissemination of good practices.

Changes to ESF Regulatory and Policy Framework and to SPSI OMC Changes

- *Making the links between EFS and SPSI OMC more explicit:*
 - ✓ In order to support better coherence and complementarity, the next ESF Regulation should better correspond to the objectives and targets set up in the three strands of the SPSI OMC. This should be explored separately for the three OMC Objectives given the different considerations made with regard to ESF suitability for each of them.
 - ✓ The next ESF Regulation should also better define how ESF can contribute to delivery of policies and interventions aimed at reducing social exclusion and poverty and addressing social protection, and health and long term care.

This could be achieved, for example by introducing references to the three SPSI OMC over-arching objectives within the communication strategy on the ESF; incorporating references to the three SPSI OMC over-arching objectives in the instruments used by auditing bodies to monitor and ensure compliance to ESF regulations; and highlighting the contribution of the ESF to promoting the three OMC over-arching objectives in national reports.

At the same time, in the design of the new OMC cycle, particular attention should be given to the identification of potential linkages with ESF. Ways of identifying potential linkages could encompass:

- ✓ improving the operational features of the SPSI OMC Objectives in order to make them more fundable by ESF;
- ✓ introducing explicit reference to ESF possible contribution as a suitable tool to reinforce SPSI OMC in the context of the future EU 2020 Strategy;
- ✓ introducing explicit reference to ESF contribution to support the social impact of the crisis in the 2011 Joint SPSI Report;

- ✓ involving ESF Commission Units to define new policy development under the SPSI OMC strategy both with respect to social integration and to healthy and dignified ageing in order to identify possible elements of coherence and complementarity with future ESF.
- *Supporting convergence in the way ESF eligible actions are defined by Member States.* Member States' interpretation of EC rules on ESF may sometimes constitute a blockage limiting the policy fields, the intervention typologies, and the target groups that are addressed. The European Commission could help in increasing awareness and understanding of how and in what circumstances ESF can be applied to support the SPSI OMC:
 - ✓ by issuing specific guidelines on the use of ESF for meeting SPSI OMC objectives able to answer the more frequent doubts and questions on the eligibility of specific interventions, target groups etc.
 - ✓ by selecting and disseminating good practices illustrating how rules and procedures can be more creatively applied to broaden the scope of interventions.
- *Enlarging the scope of target groups to be addressed by the ESF through:*
 - ✓ The increase of the target group typologies that are considered eligible for ESF to allow the inclusion of specific target groups typologies that currently (and especially in the future) are posing severe problems of social inclusion (such as citizens whose opportunities are restricted by high levels of debt; citizens with very low income; people with HIV/AIDS; and people suffering from depression). New target group identification could be effective not only for taking into account new problems but also in order to increase coherence with the target groups addressed by future NSRs¹².
 - ✓ The identification of different, but interconnected scenarios of needs, instead of identifying a list of target groups to be considered eligible. Future ESF policy, regulations and procedures should reflect the complex and multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion, focusing more on 'scenarios of needs' (for example, in this economic crisis period, one scenario is the increase of new forms of poverty in different target groups and not only in one). This approach would thus better take into account the complexity, contextuality and evolutionary nature of needs.
- *Designing interventions around the needs of the individuals:*
 - ✓ It is important to recognise that instead of traditional 'single activity' interventions, the more costly and time intensive integrated approaches that address complex multiple needs of individuals, even for a relatively small number of beneficiaries, should be encouraged¹³.
 - ✓ With specific reference to intervention typologies, other types of interventions should be considered as necessary in the future (prevention for people with underpaid jobs at risk of social exclusion, access to social services/housing): interventions should be more multi-faceted and go beyond the current definition of social inclusion. This means that also in relation to the 1st SPSI OMC Strand, ESF scope and interventions should be widened and better explored giving, for example, more attention to interventions aimed at better reaching at risk youth, the homeless and tackling child poverty.
 - ✓ Interventions to address social exclusion should avoid over-emphasising the 'individual' and 'end user' context: there is room for interventions that aim at the 'bigger picture', addressing structural and systemic weaknesses in the social, economic and cultural spheres of member states which contribute to maintaining inequalities. This means that together with the action directly addressed to people (assistance to persons intervention typology), interventions aimed at modifying structures and systems and accompanying measures should also be emphasised¹⁴.

¹² For differences between ESF and NAPs/NSRs target groups, please see Annex 3 of this Report.

¹³ For more details see Annex 6 of this Report.

¹⁴ See paragraph 1.2 of this Report and Annex 3 of this Report.

- ✓ The ESF operational system could benefit from building in more capacity to support collaboration and 'joined up working' between stakeholders working at national and regional levels and within different agencies and units of the overall design and delivery infrastructure.
- ✓ With specific regard to the 2nd SPSI OMC Strand, there is a need to better reflect and explore what ESF interventions could be useful and for which specific issues within the social protection objectives, whilst with regard to the 3rd SPSI OMC Strand there is a need to promote full use of possible support in health and care.

Restructuring the Monitoring and Evaluation System through:

- *The identification of a common set of indicators between ESF and SPSI OMC*
 - ✓ To accurately capture the multi-dimensional and dynamic nature of social inclusion and the differences in social protection systems it is necessary to adopt within ESF a portfolio of regional and local indicators based on the overarching portfolio of indicators developed in the context of the SPSI OMC, including information on the socio-economic context and on regional cohesion, and more specific information according to the nature of the programme
 - ✓ Increase the use of supporting figures able to describe the local context and the role the program intends to play in it
 - ✓ To measure the results of the program interventions to integrate the measurement of hard outcomes with soft outcomes related to achievements in personal and interpersonal and social skills as crucial indicators of success.
 - ✓ To improve the comparability of indicators it is necessary to increase the co-operation between the Indicators Sub-Group of the Social Protection Committee, ESF desk officers, as well as the Evaluation Unit, Managing Authorities at all levels and the agencies responsible for pan-European data collection.
- *Reinforce the evaluation capacity at all levels*

The introduction of new indicators implies a greater technical capacity at all levels to use them in monitoring and evaluation activities. To this end specific support in the form of training, common guidelines, and learning events is needed in order to:

- Increase impact evaluation, also using "hard" quantitative methodologies including counterfactual analysis¹⁵;
- *Introduce qualitative evaluation methods and indicators* (for example case studies, decisional process analysis, etc.) to support evidence-based learning on what works, for whom and under what circumstances.
- *Better use of ex-ante evaluation*: the recommendation here is to focus more on the learning process by applying what has been learned from the evaluation of previous programming rounds into designing future programmes.
- *Mainstream participative evaluation* involving a broad range of stakeholders. A key objective of SPSI OMC is to commit the Commission and Member States to ensuring "good governance, transparency and the involvement of stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring of policy". Civil society has been reported as not having been involved in the process of the definition of indicators during the programming stage. Main NGOs umbrella organisations working in the field of social inclusion and social protection will be able to provide added value if involved in the definition of what to observe in the field of social exclusion both at national and local level.

¹⁵ The counterfactual is an estimate of the circumstances that would have prevailed had a new policy or policy change not been introduced. By comparing counterfactual outcomes (often referred to as either control or comparison group outcomes) with outcomes measured for those units subject to the new policy or policy change, causality or attribution can be inferred.

Transnationality and Knowledge Sharing

ESF has generated significant innovation in policy making and institutional learning, both at the national and regional/local levels, especially in the case of well-focused Community Initiatives (such as Equal). Given the complexity of the issues at stake in the case of social inclusion, but also in the case of social protection and healthcare, it would be particularly relevant to stimulate more pro-active approaches and mobilise partnerships at the regional, cross-border and inter-regional level. Transnational projects are able to contribute to two different dimensions that the evidence collected shows as very relevant, and sometimes even crucial in tackling the issue of social exclusion.

- ✓ The first is the need for more scientific approaches to the problem: the possibility to compare experiences across national borders offers an invaluable opportunity to strengthen the analytic foundations of interventions in the most difficult cases, answering the questions of if and why the intervention will work.
- ✓ The second dimension is how to solve difficult governance issues, for instance the involvement of NGOs or the translation of ESF eligibility criteria into national criteria. It is also important to work with EU-funded European networks as potential drivers and facilitators of transnational mutual learning with the aim of building European resource/knowledge centres on specific priority themes and of reaching out to a much wider variety of stakeholders. Incentives and 'value added' should be highlighted within actions aimed at supporting transnational cooperation and collaborative learning.

FOREWORD

This document is the Final Report of the thematic evaluation: “Ex-post evaluation of the 2000-2006 ESF support to the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in Social Protection and Social Inclusion” which is part of a set of ESF ex-post evaluations aimed at reporting on the use of the ESF¹⁶ and at assessing the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of this financial assistance instrument. However, as distinct from other evaluations planned or under way, the object of this evaluation is not the ESF Programme and its interventions per se. Rather, this evaluation moves the body of work on ESF evaluations forward by evaluating the relationship between the ESF and the SPSI OMC at the levels of objectives, interventions, stakeholders and indicators – or, in short, the support ESF provides to SPSI OMC. This study also seeks to verify suitability, provide practical recommendations for the ongoing programmes (2007-2013) and the next round of Structural Funds (post 2013), in particular ESF.

The “object of the evaluation” for this study was rather “difficult”: unlike the ESF itself, or the SPSI OMC, there were no explicit objectives for ESF support to OMC against which developments could be evaluated. Even though from the literature review some evidence of possible linkages were identified and nowadays it is less and less possible to see them as separate (especially with regard to the social inclusion OMC strand), the anticipated or desired links between the two remain implicit, either embedded in the actions themselves or the subject of discussions. Thus, the remit of the present evaluation posed a significant challenge due to the complexity of exploring the reciprocal interconnections between ESF and SPSI OMC.

As stated in the terms of reference the evaluation was mainly aimed at providing:

An assessment at four levels (objectives, interventions, target groups / stakeholders and indicators) of the coherence and complementarity of ESF Programmes with SPSI OMC following five key evaluation questions:

- Q 1: How coherent and complementary the objectives of ESF Programmes are with the SPSI OMC?
- Q2: How coherent and complementary the interventions and target groups¹⁷ of ESF Programmes are with the SPSI OMC?
- Q 3: How coherent and complementary public institutions and other main stakeholders involved with the ESF Programmes are with the SPSI OMC?
- Q 4: How coherent and complementary the used indicators in ESF Programmes are with SPSI OMC?
- Q 5a: How suitable is the ESF as a tool to progress in the field of the OMC
- Q 5b: How the tool can be improved to ensure better coherence and complementarity with the SPSI OMC?

For the purposes of the evaluation:

coherence is defined as a measure of the correspondence and consistency (or ‘goodness of fit’), between ESF and SPSI OMC Objectives interventions, indicators and stakeholders’ involvement

complementarity is defined as a measure of reciprocity between the ESF and SPSI OMC, in terms of the degree to which each supports similar interventions, indicators and stakeholders’ involvement¹⁸.

coherence and complementarity were assessed to be **HIGH** when the cross references between ESF and national objectives are present with great emphasis;

¹⁶ As underlined in the Evaluation Terms of Reference, this thematic study is part of the ex-post evaluations to be performed following article 43 of the Council Regulation (EC) n°1260/1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds: the “ex post evaluation shall cover the utilisation of resources and the effectiveness and efficiency of the assistance and its impact and shall draw conclusions regarding policy on economic and social cohesion. It shall cover the factors contributing to the success or failure of implementation and the achievements and results, including their sustainability”.

¹⁷ Target groups were included in the third evaluation questions, but during the evaluation study were considered together with the interventions for a logic of strict interdependency.

¹⁸ For example, vocational training for elderly workers is an example of ESF typology of intervention that is complementary to the OMC2 because it can contribute to keep people working for more years and thus have effect on the sustainability of pension systems.

coherence and complementarity were assessed to be **MEDIUM** when the cross reference between ESF and national objectives are present with medium emphasis;

coherence and complementarity were assessed to be **LOW** when a form of complementarity and coherence is present but it is very partial

coherence and complementarity were assessed to be **NULL** when there is no cross reference.

The study was carried out using the following methodologies:

1. desk research and literature review¹⁹;
2. telephone interviews with Commission officials and national/regional stakeholders²⁰;
3. mapping exercise²¹ of ESF Programmes and SPSI OMC national documents through the drafting of:
 - Country Fiches (Fiches A)²² which present a general overview of the 25 Countries covered by this evaluation;
 - OP Fiches (Fiches B)²³ which present an analysis of the coherence between ESF and SPSI OMC at the level of macro-interventions and target groups;
 - OP Fiches (Fiches C)²⁴ based on a sample of OPs. The analysis presented illustrates the inter-relationship between the ESF and the SPSI OMC in terms of interventions and indicators;
 - Equal Project Fiches (Fiches D)²⁵ covering a sample of projects which show coherence with SPSI OMC.
4. on-line survey targeted at all ESF Managing Authorities which were in charge both at the national and regional levels in all the 25 countries covered by this evaluation. The online survey represented an opportunity to gather evidence 'from the ground' on the coherence and complementarity of the ESF instrument and national policies in the light of the SPSI OMC during the period 2000-2006²⁶.
5. case studies. 10 case studies were selected on the basis of the results of the mapping of programmes. They comprise examples of interventions drawn from those programmes that present a major coherence between ESF and SPSI OMC, including ESF/Equal projects that successfully contributed to the development of the Open Method of Coordination²⁷. The main purpose of the case studies was to illustrate inter-relationships between ESF and SPSI OMC as reflected in indicative examples of programme interventions.
6. stakeholder involvement through the organisation of a Stakeholder Dialogue²⁸.

The overall theoretical framework for this evaluation employed a theory of change approach combined with policy analysis and was supported by the use of triangulation (multiple sources of data and information). This allows for the synthesis of evidence of different data types and from different sources (stakeholders), drawn from multiple research methodologies, in order to arrive at the evaluations' main results and conclusions that are presented in this Final Report.

¹⁹ Desk research and literature review main findings are reported in Annex 1 of this Report: ESF and SPSI OMC literature review: main characteristics and preliminary elements of coherence and complementarity

²⁰ Interviews main findings are reported in Annex 2 of this Report: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity.

²¹ Mapping exercise main findings are reported in Annex 3 of this Report: Mapping exercise analysis and main results.

²² Fiches A are presented in Annex 3A of this Report: Country Fiches A.

²³ Fiches B were inserted in a database which is presented in Annex 3B of this Report (Data Base Fiches B and Methodological Note) together with a Methodological Note explaining how the database is structured.

²⁴ Fiches C are presented in Annex 3C of this Report: Fiches C on indicators.

²⁵ Fiches D are presented in Annex 3D of this Report: Fiches D.

²⁶ On line survey results analysis is reported in Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

²⁷ Cross case comparison analysis is reported in Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

²⁸ Agreed conclusions of the stakeholder event are presented in Annex 6 of this Report: Stakeholders dialogue main conclusions.

Table A below provides an overview of triangulation for this study, in terms of data sources, and methods of data collection, showing for each evaluation study phase, the main activities (methodologies) that have been undertaken, the different types of data collected, the different stakeholder groups consulted, and gives references to the Annexes of this Report (where main data findings are grouped).

Table A – Triangulation of data and information

Evaluation study phases	Main activities/research methodologies	Sources	Evidence types	Reference Annex
Preliminary phase (WP1-WP2)	- review of an initial set of available reports and other documents relating to the ESF, the EQUAL Community Initiative and SPSI OMC - first set of preliminary interviews	- Reports/documents/studies - European commission and Managing Authorities officials	- Qualitative - Qualitative	- Annex 1 - Annex 2
On desk research (WP3)	- Conclusion of the preliminary literature review and of the initial interviews with Commission Officials. - Drafting the Country fiche A for each of the 25 EU member states - Drafting the OP Fiches “B” for all ESF programmes (Ob.3 and OB.1) and for the OB.2 Single Programming Documents that present ESF Measures related to social inclusion and social protection issues in the 25 EU MS taken into consideration by the evaluation study - Drafting the OP Fiches “C” for a sampling of Programmes that seem to have a major coherence with SPSI OMC at the level of objectives and target groups in order to underline their concrete contribution to the SPSI OMC through specific interventions - Drafting the EQUAL Fiche “D” in relation to a selection of projects coming from all the 17 EQUAL CIPs for the period 2000-04 and the 25 out of the 27 for the second round	- Reports/documents/studies/Europe an commission and Managing Authorities officials - Country CSF, CSF evaluations, NAPs/NSRs 207 OPs 61 OPs 63 Equal Projects	- Qualitative - Qualitative and quantitative - Qualitative and quantitative - Qualitative and quantitative - Qualitative and quantitative	- Annex 1 - Annex 3 and 3A - Annex 3 and 3B - Annex 3 and 3C - Annex 3 and 3D
Stakeholder involvement phase (WP4-WP5)	- online survey of Managing Authorities in the Member States - case studies - stakeholder dialogue	- ESF Managing Authorities - ESF Managing Authorities programme and/or project managers; bodies in charge of project implementation - ESF Managing Authorities programme and/or project managers; National officials in charge of NAPs/NSRs; social stakeholders	- Quantitative - Qualitative - Qualitative	- Annex 4 - Annex 5 - Annex 6

As indicated, this evaluation has proved to be challenging for a number of reasons, including:

- 1) Firstly, as previously noted, the object of this evaluation was rather “difficult” and “elusive”: not the whole ESF itself, but the coherence and the complementarity (other “elusive” concepts) of ESF with SPSI OMC²⁹.
- 2) Secondly, ESF 2000-2006 OPs were programmed before the whole conceptualising of SPSI OMC;
- 3) Thirdly, the scarce reciprocal knowledge of the “two worlds” of ESF and SPSI OMC (that is, ESF respondents typically had limited knowledge of the SPSI OMC and vice versa) that came out explicitly both in the interviews and in the stakeholder dialogue³⁰;
- 4) Fourthly, coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC does not seem to be a priority for many Member State representatives or for ESF Managing Authorities. This was directly fed back both by participants of the on-line survey, and also by those who attended the stakeholder dialogue, and was one of the reason for difficulty in recruiting respondents for both data collection activities.

It is acknowledged that these challenges have to a degree limited this evaluation, in terms of the strength achievable in providing key findings. With respect to the preliminary desk research and literature review, it was found that relatively few of the studies and/or the documents actually considered the specific object of this evaluation. Involving Commission officials and national/regional stakeholders for direct interviews proved difficult, and those who were interviewed had limited knowledge and opinions on the coherence and complementarity between SPSI OMC and ESF for the 2000-2006 programme period. For the online survey, 203 Managing Authorities were contacted but only 71 answered even though the survey remained online for two months instead of the originally planned two weeks³¹. The organisation of the stakeholder dialogue was also challenging because relatively few people took up the opportunity to participate³². In fact, originally it was planned that two stakeholder dialogues would be run, but the first was cancelled due to insufficient numbers of participants.

The evaluation reflected a number of different purposes starting from a descriptive one – to map and make sense of the ways in which the ESF Programmes are coherent with and complementary to the objectives of the SPSI OMC, and in particular its underpinning of ‘social inclusion’ agendas. More importantly however, the evaluation had an analytical and exploratory purpose: creating knowledge and improving understanding about how the ESF Programmes support the SPSI OMC. Finally, the study was meant to apply what has been learned to support the next ESF programming round and structural funds negotiations, as well as the next cycle of SPSI OMC, the future Lisbon Strategy (EU 2020) and the future Social Policy Agenda.

On this basis, this Final Report is organised into two main sections:

- 1) The first section presents the main results and conclusions of this evaluation based on all the evaluation activities undertaken (literature review, mapping exercise, on-line survey, case study activity and stakeholder involvement). The key findings are organised according to the overarching evaluation questions that were posed in the Terms of Reference. Sources are systematically provided in the main text or in footnotes as well as linked to the specific annex that can provide additional information.
- 2) The second section presents answers on the suitability of the ESF as an instrument of support the SPSI OMC and operational recommendations with respect to the future linkages between ESF and SPSI OMC, specifying how ESF as a tool can be improved to ensure a better coherence and complementarity with the SPSI OMC in the next programming period.

²⁹ In addition, it has to be said that in line with the main ESF ex post evaluation, that equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups and social cohesion (the ESF policies that are mainly related to SPSI OMC strands) are policy goals difficult to measure from a methodological point of view. See, Final First Interim Report for the ex post evaluation of the European Social Fund (2000-2006), Enterprise LSE Ltd, Vision & Value, Red2Red Consultores, Expanzió Consulting Ltd, Deutschland Denken! E.V, October, 2009.

³⁰ See for more details, Annex 2: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity. and Annex 6: Stakeholders dialogue main conclusions.

³¹ For more details, see Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

³² For more details, see Annex 6 of this Report: Stakeholders dialogue main conclusions.

1. MAIN RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS IN RELATION TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS (Q1- Q4)

1.1 Coherence and complementarity at the level of objectives - evaluation question 1

Access to employment as a main driver to secure social inclusion: coherence and complementarity at the level of the 1st SPSI OMC objective

The literature review emphasised the role of employment as one of the main drivers to secure Social Inclusion – a primary objective of the SPSI OMC. Since the creation of the Lisbon Strategy, the EU has triggered a process that interconnects social protection and social inclusion policies (based on SPSI OMC) with those for employment and growth: “the interaction between the OMC and the revised Lisbon process should be a dual one – social protection and inclusion policies should support growth and employment objectives, and growth and employment objectives should support social objectives”³³. For this purpose a specific tool has been introduced to support the complementarity between the European Employment Strategy and the Social inclusion process: EQUAL is intended to promote a better model for working life by fighting discrimination and exclusion on the basis of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Funded through the European Social Fund (ESF), EQUAL started in 2000 and has been implemented in, and between, the Member States up until 2008, covering all the 2000-2006 ESF programming period.

*The analysis undertaken during this evaluation study on mapping and analysing national and regional ESF programming documents (CSFs and OPs as reported in the Fiches A and B annexed to this Report)³⁴ and interview/survey feedback from key informants and stakeholders, broadly supported the literature review findings, with regard to the level and nature of coherence and complementarity between the objectives of the ESF and the SPSI OMC, both at the national level (CSFs analysis present in country fiches A) and national/regional level (OPs analysis present in fiches B). The main findings showed that coherence is greatest for the 1st SPSI OMC Overarching Objective on social inclusion: that is to say that *all the 25 countries analysed have at least one national ESF objective coherent with the 1^o social inclusion objective and that the level of coherence is mostly at a high, or medium-high level.**

Coherence and complementarity with the social inclusion objective is further confirmed by the analysis of how the 1st SPSI Overarching Objective was generally translated within national policy objectives (NAPs/NSRs) and within ESF national objectives (CSFs)³⁵:

In detail:

- All the ESF objectives analysed (Fiches A and B annexed³⁶) show coherence with the national policy objective of facilitating participation in employment. The ESF objectives grouped under Policy Field A (active labour market) show consistently high levels of coherence with the first SPSI Overarching Objective of eradicating poverty and social exclusion, but a high degree of coherence was also measured between this objective and policy Field E (Gender equality) and B (social inclusion). Coherence was also identified between the national policy objective of facilitating access to resources and services and Policy Fields A and B (especially through, in both cases, employment services). Similar patterns were found in the Equal projects analysis³⁷.

³³ Council of the European Union, *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion*, 7294/06, 13th of March 2006, page 6, http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2006/cs2006_7294_en.pdf.

³⁴ See Annex 3 of this Report for the main results of the mapping exercise analysis; Annex 3A for Country Fiches A and Annex 3B for Fiches B database.

³⁵ See Annex 3 of this Report: Mapping exercise analysis and main results.

³⁶ See respectively Annex 3A: Country Fiches A and Annex 3B Data Base Fiches B and Methodological Note of this Report.

³⁷ For more details on the coherence between Equal Thematic Fields and OMC strands of Work (Objectives), please see Table 6 in the Annex 3D (Fiches D) of this Report.

- Most of the countries focused their NAPs/NSRs on the objective of promoting access to employment and mobilising training policies. Importance was also given to promoting the reconciliation of work and family life, and to promoting the social integration of people facing poverty. National ESF objectives (CSFs) showed high coherence with their corresponding national objectives as stated in the NAPs/NSRs with regard to both fighting and preventing unemployment, especially in relation to long-term unemployment, promoting equal opportunities for all, and increasing gender equality.
- Other aspects within national policy objectives were more closely related to the general issue of “fighting poverty” - an element on which ESF presents complementarity, but less coherence. In this case ESF national objectives concentrated also on developing continuous workplace training and developing entrepreneurship, preventing early school leaving, and promoting and improving educational and training systems. All these latter aspects were considered to be complementary to the national policy objective of eradicating poverty, considering its multidimensional causes.
- A similar pattern can be seen when looking at how ESF Objectives as defined in CSFs are operationalised within the single national/regional OPs of the 25 member states that were the subject of this evaluation. This suggests that there are very few differences between the programmatic “intentions” stated in CSFs and the programmatic “intentions” stated in OPs.

Increasing coherence of the 1st SPSI OMC objective after the mid-term review

Coherence and complementarity at the level of the 1st SPSI OMC Objective has been reinforced by an enhanced focus on some ESF objectives pertaining to social inclusion following the 2004 mid-term review (as Country reported mainly in Fiches A³⁸ and similarly confirmed by the stakeholder interview data³⁹) and in addition because of changes that occurred at the level of social inclusion objectives foreseen within the SPSI OMC since 2006.

Moreover, the literature review⁴⁰ conducted for this study showed that the 2004 mid-term evaluations of the ESF emphasized that ESF interventions had to develop an increased focus on social inclusion policies, and active employment policies, in particular on those aimed at preventing long term unemployment, and addressing inactive people⁴¹. At the same time, in the social inclusion objectives (former Social Inclusion OMC Objectives and the 2006 SPSI OMC Objectives), there was a shift from prevention of social exclusion to the promotion of active inclusion, with an emphasis on employment policies. In addition, the 2006 new objectives of the social inclusion strand included a direct reference to the ESF as a means of sustaining the fight against social exclusion and poverty: “incorporate the fight against poverty and social exclusion into all relevant public policies, including economic and budgetary policies and the structural funds programmes (especially the ESF)”⁴².

These European Commission suggestions were, to a degree, taken on board by the majority of Member States with regard to Social Inclusion issues. The on-line survey undertaken for this evaluation found that *changes towards a major attention on policies/interventions for the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups were considered to be partial and not radical*: 46,5% of the MA surveyed stated that the ESF mid term-review led to partial changes both in programming and financial allocation⁴³; whilst 18,3% of the survey respondents stated that changes were just in programming but that they did not imply a different financial allocation.

³⁸ Fiches A first section (Characteristics of ESF in the period 2000-2006 and its evolution) is divided into different paragraphs . One is specifically aimed at highlighting any changes that occurred after the ESF mid-term review which are relevant for social inclusion and social protection in relation to programming, financial resources and/or stakeholders involvement. For more details, see Annex 3A of this Report: Country Fiches A.

³⁹ See Annex 2 of this Report: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity.

⁴⁰ See Annex 1 of this Report: ESF and SPSI OMC literature review: main characteristics and preliminary elements of coherence and complementarity.

⁴¹ European Commission, *Information paper The mid term review, performance reserve and mid term evaluations of ESF interventions*, page 2, part of the collection of materials provided for to the coordinating team by the European Commission.

⁴² European Commission, Common objectives, http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2006/objectives_en.pdf.

⁴³ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

Conversely, around a third of the respondents (31%) stated that the mid-term review did not change at all the ESF programming and financial allocation.

Nevertheless, the majority of the Managing Authorities surveyed believe that the *ESF during the period of time between 2000-2006 did play an important (62%) or even crucial (11,3%) role in programming and financing social inclusion policies/interventions*. Although, *approximately one fourth of the Managing Authorities reported that the ESF played just a minor (22,5%) role or no role at all (4,2%)*⁴⁴.

These findings show some differences when analysed according to a typology (in line with the main ESF ex post evaluation typological approach employed) that reflects the complexity of Europe, in terms of Member States organised according to their different “political-institutional” and “welfare policy” regimes⁴⁵. Southern Countries (Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal) and New Member States are those for which ESF during the period 2000-2006 played an important/crucial role in programming and financing social inclusion. However, this ‘finding’ is qualified, in that the survey data being reported does not cover the entire population of member states, rather it represents a self selected sample of Member States who chose to answer the survey (for example, no Spanish Managing Authorities have answered the on-line survey and very few Italians). This means that the Southern Countries are largely unreported⁴⁶.

A possible explanation for these differences was suggested by stakeholders directly interviewed⁴⁷, who stated that the *degree of cohesion and complementarity between ESF and social inclusion issues was associated with the degree of importance ESF programmes assume in supporting national development*. This highlights to some extent differences in terms of the relative importance ESF programme funding has in supporting programmes with a social inclusion orientation. In some member states, ESF can be the most important source of programme funding in an environment where ‘social’ objectives play a relatively minor role in initiatives, thus providing limited support to SPSI OMC Objectives. In other member states, ESF may play only a ‘supporting role’ within a broad spectrum of numerous programmes that contribute to SPSI OMC Objectives. It also highlights differences between long-established and more recent members of the EU. In member states where there is a high level of structural problems, associated with lagging behind regions and/or high unemployment, ESF funding becomes both more important and more visible, and there is consequently more scope and impetus to broaden ESF programme objectives in line with SPSI OMC Objectives. This is not necessarily a reflection of absolute differences in wealth between West and East but of the relative importance of ESF within the wider programming schemes supporting social inclusion initiatives. For example, interviews undertaken indicated that Poland and Slovakia have depended less on ESF programme funding than Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Greece and Portugal⁴⁸.

Variability in coherence at the level of the 2nd and 3rd SPSI OMC objective

When looking at the other two OMC strands (Social Protection and Healthcare and long term care) a very different picture emerges, as detailed below and *variability in coherence and complementarity with respect to the other two SPSI Overarching Objectives is also confirmed*⁴⁹.

With respect to the *social protection objectives* (defined since 2001) of the SPSI OMC, some *forms of indirect coherence and complementarity* were found in the literature review, mainly relating to lifelong training approaches within an active ageing strategy, but *no explicit links were identified*. In contrast, the literature review shows that *ESF was explicitly identified as a tool to support the Healthcare and Long Term Care OMC Objectives* (even if only in relation to training of the healthcare and long-term carers⁵⁰), but, in

⁴⁴ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

⁴⁵ See, Final First Interim Report for the ex post evaluation of the European Social Fund (2000-2006), Enterprise LSE Ltd, Vision & Value, Red2Red Consultores, Expanzió Consulting Ltd, Deutschland Denken! E.V, October, 2009, page. 8.

⁴⁶ For more details on the characteristics of Managing Authorities answering to the on line survey, see Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

⁴⁷ For more details see Annex 2 of this Report: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity.

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

⁴⁹ See Annex 3 of this Report: Mapping exercise analysis and main results.

⁵⁰ ESF can be used” to ...promote human resources management that meets the challenges of demographic ageing in the healthcare and long-term care sector, in particular by anticipating or reducing shortages of certain categories of staff, thanks to sufficient investment in basic and continuing training and an improvement in the quality of jobs, including their health and safety at work aspects. The ESF

this case, the creation of these objectives in 2004 occurred after the ESF mid-term review and so there was limited *potential for these to have an impact on the ESF programming*.

These findings were supported by stakeholder feedback involved in the evaluation through direct interviews⁵¹ and the on-line survey⁵². All the informants directly interviewed, as well as Managing Authorities surveyed reported a *stronger coherence and complementarity between ESF objectives and SPSI OMC Objectives with regard to social inclusion issues than to social protection and healthcare and long term care*.

Among stakeholders and informants interviewed during the evaluation study⁵³, there was a consensus that timing has affected the relationship between ESF and SPSI OMC, and hence the degree of cohesion and complementarity between the two. *Social inclusion OMC objectives were emerging at the beginning of 2000*, while ESF OPs programming and drafting was initiated in 1999. Thus, *rationalization for coherence was only made ex post, leading to a differentiated impact during the 2000-2006 ESF programming period*. However, stakeholders commonly agreed that much more could be done in the future to promote coherence and complementarity especially in the field of governance⁵⁴.

Only indirect coherence for the 2nd SPSI OMC Objective

Coherence diminishes when it comes to social protection even if, at the level of objectives, is still present. In this case, there were 19 countries out of 25⁵⁵ that presented at least one objective coherent with the Second SPSI Overarching Objective. It should be highlighted that this assessment of coherence is based on considering the *indirect effect that the ESF lifelong learning objective (within an active ageing strategy) may have in sustaining social protection elements*. A lower coherence with respect to the First SPSI Overarching Objective is also present when looking at how the 2nd SPSI Overarching objective was generally translated within national policy objectives (NAPs/NSRs) and within ESF national objectives (CSFs):

In detail:

- With regard to the 2nd SPSI Overarching Objective – social protection - the strongest coherence is between the national policy objective of ensuring adequate and sustainable pensions and ESF objectives under Policy Field C (Training and Education). All the other national policy objectives show no coherence with ESF objectives. However, the evaluation did identify complementarity between national policy objectives to facilitate participation in employment and access to resources and services, and ESF objectives under Policy Field C. Concerning EQUAL projects almost no coherence has been detected in the projects selected with regard to the second SPSI OMC Objectives.
- At the level of national policy objectives (NAPs/NSRs), most of the countries focused on ensuring adequate retirement incomes for all and access to pension (90% of the countries analysed) and ensuring the financial sustainability of public and private pension schemes. Attention was also given to (even if with a minor emphasis) the aspects related to transparency in pension systems and to a renewed organisation of the whole social protection system.
- The analysis of the ESF national objectives showed that coherence and complementarity with national policies as stated in NAPs/NSRs in the light of the 2nd SPSI Overarching Objective, can be seen at the level of sustainability. Sustainability of the social protection objective refers, not only to balancing

contribution must be used to the full in this area". European Commission, COM (2004) 304, *Final Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Modernising social protection for the development of high-quality, accessible and sustainable health care and long-term care: support for the national strategies using the «open method of coordination»*, 20th of April 2004, page 8,

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2004:0304:FIN:EN:PDF>.

⁵¹ See Annex 2 of this Report: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity.

⁵² See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

⁵³ See Annex 2 of this Report: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity.

⁵⁴ For more details, see paragraph 2.1 of this Report: ESF suitability as a tool to progress for delivery on the common social objectives of the SPSI OMC.

⁵⁵ The six countries that presented no objective coherent with 2nd SPSI OMC Objective are Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, The Netherlands and Portugal.

contributions and benefits in an appropriate and socially fair manner and promoting the affordability and the security of funded and private schemes, but also to supporting longer working lives and active ageing.

- This pattern was also confirmed, although to a lesser degree, at the level of single national /regional Ops. The attention to supporting longer working lives within an active ageing approach seems, in fact, to have been less programmed in the ESF with respect to what was stated in national CSFs.

Coherence in a limited number of countries and only after mid-term review for the 3rd SPSI OMC Objective

Coherence with regard to the 3rd SPSI OMC Overarching Objectives - healthcare and long- term care - was found for just 5 countries (Greece, Finland, Poland, Portugal, and Sweden), and it has been associated with the ESF objectives aimed at supporting the modernisation of healthcare sector through training.

In detail:

- with regard to the 3rd SPSI Overarching Objective - Accessible, high-quality and sustainable healthcare and long-term care - low coherence was identified between the national policy objective 7 - Ensuring accessible and high quality health and long term care - and the ESF objective under Policy Field D - Adaptability in work organisation. Concerning EQUAL projects almost no coherence has been detected in the projects selected with regard to the third SPSI OMC Objectives.

Box 1 - Examples of complementarity with the 3rd SPSI OMC Overarching Objectives - healthcare and long-term care.

In Finland, the ESF supports the promotion of healthy life styles objectives by developing cooperation between workplaces, rehabilitation centres and occupational healthcare. In Poland, the ESF supports the healthcare objective of developing human resources for the care sector in screening centres and other healthcare institutions. In Sweden, the ESF support concentrates on developing the healthcare system under the local development objective. In Portugal, the ESF support to the healthcare objective of promoting good human resources in care sector is higher as there is an entire ESF OP focused on health under the priority to raise the level of qualifications of the Portuguese, promoting employment and social cohesion.

Source: Country Fiches A⁵⁶

During interviews held with stakeholders of these countries⁵⁷: it was reported that this was a *difficult process that needs to be supported by high level political decision-making and prioritisation*. For example, Finnish and Swedish officials stated:

“In Finland, it has been very difficult to execute or finance projects that are totally concentrated on the development of health care or long-term care. Projects linked with the health care sector should have had also specific connections to employment issues. Despite this, we have succeeded to fund some good health care as well as social protection projects. This is because active ageing and ageing policy are the type of themes intensively linked to employment policy and thus important also for our Ministry of Employment. Moreover, positive development of social inclusion is tightly linked to the standard of health care sector. Health care sector has already many years concentrated intensively on the long-term unemployed – without this we could not even think that those people are some day able to return to work. Although the majority of ESF projects mainly concentrate on the social inclusion problematic it can be said that many of them also stress questions of health care and long-term care. Moreover, some projects have also concentrated on the development of cooperation between workplaces, occupational healthcare services and rehabilitation centres. They have created several innovative models that are important for the whole health care system”.

⁵⁶ See Annex 3A of this Report: Country Fiches A.

⁵⁷ Specific interviews to ESF Managing Authorities at national level (thus in charge of Community Support Framework) were undertaken for those countries that were found to be outliers with respect to the others. The interviews were aimed to investigate more in depth those elements of coherence and complementarity that resulted to be outliers with respect to SPSI OMC Overarching objectives. For more details, see Annex 2 of this Report: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity.

“Over time, especially after the mid-term review, in the Swedish ESF programme there was more focus on long-term sick and long term unemployed than before. Mostly this change was politically driven.”

Similar patterns are shown also with regard to Equal. The analysis carried out on the 63 projects selected⁵⁸ provides evidence that Equal Community Initiatives were used to achieve objectives coherent with and complementary to SPSI OMC Objectives, however, in line with other ESF Programmes, mainly with regard to the first SPSI OMC Objective (Impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion). 82,5% of the 63 selected⁵⁹, have been reported with “high” coherence and complementarity with the 1st SPSI OMC Overarching Objective, whilst in contrast, over 90% of the projects analysed show no coherence or complementarity with *both* the second and the third SPSI OMC Objectives.

Summing up⁶⁰: how coherent and complementary the objectives of ESF Programmes are with the SPSI OMC

- ❖ The level of objectives (programming phase) is the one for which all main evaluation findings showed an higher coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC.
- ❖ Coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI is particularly pronounced within the context of the social inclusion strand of SPSI OMC and is focused primarily on the promotion of labour market and employment policies (reinforced by linking employment to training and education).
- ❖ Coherence and complementarity at this level has been reinforced by an enhanced focus on some ESF objectives pertaining to social inclusion following the 2004 mid-term review and in addition because of changes that occurred at the level of social inclusion objectives foreseen within the SPSI OMC since 2006.
- ❖ The degree of cohesion and complementarity between ESF and social inclusion issues was associated with the degree of importance ESF programmes assume in supporting national development.
- ❖ When looking at the other two OMC strands (Social Protection and Healthcare and long term care) a very different picture emerges.
- ❖ With respect to the social protection objectives (defined since 2001) of the SPSI OMC, some forms of indirect coherence and complementarity were found in the literature review, mainly relating to lifelong training approaches within an active ageing strategy, but no explicit links were identified. On the contrary, literature review shows that ESF was explicitly identified as a tool to support the Healthcare and Long Term Care OMC Objectives (even if only in relation to training of the healthcare and long-term carers⁶¹), but, in this case, the creation of these objectives in 2004 occurred after the ESF mid-term review and so there was limited potential for these to have an impact on the ESF programming and only in a limited number of countries.

The following diagram provides an illustrative summary of the relationships according to the level of coherence identified in the foreword.

The thicker the arrows are, the stronger the degree of cohesion between ESF and SPSI OMC Objectives.

⁵⁸ See Annex 3D of this Report: Fiches D.

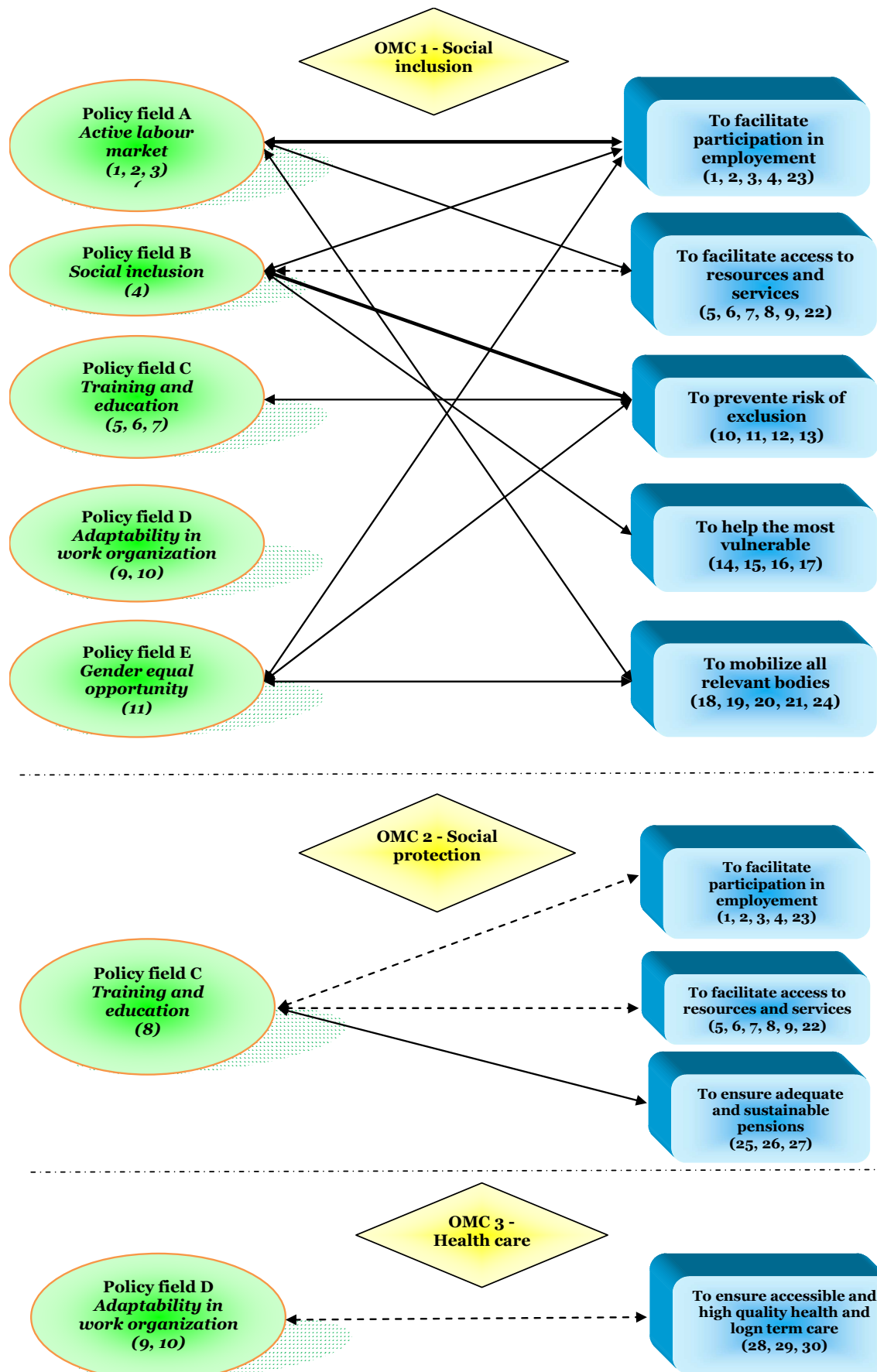
⁵⁹ See Table 1 in Annex 3D (Fiches D) of this Report.

⁶⁰ For summing up, all sources and analysis undertaken during this evaluation study were considered.

⁶¹ ESF can be used” to ...promote human resources management that meets the challenges of demographic ageing in the healthcare and long-term care sector, in particular by anticipating or reducing shortages of certain categories of staff, thanks to sufficient investment in basic and continuing training and an improvement in the quality of jobs, including their health and safety at work aspects. The ESF contribution must be used to the full in this area”. European Commission, COM (2004) 304, *Final Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Modernising social protection for the development of high-quality, accessible and sustainable health care and long-term care: support for the national strategies using the «open method of coordination»*, 20th of April 2004, page 8,

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2004:0304:FIN:EN:PDF>.

Scheme 1.1 – How coherent ESF is with SPSI OMC at the level of objectives



1.2 Coherence and complementarity at the level of interventions - evaluation question 2

High coherence and complementarity at the level of the 1st SPSI OMC objective

For the 1st SPSI OMC Overarching Objectives, the clear evidence of coherence and complementarity previously identified between the national policy objectives of reducing unemployment and increasing employability as well as tackling disadvantages in education and training with ESF objectives within Policy Field A (Active Labour Market), and B (Social Inclusion) can also be identified when interventions are taken into account.

The analysis made on ESF OP⁶² shows that *the majority of the OPs interventions are related to the 1st SPSI OMC Overarching Objective (96,1%)*.

At the same time, the case study comparative analysis⁶³ suggests that, within the 1st SPSI OMC strand the focus is particularly on reducing unemployment, increasing employability and tackling disadvantages in the training and education of vulnerable groups. This is the case for the ten analysed projects: in the Czech, the Swedish, the Spanish, and the German cases, interventions focused on preventing unemployment and increasing employability, whilst in the Irish the Slovenian, and the Czech cases interventions concentrated on tackling disadvantages in training and education for vulnerable categories. In two of the selected case studies, the social inclusion objective is addressed through combining interventions for preventing unemployment and increasing employability with interventions supporting access to decent housing (the Czech case) and care giving interventions (the French case).

As with objectives, there are difference between member states – and between regions within member states – with regard to the extent to which ESF interventions are integrated with the 1st SPSI OMC and this was shown both by the mapping exercise⁶⁴ and by stakeholders interviewed⁶⁵ who, for example, underlined that in some countries, notably the UK, Spain and Estonia, there is evidence of systematic attempts to actively support integration between ESF and SPSI OMC through programme interventions. Again this is linked to factors like political culture and institutional set-ups: the relative importance of ESF funding in national development programmes, being ‘old’ or ‘new’ Member States, the ways in which different government departments collaborate, and the extent to which different units responsible for ESF and SPSI OMC respectively co-operate within the same department.

Stakeholders interviewed cited further evidence where the political situation, particularly with regard to regional policy, shaped the relationship between ESF and social inclusion objectives. As one respondent stated:

“Spain is interesting because it gave more and more power to the regions that were strong, assertive regions during that time. Regions took charge of the funds and used the inclusion process as a way to assert themselves. Italy was driven by this too. In Germany it was different”.

These observations highlight the important role played by the regions in mediating between the ESF and the implementation of SPSI OMC Objectives. In some cases, strong regions used the ESF as a platform to support their own regional policy priorities – ones that happened to be consistent with SPSI OMC Objectives. Again, as with objectives, the evolution of ESF and of SPSI OMC during the 2000-2006 period brought about a greater degree of integration in terms of interventions towards the end of the programme period. During stakeholder interviews it was reported that for some of the new member states, coherence and complementarity between the two has been stronger. In the first Operational Programme implemented in Lithuania, for example, there has been a shift from putting employment issues first towards helping the disabled integrate into the labour market. This reflects a broader trend in recent years towards in some way extending the breadth and scope of interventions more in line with the broader agenda of SPSI OMC.

⁶² See Annex 3: Mapping exercise analysis and main results and Fiches B database in the Annex 3B of this Report (Data Base Fiches B and Methodological Note).

⁶³ See Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

⁶⁴ For more details, see Annex 3 of this Report: Mapping exercise analysis and main results.

⁶⁵ For more details, see Annex 2 of this Report: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity.

Interventions typologies and policy fields for the 1st SPSI OMC objective

The distribution of interventions for the first SPSI OMC Objective broken down by type of intervention and ESF policy field⁶⁶ shows overall, that the largest category of interventions is comprised of “Assistance to persons” (54,2%) followed by “Assistance to structures and systems” (30,9%) and by “Accompanying measures” (14,9%). This distribution varied slightly across the five ESF Policy Fields.

Policy Fields B and E (social inclusion and gender equality) showed a higher percentage of “Assistance to Persons” interventions (respectively 59,6% and 57,2%). This reflects the ‘individualist’ orientation of the two policy fields. Policy Field B is aimed at “promoting equal opportunities for all in accessing the labour market, with particular emphasis on those exposed to social exclusion”. In general, actions within this policy field are aimed at tailoring support to the needs of a range of disadvantaged target groups (disabled, immigrants, etc.). Similarly, Policy Field E, which implements “specific measures to improve women’s access to and participation in the labour market” tends to be characterised by interventions that focus on the personal circumstances of women in situations of economic and social exclusion.

Policy Field E also showed a higher proportion of “Accompanying measures” than the other policy fields. This reflects efforts made in interventions to address structural processes that work against the greater participation of women in the labour market⁶⁷.

Similar patterns to those exhibited by Operational Programmes were also identified from the analysis of national interventions (i.e. those interventions that operationalise SPSI OMC Objectives within NAPs/NSRs)⁶⁸ which show that national interventions were overwhelmingly dominated by an orientation to the *first SPSI OMC Overarching Objective* (social inclusion) – as is the case with 73% of the interventions assessed.

The main types of interventions implemented cover those included under the category “Reducing unemployment and increasing employability” and “Tackling disadvantages in education and training”. With respect to “Reducing unemployment and increasing employability”, particular emphasis has been put on measures to increase employability of specific vulnerable target groups (women, immigrants, etc.), and on measures to facilitate the matching of supply to demand especially for unemployed women, long-term unemployed, disadvantaged people in general, older unemployed, and people with “fragile” labour market status. This suggests a high degree of coherence and complementarity with ESF interventions programmed within ESF Policy Field A and B.

Similarly, with “Tackling disadvantages in education and training”, the focus is on measures to improve the quality of education and training for similar targets. Again, this suggests a high degree of coherence and complementarity with interventions programmed within ESF Policy Field C.

Box 2 – An example of ESF interventions coherent with the OMC “tackling disadvantages in education and training” objectives (1st OMC strand Social Inclusion): School Completion Programme - Ireland

The School Completion Programme (SCP) was created in 2002, as part of the national Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme (EHRDOP), with co-financing from the ESF. The SCP is a sub programme of Employability and an operational programme of the EHRD. This project addresses early school leavers and actively involves schools and social actors at community level. It deals with issues of both concentrated and regionally dispersed disadvantage and is a multi agency programme.

82 projects participated in the SCP between 2002-2006, which were managed by Local Management Committees, Local Coordinators and the SCP National Coordination Service. Activities and resources had to include in-school, after school and holiday support and could also include out of school supports. Examples of activities included: Mentoring to give students the chance to resolve issues, which can have a very positive impact on their lives, Counsellors, extra teaching hours (limited), anger management courses, group work and one-on-one support, Homework and Breakfast clubs, and Summer camps.

Ireland School Completion Programme Case Study

⁶⁶ See Annex 3 of this Report: Mapping exercise analysis and main results.

⁶⁷ Gender equal opportunities need.

⁶⁸ For more details, see Annex 3 in this Report: Mapping exercise analysis and main results.

Referring to EQUAL⁶⁹ it is interesting to note that the highest level of Coherence and complementarity in the interventions implemented can be observed within the OMC Social Inclusion strand (1st SPSI OMC Overarching Objective) in 4 thematic fields: Combating racism, Business creation, Reconciling family and professional life, Reducing gender gaps and desegregation, where 100% of the projects are reported to have a high degree of coherence. For the Life Long learning policy field 62% of interventions were reported as coherent with those referring to OMC1.

Low coherence and complementarity at the level of the 2nd and 3rd SPSI OMC objective

The analysis on ESF OPs⁷⁰ suggests that when looking to the 2nd and 3rd SPSI OMC Overarching Objectives, only a small proportion of interventions were considered to be coherent.

Similar patterns to those exhibited by Operational Programmes were also identified from the analysis of national interventions (i.e. those interventions that operationalise SPSI OMC Objectives within NAPs/NSRs). This compares with 9.7% of interventions in the ‘social protection’ category and 17% in the ‘healthcare’ category. However, it should be noted that this pattern can partly be explained by the time frame of the analysis. Over the period covered by the evaluation - 2000-2006 – it was only in the latter years (2004 for health care issues and 2006 for social protection ones) that specific requirements were introduced for Member States to include in the documents (NAPs/NSRs) the issues of social protection and health-care.

In detail, the areas where coherence could be established for the 2nd and the 3rd SPSI OMC Objectives are as follows:

2nd SPSI OMC Objective (adequate and sustainable pensions)

- The main kind of national intervention represented focuses on “Modernising social protection”. This typically covers benefits for vulnerable groups, in particular older workers, and measures to address early retirement and pensions. There is a low level of coherence with ESF for this category.
- Tackling disadvantages in education and training are also represented, albeit in a smaller proportion. This category shows a high degree of coherence with ESF Policy Field C especially for those interventions concerned with life long learning for active ageing.
- Most of the interventions assessed as coherent were “Assistance to persons” interventions (64,7), mainly associated with lifelong training interventions in active ageing. When considered in relation to our typology of member states, this finding follows the pattern identified in the previous paragraph, and is in fact even more pronounced⁷¹.
- Within case studies analysis⁷², the selected case study (British programme SWOOP) is an example of an intervention in which the focus is on promoting measures to contrast early retirement.

Box 3 - An example of an intervention coherent with the 2nd SPSI OMC Overarching Objective: The South West Opportunities for Older People (SWOOP) UK

The SWOOP Equal Project was chosen as a case study of good practice and high relevance because of its specific focus on active ageing issues; it started with the idea that there was a special need within the South West region to research and experiment with ways of (i) encouraging more older people to remain in work; (ii) supporting employers to recognize the value of employing older workers; and (iii) re-training older workers and supporting them in representing their skills and knowledge.

SWOOP's core aims were to:

- 1) Empower older people in representing their experience and aptitudes to enhance employability;
- 2) Assist employers to understand and act positively regarding employing and supporting older workers; and
- 3) Ensure direct influence on the South West region's key strategic agencies in respect to addressing age demography issues.

The core target groups for the project were older people aged 45+, employers and intermediary organisations.

A considerable number of actions were activated:

⁶⁹ For more details, see Annex 3D of this Report: Fiches D.

⁷⁰ See Annex 3 Mapping exercise analysis and main results and Fiches B database in the Annex 3B of this Report.

⁷¹ See Annex 3 Mapping exercise analysis and main results and Fiches B database in the Annex 3B of this Report.

⁷² See Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

- o Action Learning Sets to help employers explore the implications of the age legislation on the HR policy and practice within their own organizations;
- o Developing and testing training materials to improve the awareness of age issues amongst Train to Gain brokers;
- o Action research to support long-serving staff in a process of personal and professional review and career planning;
- o The provision of information and advice to older people and Age Concern staff on the age discrimination;
- o IAG sessions⁷³, personal action planning and training and coaching in work-related skills, providing volunteer placements for work preparation and/or confidence building.
- o IAG for people with visual impairment, offered alongside its expertise in employee and employer support and training in assistive technology.
- o Sessions in self-employment awareness and business start-up preparation.
- o A workshop for participants to explore their capabilities, and career and life opportunities.

Source: UK SWOOP case study

- As for Equal, a very low level of Coherence and complementarity has been observed concerning the second SPSI OMC: only 4 out of 63 projects selected present interventions in this strand and 3 of them concern Life long learning: out of them only 1 has been reported with a high level of coherence.

3rd SPSI OMC Overarching Objective (Accessible, high-quality and sustainable healthcare and long-term care)

- The main kind of national intervention represented focuses on: measures to develop health programmes for vulnerable categories such as the long-term ill, and disadvantaged people in general, and on measures to reduce geographical disparities of care supply. The coherence with ESF interventions is low for this category.
- Most of the interventions assessed as coherent were “Assistance to structures and systems” type interventions, aimed at modernising and reorganising the health care sector.
- Differences between Member States are particularly evident. No new Member States have programmed interventions that were considered to be coherent with the 3rd SPSI OMC Overarching Objective, which could be argued as testifying to the difficulty in conceptualising ESF interventions in the healthcare sector. In addition, the Southern countries contribute even more than the Nordic and the Central ones, to the use of structure and systems interventions in this field. This can be related again, even if with a different meaning, to the different welfare regimes; that is to say, Southern countries have seen in the ESF a possible tool to modernising their health care sector⁷⁴.
- Within case studies analysis⁷⁵, the Finnish case is an example of intervention promoting measures that focus on modernising healthcare and enhancing well-being.

Box 3 – Examples of coherence with the 3rd SPSI OMC Overarching Objective

An example of intervention coherent with the 3rd SPSI OMC Overarching Objective (Accessible, high-quality and sustainable healthcare and long-term care) The Support for Job Retention and Return to Work and Sickness Absence Practices: development-, training- and co-operation project (JATS)

The project JATS represents a good example of intervention coherent with health care issues. The project was aimed at meeting two different challenges in the Finnish society; 1) the general need to remain in working life for two years longer than currently for demographic reasons 2) and the concern that the Swedish figures on the growing amount of sick leave, would prefigure the same change in Finland.

The main aims of the project were to reduce exclusion for social inequality reasons and reduce exclusion from work because of sickness. The operational environment was especially SMEs. The means of meeting these challenges were developing work place rehabilitation models specifically for the sickness absences. The intention was to intervene in the factors leading to the sickness absences. One of the essential activities was to inform the interest groups about the models created in the project that promote retention in the working life for longer.

JATS was divided into four different programmes with their own products, processes and supporting methods. The programmes were:

⁷³ Information, Advice and Guidance Sessions

⁷⁴ See Annex 3 Summary and analysis of the case studies and Fiches B database in the Annex 3B of this Report.

⁷⁵ See Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

- Occupational Health Care, rehabilitation and work place roles at the work place and rehabilitation of the employees;
- Development of models and procedures in SMEs and their work communities related to sickness absences;
- Development of support structures for employees returning to work, retention at work and the superiors;
- The communication of supportive procedures of well-being at work.

Source: Finland JATS Case Study

An example of an intervention coherent with the 3rd SPSI OMC Overarching Objective (Accessible, high-quality and sustainable healthcare and long-term care): The Portuguese OP SAUDE

The Portuguese OP SAUDE is a comprehensive national health programme that has been part-financed by EU Structural Funds (both the ERDF and the ESF) since 1986 and covers the entire territory of Portugal. Initial investment was channelled into basic infrastructure - the construction of hospitals and health centres - and medical staff training. The 2000-2006 priorities were: a) Promoting health and preventing illness: targeting the most serious illnesses and promoting healthier lifestyles; b) Improving access to healthcare: bringing it within reach of all groups of society while at the same time improving the quality of care; c) Partnership for health: to encourage new partnerships with the private sector and social agencies in the regions and areas where they can offer high-quality services. Measure 2.4 - Training support project of modernization of the health has been financed by ESF. OP Target groups were Bodies of the Ministry of Health, and Educational and training institutions and enterprises (Private entities with investment projects supported under the OP).

Source: The Portuguese OP SAUDE

- Coherence and complementarity between the EQUAL interventions and the NAPs/NSR are reported only in projects on Social economy, Reconciling family and professional life and Integration and reintegration to labour market.

Intervention macro-categories: overall considerations for all the three SPSI OMC Objectives

The following findings are organised according to the interventions macro-categories used during interventions analysis. For each macro-category, findings coming from a triangulation of sources are reported. When relevant, differences amongst SPSI OMC Objectives are underlined.

“Assistance to persons” macro-category:

The mapping exercise also allows for greater understanding of the *relationship between intervention type and target group addressed*. The following main findings can be reported concerning OPs⁷⁶:

- Training, counselling and orientation and integrated pathways for labour market insertion are the main interventions used to implement activities to support social inclusion. Training is also most frequently used to support social protection objectives (mainly through lifelong learning interventions within an active ageing context) and to support modernising the health-care sector (mainly through training interventions for health-care workers or carers). Counselling and orientation and integrated pathways for business start-up are particularly used within ESF Policy Field E to improve women’s access to and participation in the labour market.
- Many of the examples of interventions that provide training, cover basic skills (i.e. initial training). For example language skills for immigrants, to support labour market access for unemployed and long-term unemployed, as well as specific target groups such as women, disabled and employed persons that have a “fragile” labour market status.

Box 5 - Integrating Immigrants into the Swedish Work Force

⁷⁶ For more details, see Annex 3 - Mapping exercise analysis and main results - and Fiches B database in Annex 3B in this Report - Data Base Fiches B and Methodological Note.

The project focused their services for immigrants who had poor language skills in Swedish and in some cases, mental or physical difficulties. It was based on the idea of transferring the “supported employment method” already used successfully with disabled people, to immigrants as a target group. The method employed involved an individual coach accompanying a participant first to their work placement, and subsequently to their new place of employment to support them through the difficult early stages of finding, and maintaining a new job. The individual coaching was based on the supported employment method that has been created for people with disabilities. The key player of this form of supported employment model was the coach who worked as a cultural and also linguistic interpreter. The coaches working in the project had immigrant background. Therefore they had a deep understanding of the situation of their clients.

Sweden Case study

Box 6 - Conciliation Famille Handicap

The project was aimed at helping families (particularly mothers) of disabled children to have a social and professional life. The intention was to meet the need for disability information and training, as many families do not feel competent to raise a disabled child, and ultimately to recognise and valorise the skills acquired by the parents. Parents associations and training centres were co-promoting this project. The project also included working with companies employing parents of disabled children, to encourage employers to adapt working hours and conditions.

France Case study

- Other interventions cover refresher vocational training, particularly aimed at people excluded because of their limited educational attainment. Counselling and orientation is especially used to support women (both unemployed and/or re-entering in the labour market) in gaining access to the labour market. There are a number of examples of initiatives promoted by ESF Programs to support “front-offices”, usually, within Public Employment Centres, specifically designed to address women, and ESF has a long tradition (starting from the NOW Initiative) of this kind of intervention.
- Another important type of intervention covers the use of integrated pathways for labour market access (i.e. skills assessment, pre-training, training, work experience, etc.) to support the insertion in the labour market of specific disadvantaged targets groups. Work-experience interventions are particularly used within ESF Policy Field A, and are directed at unemployed and long-term unemployed groups. Integrated pathways for labour market insertion interventions are particularly used within ESF Policy Field B, that is addresses people exposed to social exclusion.

Box 7 – Learning for Young Adults PLYA in Slovenia

The Project Learning for Young Adults PLYA is a publicly recognised non-formal education programme targeted at young unemployed people. PLYA was included in the case studies pool as it illustrates a social programme with innovative qualities. The programme demonstrates the way in which valuable principles and methods of continuous learning can be used in order to prevent and alleviate social problems. Moreover, PLYA targets two key dimensions of social policy in Europe: continuous learning and employment.

The projects success was achieved by a number of factors: firstly, a comprehensive approach addressing all the problems of the participants in the programme, adapted to their needs, interests and abilities. This integrated approach is designed in order to achieve integration in school, employment and society. Secondly, the very methods and content of the intervention can be considered as a factor triggering success of the programme: the empowerment approach, the personalised and individualised methods of learning based on project work and negotiating curriculum, the non-conventional school methods, all make the working method flexible and innovative. Thirdly, the use of trained mentors who guide, moderate and advise students was another major factor that positively contributed to the programmes overall success.

Slovenia Case study

At a general level, the main findings that emerge from the OPs analysis are confirmed by the results of the on-line survey⁷⁷. Managing Authorities were asked to identify, referring to their country/region, which ESF interventions during 2000-2006 period had major and minor results⁷⁸ - that is to say those interventions

⁷⁷ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

⁷⁸ Ibidem.

that were more able or less able than others to achieve main ESF Objectives (employment and increasing in professional competences).

Within the macro-typology Assistance to persons, training (77,5%), integrated pathways for labour market insertion (29,6%), counselling and orientation (21,1%) and work experiences (19,7%) are confirmed to be not only the main interventions used to implement activities to support social inclusion, but also those best able to achieve the major results. Only minor results were reported as achieved, according to the Managing Authorities, through mediation (46,5%), incentives – both to persons and to companies - (19,7%), pathways for business start-ups (18,3%) and employment aids (16,9%). The latter finding suggests that it is not enough to fund or to facilitate a business start-up to achieve an impact on the participation and/or on the maintenance of disadvantaged people in the labour market; rather *“individual preparation” through training and the “individual support” given by experts during a long process that usually doesn’t finish at the end of the intervention*, has a greater impact. This finding is further supported by the fact that the macro-typology Assistance to persons, is seen to be the main type of intervention that should be promoted in the future in order to improve the ESF contribution to the implementation of social inclusion policies⁷⁹. When asked if greater emphasis should be given in the future to “structure and system” interventions instead of “assistance to persons” interventions, Managing Authorities largely responded in the negative - 28,2% disagree and 8,5% strongly disagree (as compared to 29,5% that answered positively). It is noted that Northern Countries more than other types of countries responded in the negative (disagree or strongly disagree), whilst New Member States were more likely to have responded in the affirmative (agree). As indicated previously both Northern countries and New Member States are, in fact, those that have the highest use of “Assistance to structure and system” type interventions. One might therefore interpret from the above discrepancy, that the reported use of “assistance to structure and systems” is felt to be sufficient in Nordic countries, and thus they do not perceive a need to increase this type of activity, whilst obviously for New Member States there is still a perceived need to increase this type of intervention. Those that stated partial agreement (33,8%) argued for an increase in the “weight” given to assistance and structures interventions, whilst maintaining and not *changing significantly the “individual” ESF mission*.

Within this overall picture, differences can be observed when looking at Member States grouped in typologies combining “political-institutional” and “welfare policy” regimes⁸⁰. Whilst training interventions are widely distributed amongst Member States with no particular differences found (testifying the strong weight that the training typology of intervention has still within ESF programming in the majority of countries), pronounced differences can be found with regard to the use of incentives (both to persons and to companies) and with regard to the use of the integrated pathways (both for employment inclusion and for business start-ups). Differences are again mainly between Nordic and Southern countries: Incentives are used to a high degree by Southern Countries, but are employed very rarely in the Nordic countries. Whilst in contrast, integrated pathways are prevalent in Nordic countries, but have very limited use in Southern countries, especially those aimed at business start-ups. With regard to the use of incentives, a possible explanation may be that Southern Countries typically use ESF funding for supporting people and companies through direct financial contributes. Whilst the finding for use of integrated pathways may be related to the fact that Nordic countries tend to concentrate their efforts on more innovative approaches as opposed to more traditional interventions (again because of their strong social tradition of providing assistance to persons). Differences are also found at the level of target groups, with Northern countries addressing to a greater degree (more than the double of the average) older people, and a much lesser degree (than the average) those people who are excluded by the labour market for their background or for their personal characteristics. Whilst New Member States place little emphasis on addressing migrants, but do prioritise ethnic minorities as a target group (especially because of the prevalence of Roma people in the Eastern countries).

When looking at the typology of interventions analysed in the case study analysis⁸¹, it is observed that most of the case studies undertaken focused mainly on “direct assistance to persons”, with the exception of the Irish project. The types of person interventions promoted in the case studies included training, counselling and orientation, mediation, and integrated pathways for labour market access (pre-skills assessment, training,

⁷⁹ Ibidem.

⁸⁰ For more details, see Annex 3 - Mapping exercise analysis and main results - and Fiches B database in Annex 3B in this Report - Data Base Fiches B and Methodological Note.

⁸¹ See Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

work experiences, etc) for disadvantaged groups. Training interventions are also common in the Finnish and British case studies that are coherent and complementary with the second and third strand of the SPSI OMC. It has to be underlined also that most of the analysed cases regard small-scale interventions that focus specifically on the individuals' needs and problems, as opposed to generic issues associated with particular target groups. This is also considered to have contributed to the success of the analysed projects particularly in the Czech, the Swedish, the Slovenian and the French cases. Moreover, the analysed cases consider the manifold disadvantages of target groups. Therefore, interventions designed are not strictly related to a single type of intervention, but combine multiple typologies in order to address the multi-dimensionality of social exclusion. For instance, the French project combines networking, studies and research with training, mediation and awareness raising and dissemination activities; the Slovenian project integrates within the same programme teachers' training, and integrated pathways for access to the labour market; the British, the German and the Italian cases use both assistance to persons interventions and assistance to structures in an effort to increase the capacity of the project to fight social exclusion, etc. Furthermore, in one of the analysed cases studies (the German one) risks of social exclusion are considered to be in continuous change, according to developments in society and the economy, therefore the interventions are adapted continuously to the actual situation to better tackle disadvantages that cause social exclusion. This shows that an accurate monitoring of interventions can support and even increase the possibility of ESF to fight social exclusion allowing project and/or Program managers to use ESF instruments in a flexible way according to the changes of context.

“Assistance to structures and systems” macro-category:

- Networking between different systems/services, training and education systems development, employment services development (especially if considered together with advisory and orientation development) and studies research are the interventions most often used to implement activities to support social inclusion. As previously noted, networking between different systems/services, is well represented across all the ESF Policy Fields but particularly within ESF Policy Field A and B (respectively addressing unemployment and long-term unemployment and social exclusion).
- Networking between different systems/services is also the type of intervention most often used to support social protection objectives, and a number of illustrations of this approach can be drawn from the case study work.

Box 8 – Examples of networking interventions

The “Network for social inclusion” project promotes networking between third sector organizations from different territories, operating in social inclusion field, and public authorities. (Italian case study)

The LOS programme included also 20 regional conferences that took place in different German cities. These conferences were attended by the managing authorities and the Monitoring Committee (made of civil society bodies and citizens at risk of social exclusion) and were considered a platform to exchange experiences and best practices. The programme included also four LOS-congresses in order to interchange experiences and information between the Ministry, the Regestelle (made of two private organizations) and the Regional Cooperation offices (composed of public agency networks). (German case study)

The managing organization of the Reconciliation Family Disability project aimed at promoting heterogenic cooperation. Many parents of children with disabilities face challenges when they search for information related to their child. One of the problems is the lack of cooperation between the authorities and third sector organizations dealing with this issues. The right information and organizations can be difficult to find. Therefore, the broad partnership was also considered a way to make different organizations see synergies of the cooperation. Learning to cooperate and form networks was seen as a great advantage for small organizations wanting to promote mutual interests. The project included also international partners from Italy, Holland and Belgium that participate to symposiums and other exchanges of experiences. (French case study)

The project is also part of a Transnational Co-operation Partnerships financed by Equal, named “From Eastern to Western Europe: a challenge for integration” (TCA Id code: 4426). The network is based on exchange of information and experiences, and was focused on creation and implementation of common tools and methodologies concerning social communication, development of innovative approaches and exchange of trainees/trainers/staff. The interviewed persons considered the network helpful in exchanging experiences, trainers and setting up methodologies, one of the key elements in the dissemination of the project' results. As an important result of the project, a formal national network was developed with interests in social economy domain – National Thematic Network “C”. This thematic network brings

together seven separate efforts, mainly projects financed by the ESF EQUAL Community Initiative in the Czech Republic. (Czech case study)

The SWOOP project was chosen as a case study of good practice and high relevance because of its specific focus on active ageing issues; its strong principle of enriching networking and collaboration between the different stakeholder groups; and because of its ethos of engaging the target groups in an inclusive, empowering and cost-effective way. SWOOP secured transnational partners during Action 1 to proceed to Action 2. SWOOP established two transnational partner groupings through two Transnational Cooperation Agreements (TCAs); the Age Management and Employability - Transatlantic Partnership (AMET) and the Equality through Transnational Actions on Age Partnership (ETAAP). Partners were constantly encouraged to share from one another and also to learn from abroad. (UK case study)

- The most common types of networking activity involve: networking between national institutions, trade unions and enterprises to promote active ageing; and promoting modernisation of the health-care sector (especially to reorganise the long-term care sector with specific attention to family long-term assistance to elderly people and/or disabled). Networking involves mainly public employment services, and educational and training institutions, but can also include civil society, NGOs, social services and local government. This suggests that the ESF provides opportunities to support collaborative working between different actors and stakeholders in order to address social inclusion and social protection issues.
- Employment services development and training education systems development have provided opportunities to enable key stakeholders working in partnership to respond to the specific local needs of disadvantaged people in different situations, and to reflect a broad spectrum of stakeholder perspectives. The involvement of civil society and NGOs shows the attention paid by ESF to involve actors usually working directly with social inclusion and social protection issues (e.g. through implementing a memorandum of understanding amongst different actors working with disadvantaged people for their insertion in the labour market). The following is an illustrative example from the case study work, of training education systems development.

Box 9 - The School Completion Initiative

The SCP is a Department of Education & Science programme, under the Social Inclusion Unit, that aims to have a significant positive impact on levels of pupil retention in primary and post-primary level schools and on the number of pupils who successfully complete the Senior Cycle of education, or equivalent. The aims of the School Completion Programme stated in the Aims and Principles SCP promotional booklet, include: to retain young people in the formal education system to completion of the Senior Educational Cycle, or equivalent; to improve quality of participation and educational attainment of targeted children and young people in the educational process; to bring together all local stakeholders to tackle early school leaving; to offer positive supports in schools towards the prevention of educational disadvantage; to encourage young people who have left mainstream education to return to school; to influence in a positive way policies relating to the prevention of early school leaving in the education system.

Source: Irish case study

- Another important category of intervention highlighted by the analysis is studies and research. This covers: collecting best practices for labour market insertion, action research on the development of organisational working practices to support social inclusion, and research on the third sector and its potential. Studies and research are particularly used within ESF Policy Field E addressing gender equality (ranging from best practices collection; labour market analysis according to gender perspective, etc).
- Teacher training interventions, although representing a relatively small proportion of interventions, have been an important platform to support systems to design specific training modules to train social workers and cultural mediators (as illustrated below, by one of the Case Studies).

Box 10 – Learning for Young Adults PLYA in Slovenia

The Slovenian programme “Project learning for young adults, includes besides direct assistance to person interventions, also interventions focused on teachers’ training (in this case mentors). Mentors are educated as defined in the decree on nature and level of education required for the mentor - group leader and mentors in the educational programme Project Learning for Young Adults. If they meet the requirements they are issued with a licence for mentors in the programme Project Learning for Young Adults, the licence is renewed every three years.

Source: Slovenia Case study

- Statistical and informative systems are particularly used within Policy Fields A, B and E, reflecting an increasing awareness of the need to embed systematic monitoring, evaluation and impacts assessment processes and practices within the domain.
- Both New Member States and Nordic countries, show a preference for “Assistance to structure and system” type interventions. In the case of new Member States, this finding may be a consequence of their need to newly create structures and support systems that strategically underpin ESF priorities. At the same time, the preference for different types of intervention approaches and strategies⁸² between Southern and Northern countries might be explained by the different use of ESF and national funding⁸³. That is, Nordic countries have a long and recognised tradition on social welfare that is characterised by the concrete (also at financial level) support of “disadvantaged” people and therefore ESF may be less relevant/required for ‘Assistance to person’ type interventions (i.e. provision of this type of intervention is already good). In contrast, this history does not apply typically to Southern countries. In this way, Nordic countries may concentrate themselves more on the additional value that ESF can bring in achieving structure and systems of high quality.

Also in this case, the survey findings support the mapping exercise findings. Major results are obtained when “investing” (with a medium–long term perspective) in specific systems/services such as training and education system development as well as advisory and orientation services development (25,4%) and employment service development (23,9%) in order to increase effectiveness in dealing with disadvantaged people. In addition, networking between these different systems/services is considered to have yielded major impacts (33,8%). Such networking interventions have increased awareness that disadvantaged people present a high level of complexity and have highlighted the prevailing view that social exclusion is a multidimensional construct that requires an integrated approach. *The importance of recognising the multidimensional nature of social exclusion was further underlined by respondent feedback when asked if in the future there should be greater emphasis placed on implementing complex projects to tackle multiple disadvantages* - more than a third of the Managing Authorities expressed their total agreement with this statement, with 28% declaring partial agreement.

However, the ‘multi-dimensionality’ of social inclusion, and the importance of using multi-modal strategies to address exclusion, is not universally understood. This is reflected in the sometimes paradoxical answers provided by Managing Authorities via the on-line survey. For example, although over a third of the Managing Authorities surveyed thought networking had had a major impact terms of supporting SPSI, networking was also considered by a significant proportion of the Managing Authorities surveyed – 24% - to have had a minor impact. Equally, interventions that could be considered in principle to have a major impact on raising awareness of and addressing the multi-dimensional nature of social inclusion –like statistical and information systems development and competences certification – were considered by Managing Authorities to have had only minor impact.

Again, differences can also be found when looking at Member States grouped in typologies combining “political-institutional” and “welfare policy” regimes⁸⁴. For example, both New Member States and Southern countries are those to have mainly programmed (and thus those that have mainly used ESF funding) for the development of their employment services. New Member States and Southern Countries are also highly likely to have used ESF funding to increase teacher training, again a sector – like that of employment centres – that is less covered at national level⁸⁵. Southern countries are also highly likely to have used (more than the double the average) “studies and research” type interventions.

⁸² For more details, see Fiches A in the Annex 3A of this Report: Country Fiches A.

⁸³ Differences in funding are testified also by the ESF main ex post evaluation. See, Final First Interim Report for the ex post evaluation of the European Social Fund (2000-2006), Enterprise LSE Ltd, Vision & Value, Red2Red Consultores, Expanzió Consulting Ltd, Deutschland Denken! E.V, October, 2009, page. 105.

⁸⁴ For more details, see Annex 3 - Mapping exercise analysis and main results - and Fiches B database in Annex 3B in this Report - Data Base Fiches B and Methodological Note.

⁸⁵ Just think to the example of Italy where all vocational training and labour policies and interventions are financed only by ESF.

‘Accompanying measures’ macro-category

- Awareness raising interventions, support for adapting work organizations and guidance services are the interventions most often employed to implement activities to support social inclusion (in this case especially related to women and immigrants). In particular, the analysis of the OPs revealed that both support in the individualization of the interventions and awareness of the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion are identified as relevant. This is exemplified also in some of the selected case studies⁸⁶. Guidance services and tutorial mentoring are particularly relevant in the Czech, the Slovenian and the French cases. As to ‘awareness raising campaigns’, this type of intervention is present in the French case study that included the realization of numerous films and other communication materials on the difficulties of disabled people and their families, especially lone mothers with disabled children, and solutions available for overcoming these difficulties.
- Awareness raising interventions is also the type of intervention most frequently adopted to support social protection objectives (mainly with respect to active ageing) and to address health-care and long-term care issues (e.g. guidelines for the use/access to basic social services especially those related to disabled and elderly people, and for services related to immigrants’ carers).
- Interventions aimed at supporting the adaptation of work organizations are most often used in promoting work-life balance (e.g. support for testing tele-working, job sharing, job rotation or other flexible working time arrangements, and more generally, measures to design a family friendly environment within firms).
- Accompanying measures show wide variation in terms of the type of intervention adopted within different ESF policy fields.
- In Policy Field B (social inclusion), training instruments for disabled people and transport interventions are well represented.
- In Policy Field E (gender equality) care for dependents and aids for adapting work organisations are the biggest category of interventions.
- In Policy Field A (Active Labour Market) the largest category is represented by interventions aimed to support disabled in transport.

As regards the survey findings, within Accompanying measures, both support in the individualization of the interventions, and awareness of the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion are identified as important by respondents. Guidance services (32,4%) and Tutorial system/mentor (28,2%) – both interventions aimed at supporting disadvantaged people during their pathways into labour market insertion – are reported by on line survey respondents to have achieved major results. Awareness raising interventions (26,8%) are also valued as a means to support societies in understanding the multidimensional needs of disadvantaged people.

Also in this case, differences can be detected when looking at Member States grouped in typologies combining “political-institutional” and “welfare policy” regimes⁸⁷. Southern Countries operated to a far lesser degree “guidance services” and “tutorial/mentor systems”, than all other types of member states (equally programmed by other countries). At the same time Southern countries were most likely to have programmed “awareness raising interventions”.

Target groups mainly addressed by interventions: overall considerations for all the three SPSP OMC Objectives

The on-line survey allowed the investigation of major and minor results achieved⁸⁸ for target groups. According to the Managing Authorities surveyed, young unemployed people (49,3%) and long-term unemployed people (45,1%) were the target groups that achieved major results. In addition, very focused

⁸⁶ See Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

⁸⁷ For more details, see Annex 3 - Mapping exercise analysis and main results - and Fiches B database in Annex 3B in this Report - Data Base Fiches B and Methodological Note.

⁸⁸ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

target groups including women (39,4%), people with social disadvantages and/or low educational attainment (32,4%), and people with disabilities (23,9%), were reported to have reached major results during the period 2000-2006.

The target groups that achieved only minor results were those that were tackled largely by national policies, rather than ESF, for example the homeless (28,2%) and families (23,9%). However, minor results were also reported for some typical ESF target groups including immigrants (23,9%) and/or ethnic minorities (19,7) and it is suggested that in these cases the ESF focus/intervention was not sufficient to achieve significant results when prevailing cultural attitudes towards these groups are not changed/addressed.

With respect to EQUAL it is important to state that EQUAL was originally envisaged as a 'thematic' rather than a 'target group' focused programme. As the Commission's evaluation report observed: "It has to be noted that EQUAL had not initially encouraged a target group focus of interventions". On the contrary, the thematic approach was expected to lead to actions exploring new ways of tackling problems common to different types of discrimination and inequality, rather than focusing on a specific target group. This accounted for example for the fact that the EQUAL guidelines required each thematic field to be 'accessible to all such groups'⁸⁹. In keeping with the thematic orientation of the programme, the share of Development Partnerships, which was variable in the different countries, addressed multiple or highly specific discrimination scenarios affecting specific groups, e.g. people with disabilities, prisoners and ex offenders, the traveller community, the Roma. The projects selected for the analysis in this evaluation also reflect these targets, although the target group addressed in the majority of projects is 'unemployed persons' (85.7%). The other significant target groups addressed – covering between 40% and 47% of projects – are: Employed people with "fragile" labour market status; populations not migrant and not suffering from a disability⁹⁰; migrants and asylum seekers; Ethnic minority groups; people being excluded because of personal characteristics⁹¹.

The analysis undertaken⁹² enables one to see which target groups are addressed by EQUAL projects sampled within the three OMC overarching objectives. In summary:

- Equal projects coherent with 1st SPSI OMC Overarching Objective cover the broad spectrum of target groups.
- In contrast, projects identified as coherent with the 2nd SPSI OMC Overarching Objective involve interventions for only unemployed and employed people (including older workers).
- Target groups involved in the projects falling under the 3rd SPSI OMC Overarching Objective are employed people, populations not migrant and not suffering from a disability, persons excluded because of personal characteristic, unemployed persons, disadvantaged people and other discriminated (for example religion, sexual orientation).

The comparative analysis of the ten case studies⁹³ reveals that target groups are particularly represented by unemployed youngsters, youth at risk of school dropout, immigrants, elderly women, other people at risk of social exclusion (such as youngsters coming from social houses – Czech case). Furthermore, evidence from the case studies shows that projects address the multiple dimensions of social exclusion not only by promoting integrated interventions, but also by targeting different groups at risk of exclusion within the same action. This is particularly relevant in the German case (the programme finances small-scale interventions that can reach different target groups: immigrants, unemployed people, youth at risk of social exclusion, resettled ethnic Germans, elderly, disabled), the French case (the project tackles both disabled children and families, with a special focus on lone mothers that face double disadvantages) and the Swedish case (immigrants and in particular immigrants with disabilities).

⁸⁹ European Commission Dg Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, EU-Wide Evaluation Of The Community Initiative Equal 2000–2006 - Final Report (page 32)

⁹⁰ This category gathers the following beneficiaries: "not migrant" "not disability" that appear always together.

⁹¹ Disability, drug-addicts, attention disorders, young with integration problems.

⁹² See Annex 3D of this Report: Fiches D.

⁹³ See Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

Summing up: how coherent ESF is with OMC at the level of interventions

- ❖ The evaluation of coherence and complementarity at the level of interventions mirrors, to a large extent, the conclusions of the analysis of objectives, outlined in the previous sub-section. Again, the consensus amongst those stakeholders that participated in the interviews⁹⁴ and the stakeholder dialogue⁹⁵ is that there was strong coherence and complementarity with regard to labour market and social inclusion issues and weak coherence and complementarity in the field of social protection and healthcare.
- ❖ Thus, ESF can be considered to be coherent with the first SPSI OMC overarching objective - a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion - at the level of interventions. A high degree of coherence can also be established at the level of target groups, particularly unemployed, long term unemployed, disadvantaged people in general and other vulnerable groups such as women and immigrants. This coherence is particularly high with regard to ESF Policy Fields A (Active Labour Market), B (Social Inclusion) and E (Gender Equality).
- ❖ Little evidence of coherence and complementarity can be demonstrated between ESF and the second and third SPSI OMC overarching objectives (Adequate and sustainable pensions, and Accessible, high-quality and sustainable healthcare and long-term care).
- ❖ In addition, with specific regard to the 2nd and 3rd SPSI Strands, evidence from the mapping exercise⁹⁶ shows that the degree of coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC is weaker when it comes to interventions than it is for objectives. This is probably due to the fact that, whereas 'objectives' can be seen as 'intentions' that can be more easily aligned in theory, promoting coherence and complementarity through concrete actions (interventions) is more difficult.
- ❖ As with objectives, there are some differences between member states – and between regions within member states – with regard to the extent to which ESF interventions are integrated with SPSI OMC. Similarly this is linked to factors like political culture and institutional set-ups; the relative importance of ESF funding in national development programmes; being 'old' or 'new' Member States; and the ways in which different government departments collaborate, and the extent to which different units responsible for ESF and SPSI OMC respectively co-operate within the same department⁹⁷. Stakeholders interviewed⁹⁸ cited further evidence where the political situation, particularly with regard to regional policy, shaped the relationship between ESF and SPSI OMC Strands. These observations highlight the important role played by the regions in mediating between the ESF and the implementation of SPSI OMC Objectives. In some cases, strong regions used the ESF as a platform to support their own regional policy priorities – ones that happened to be consistent with SPSI OMC Objectives. Other countries adopted a similar strategy to strengthen regional governance.

The following diagrams provide an illustrative summary of the relationships outlined above⁹⁹. The thicker the arrows are, the stronger the degree of cohesion between ESF and SPSI OMC Objectives. No explicit reference is made in ESF OPs to eradicating poverty, decent accommodation, supporting dependants, modernisation of social protection, access to healthcare, mobilizing all stakeholders, as these categories of interventions were effectively outside the scope of ESF, and so not surprisingly no coherence is found / can be reported on. For other categories, such as supporting dependants and mobilizing all stakeholders, ESF allowed the programming and the implementation of specific interventions (especially within the Assistance to structure and system typology and within the Accompanying measures) that could have been much more used.

⁹⁴ See Annex 2 of this Report: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity.

⁹⁵ See Annex 6 of this Report: Stakeholders dialogue main conclusions.

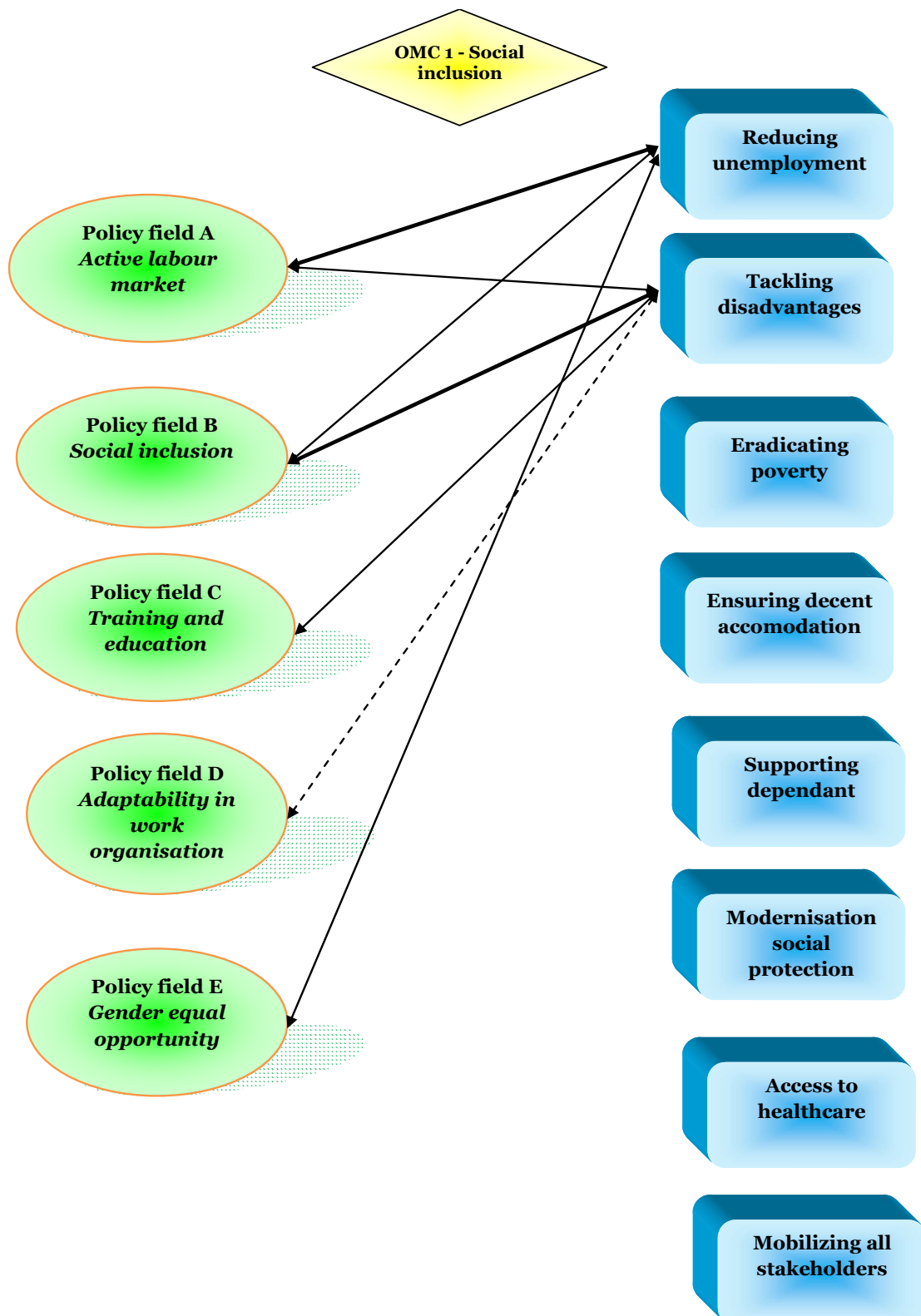
⁹⁶ See Annex 3 of this Report: Mapping exercise analysis and main results.

⁹⁷ For more details on this point, please, see Country Fiches A containing, for each of the 25 countries analysed by the study, a short description in relation to the main stakeholders involved in programming and managing country ESF Programmes and NAPs/NSRs with specific attention to the involvement of social actors. Annex 3A of this Report: Country Fiches A.

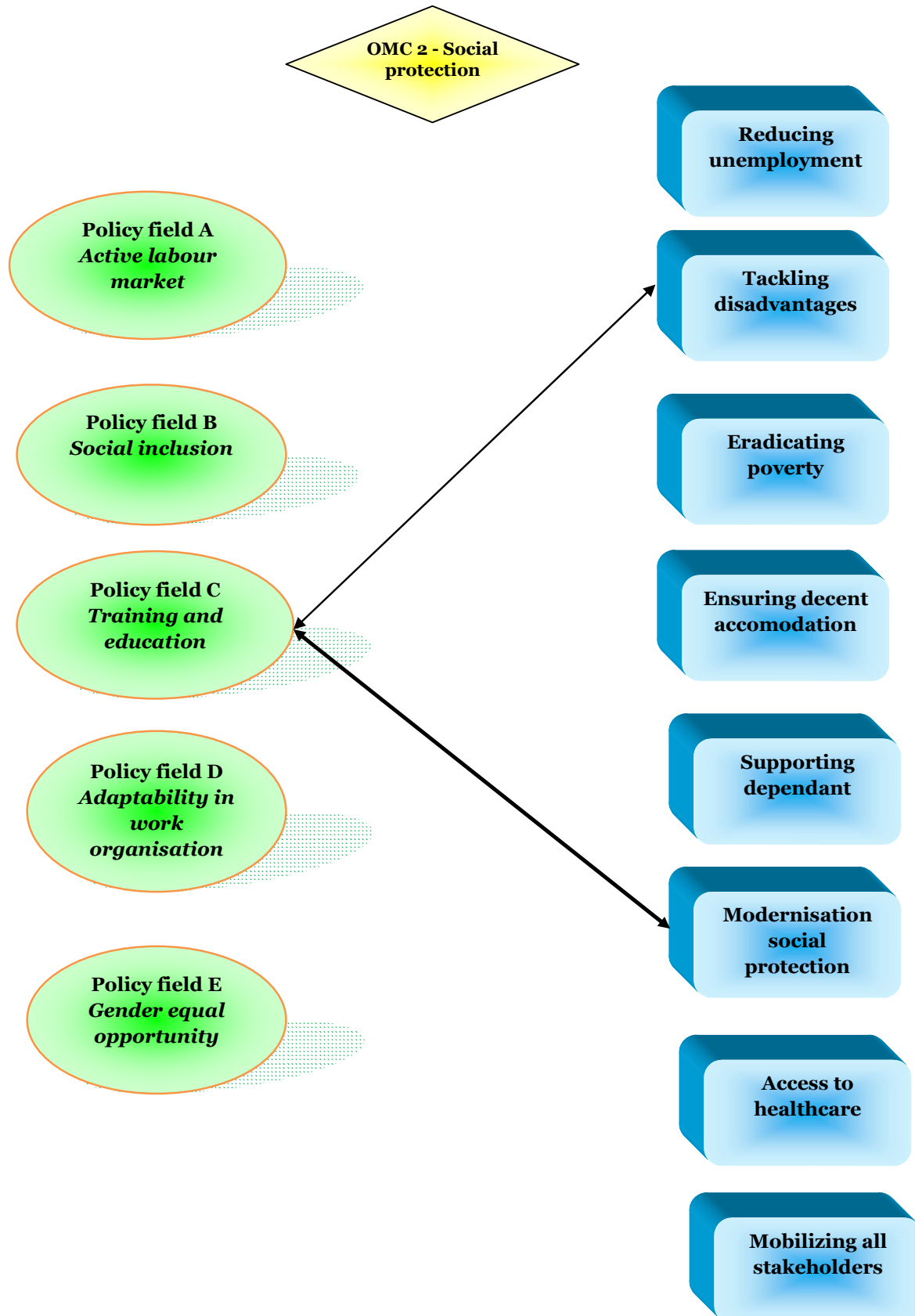
⁹⁸ See Annex 2 of this Report: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity

⁹⁹ Additional graphs and tables can be found in Annex 3 of this Report: Mapping exercise analysis and main results.

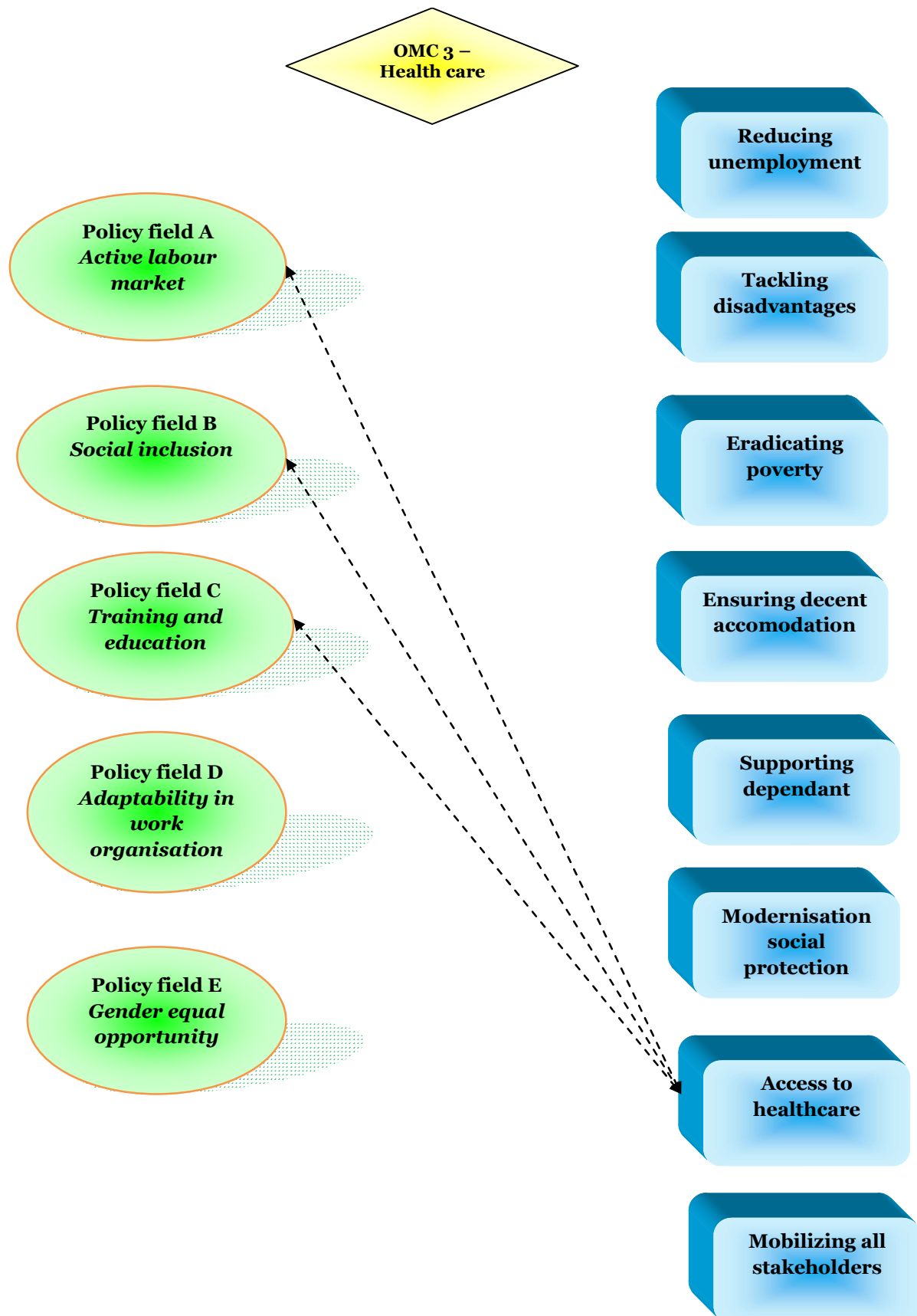
Scheme 1.2 – How coherent is the ESF with OMC1 – Social inclusion at the level of interventions?



Scheme 1.3 – How coherent is the ESF with OMC2 – Social protection at the level of interventions?



Scheme 1.4 – How coherent is the ESF with OMC3 – Health care at the level of interventions?



1.3 Coherence and complementarity at the level of stakeholders - evaluation question 3

Coherence and complementarity at the level of principles

The literature review showed that in principle, both SPSI OMC and ESF shared a commitment to a participatory approach.

In the ESF case, the partnership principle was introduced with the 1988 structural funds reform, and was further strengthened during the 2000-2006 programming period. In the SPSI OMC case, the European Lisbon Council's conclusions emphasized the active involvement of the Union, the Member States, the regional and local levels, as well as the social partners and civil society using variable forms of partnership. This approach was further strengthened with the 2005 SPSI OMC.

The participatory approach of the SPSI OMC reinforces both symbolic and practical elements of the social inclusion agenda. On the one hand, the engagement of local actors sends a message that the principles of equality and democracy that are embedded in SPSI OMC are being implemented in practice, since grass roots stakeholders are represented as well as policy-makers and programme managers. In turn, decentralisation of interventions strengthens and supports the OMC logic that local actors "act as an integrator of segmented policies. Therefore their potential relies on their capacity as promoters of third system activities and on their contribution to achieving the overarching EU goal, in particular as regards social exclusion and equal opportunities"¹⁰⁰.

On this basis, it can be said that the influence of SPSI OMC in the Member States has been noted with regard to decision-making processes and the involvement of a great number of stakeholders. Some of those interviewed argued that the Open Method of Coordination has been a catalyst in mobilizing a wide range of so called "social actors" - such as NGO's, civil society - and research institutes and therefore the social inclusion strategy/Open Method of Coordination has helped Member States (especially the new ones) to develop civil society.

Also the comparative analysis of the case studies¹⁰¹ highlights that the creation of large networks, composed of different types of actors (politicians, civil servants, economic interest groups, social interest groups) and increased vertical and horizontal cooperation, supports successful outcomes (Slovenian, UK, German, Czech, the Irish, the Spanish, the Finnish cases). Particularly relevant is the Italian case study, where the network of actors reached was extended to actors from different regions.

Patterns of stakeholder involvement in the programming phase

The analysis of which stakeholders were involved in the development of national policy documents (NAPs/NSRs) and in ESF supports the above picture (Fiches A analyses provides the necessary evidence¹⁰²). The overall pattern in the case of social inclusion and social protection is roughly comparable, although there is more frequent involvement of trade unions and employers representatives in the ESF, and of NGO's and research institutions in the SPSI OMC. In contrast, the picture is entirely different in relation to Healthcare, however it should be borne in mind that few member states engaged through ESF in this field.

"Institutional actors" such as National Ministries for national policy documents and Regional/Local Government for ESF are the most actively engaged with regard to all the three SPSI OMC Objectives (Social Inclusions, Social Protection and Health care). However, this similarity can be misleading.

Firstly, it is important to note that *ESF and SPSI OMC documents are the responsibility of different Ministries/Departments in several countries*, like Austria, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Latvia and the UK.

¹⁰⁰ Sabina Regent, *The Open Method of Coordination: a supranational form of governance?*, International Institute for Labour Studies, 2002, page 17, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inst/publications/discussion/dp13702.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ See Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

¹⁰² For more details, see Annex 3A: Country Fiches A.

Even when the two policies fall under the political responsibility of the same minister, the administrative units in charge are different and do not necessarily act in a co-ordinated fashion. Little evidence has been found of connecting mechanisms, one notable exception being Belgium, where a specific "Cellule" was established in order to analyse the impact of the ESF on the SPSI OMC and therefore feedback the results in the following programming phase¹⁰³. Further, it is worth noting that the need to strengthen the governance of social inclusion policy, also using the ESF, has been recognized as a priority in the 2007/2013 programming period by several Member States, in particular in the Convergence Regions and in the Cohesion Member States, as acknowledged by the 2008 Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion.

Secondly, *the participation of ESF actors in the preparation of SPSI OMC documents could be significantly developed*. Within the on-line survey¹⁰⁴, only a fourth of Managing Authorities reported¹⁰⁵ that they were involved in the preparation of NAPs/NSRs in the field of Social Inclusion, in two thirds of the cases it was in official consultation, and mainly but not solely in identification of policy needs. It is interesting to note that this involvement is rather homogeneous across Europe, i.e. between Old and New Member States, between rich and poor countries, between different welfare systems, between federal/regional states and unitary ones. The overwhelming majority of those that were involved considered their contribution important (12 out of 25) or even crucial (12 out of 25). On the same point, and as might be expected, the level of involvement is significantly less when considering the preparation of Social Protection and Healthcare national documents¹⁰⁶. In the first case 20% (but 14% only in informal consultation) and in the second case only 12% of the on-line survey respondents answered in the affirmative.

In the third place *patterns of participation of the different stakeholders in the programming phase of the ESF can vary from country to country* even if, as already mentioned, it is difficult to find regularities when comparing groups of Member States. In general, one can say that the old Member States show a greater involvement of the regional authorities and economic stakeholders, namely employers representatives and trade unions (44% against 31%). On all the other categories of stakeholders the proportions are roughly the same¹⁰⁷.

However, what is quite apparent is that *even in the case of the social inclusion objectives, not all the Member States involved all the relevant social actors* (NGOs, universities, trade unions, etc) in the ESF decision-making process, and in any case to a much lesser degree than in the case of the SPSI OMC.

This broad homogeneity does not mean that *participation is nonetheless shaped by the political culture* of Member States, as suggested by the literature, depending for example, on the degree of centralisation and decentralisation of decision-making, by the administrative traditions or by the vitality of the civil society. The point here is that the representativeness of the survey, and the level of homogeneity of the programming documents cannot allow a finer analysis of this issue.

As far as the level of decentralisation is concerned, some stakeholder interviewees¹⁰⁸ pointed out how *separation of powers 'downstream' could further contribute to the fragmentation of coherence* and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC, particularly in Member States with a strong tradition of sub-national autonomy as, for instance, in the case of German Laender. However, *this pattern is itself variable*. In other Member States, for example Spain and Italy, strong regional government can help support the development and implementation of broader agendas and objectives for ESF than those typically implemented at the national level, going in the direction of more coherence with SPSI OMC Objectives.

These observations highlight the important role played by the regions in mediating between the ESF and the implementation of SPSI OMC Objectives. During the interviews, it was suggested that one of the main reasons for this discrepancy was the fact that when strong regions had regional policy priority consistent with SPSI OMC Objectives they were then able to use the ESF as a platform to support their own regional policy priorities.

¹⁰³ For more details, see Annex 3A: Country Fiches A.

¹⁰⁴ For more details on the online survey results, see Annex 4: Online survey main findings.

¹⁰⁵ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

¹⁰⁶ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

¹⁰⁷ For more details on the online survey results, see Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

¹⁰⁸ See Annex 2 of this Report: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity.

The capacity to combine top down logics with bottom-up ones may be an important success factor, as is clear in the German, the Irish, the Slovenian and the Italian case studies¹⁰⁹. In all the other cases (Czech, British, and French cases), projects are based on the bottom-up principle. Linking programmes and projects specifically to territorial problems is highly relevant in the Czech and UK cases. Furthermore, actions should be implemented both at the national and local level, as national based programmes have advantages in terms of articulating a general policy, creating synergies, transferring the know-how, making the investment more profitable and ensuring its continuity. Evidence in this sense comes from the Czech case study, where the analysed programme not only passed from the local level to the national one, but was applied also in other regions and at the moment legislation is being drawn up based on the content and results of the programme.

Finally, although it was recognised that the Commission itself has directly supported closer linkages between ESF and SPSI OMC Objectives in a broad sense, it was also observed by some stakeholders (interviewees) that *a lack of 'joined-up' working between different DGs involved in different inclusion agendas has also helped to 'create separate worlds'* and has contributed to inhibiting increased coherence and complementarity. Strong evidence for this assertion is not available from this evaluation data, however, the metaphor of the "two worlds" has appeared in several interviews both with Commission Officials, and national and regional authorities¹¹⁰, as demonstrated by the fact that the attempts developed to integrate them - both at the European level and at the Member State level as in the UK, Spain and Estonia - were often mentioned as based to a considerable extent on the personal interest and motivation of officials on both sides, thus implicitly recognizing that there is a potential barrier to be addressed here.

Patterns of stakeholder involvement in the implementation phase

According to the Managing Authorities surveyed¹¹¹, there is a clear distinction between the programming and the implementation phase. By and large *participation is broader in the implementation phase*. All categories of stakeholders, with the only exception of National departments, played a more important role in the latter phase. Sometimes the differences are quite pronounced: for instance Educational and Training institutions were reported as important or crucial in implementation in 78% of the answers, compared to a figure of 61% in the programming phase, and this can be explained by the fact that for more than four-fifths of those mentioned it was the case that they were beneficiaries of the funds. The same applies to public Employment Services (72% versus 58%), to Local Governments (77% versus 63%), and to a lesser extent to NGOs (54% versus 45%). In the latter case almost all were engaged as beneficiaries and in two-thirds of the cases they were also members of Steering Committees. With respect to participation as members of Monitoring or Steering Committees, it was found that 'civil society' played virtually no role at all, although one of the essential elements of OMC is the involvement of civil society. During the stakeholder dialogue¹¹², it was suggested that the contribution of civil society to defining what to observe in the description and addressing of social exclusion at national and local level, would have provided added value to the process.

The comparative analysis of the case studies¹¹³ allows for similar conclusions to be drawn – that there is increasing participation of social interest actors representing the 'voice' of disadvantaged people in the programming phase. Furthermore, the case studies also reveal that a factor contributing to success, is not only the increased participation of NGOs in the programming phase, but also the direct participation of affected people (disadvantaged individuals). Whilst the involvement of social interest groups (NGOs, universities, etc) was apparent in all the analysed cases, the direct involvement of disadvantaged people in the programming phase was observed only in the Spanish case (involvement of Roma people in the programme). However, in some other cases, the direct participation of interested people could be seen in the project at a later stage, for example, in the German case where citizens were involved in the selection of the interventions through the network and monitoring committee; and in the Irish cases, where both students

¹⁰⁹ See Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

¹¹⁰ See Annex 2 Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity and Annex 6 of this Report: Stakeholders dialogue main conclusions.

¹¹¹ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

¹¹² See Annex 6 of this Report: Stakeholders dialogue main conclusions.

¹¹³ See Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

and parents were involved in the Local Management Committee, which contributed to the creation of Local Retention Plans and delivery of the interventions.

The slight difference in the degree to which Employers Representatives are viewed as playing an important role in the implementation phase, between Northern and Central Europe on the one hand (56% answered in the affirmative) and Eastern and Southern Europe on the other (46% answered positively) is confirmed. Finally in the case of Trade Unions, it can be reported that in the majority of cases their participation and influence was as members of steering committees, as opposed to as beneficiaries (in the case of Employers involvement was roughly split in half between the two types of participation).

All in all the analysis of the on line survey data does not allow the building up of a clear cut typology of different Member States. However, there are minor indications to suggest that in very broad terms Northern and Central European countries were the most likely to involve social partners. Although it is noted that some countries including France, Latvia and Greece relied more on the public agencies, whilst other countries including Italy, Portugal and the Czech Republic adopted a general participatory approach. Coming back to the Educational and Training Organisations it is worth noting how Southern European countries, in 90% of the cases, reported a relevant involvement in implementation, whereas the corresponding figure in Northern countries is 73%: this possibly means that they rely on the "official" providers of training more than in situations in which social inclusion policy is more established.

Finally, with reference to NGOs, as previously stated their role in the implementation phase is relatively minor, meaning that there is certainly scope to increase their participation, and the case studies undertaken offer some useful illustrations of how this might be achieved¹¹⁴. At least in four countries (Italy, Germany, Spain and the UK) we have cases in which *the ability to build and/or use 'intermediaries' like public employment services, training providers and social partners explains how the ESF was able to build and support large partnerships*, that, particularly since the mid-term review, have involved a diverse range of beneficiaries in initiatives targeting a wide range of groups.

Box 11 – Examples of NGO involvement in the implementation of ESF interventions against discrimination and social exclusion.

The ACCEDER Programm

The Project is managed by the Fundación Secretariado General Gitano that was able to start up institutional cooperation with many public administrations at regional and local level through the signing of specific agreements. It was based on an intercultural approach involving Roma and non Roma people at all levels of organizations giving the possibility of an NGO composed also by Roma people to run their own programme. Thus, the project represents one of the few successful interventions addressing the Roma communities, demonstrating their full and active involvement in the programming and implementation of training and employment opportunities. It also involved many actors at different levels of governance. The project achieved great success both in the number of Roma people helped into the labour market, and with respect to the cooperation levels achieved. *Spanish Case Study*

Networking for social inclusion

In the case of the inter-regional project called "Networking for social inclusion", it is noted that at a local level (OP Obj.3 Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano – Axe B – Measure B1) the project was implemented through an intermediary body composed of 6 of the main social organizations in the Province of Bolzano offering small financial aids to structures operating directly in the field of social exclusion (cooperatives, NGOs, etc.). The project helped disadvantaged people to be reinserted into the labour market and offered support and financial aids for activating spin-off processes from social enterprises. *Italian Case Study*

Summing up: how coherent ESF is with OMC at the level of stakeholders

Both SPSI OMC and ESF share a commitment to a participatory approach. The influence of SPSI OMC in the Member States has been noted with regard to the decision process and the involvement of a great number of stakeholders. Some of those interviewed argued that the Open Method of Coordination has been a catalyst in mobilizing a wide range of actors, such as NGO's, civil society and research institutes and therefore the social inclusion strategy/Open Method of Coordination has helped Member States (especially the new ones) to develop civil society.

¹¹⁴ See Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

However, the analysis of which stakeholders were involved in the development of national policy documents (NAPs/NSRs) and in ESF shows that:

- ❖ ESF and SPSI OMC documents are the responsibility of different Ministries/Departments in several countries.
- ❖ This is particularly true with regard to the 2nd and 3rd SPSI OMC Objectives.
- ❖ Participation of ESF actors to the preparation of SPSI OMC documents is rather low.
- ❖ There is a clear distinction between the programming and the implementation phase. By and large participation is broader in the implementation phase (as beneficiaries). Actually all categories of stakeholders, with the only obvious exception of National departments, played a more important role in the latter phase.
- ❖ Patterns of participation of the different stakeholders in the programming phase of the ESF can vary from country to country. However what is quite apparent is that, even in the case of the social inclusion objectives, not all the member states involved all the relevant social actors. Northern and Central European Countries were, for example, the most likely to involve social partners.
- ❖ Separation of powers ‘downstream’ has further contributed to the fragmentation of coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC, particularly in member states with a strong tradition of sub-national autonomy as, for instance, in the case of German Lander. However, this pattern is itself variable as in the case of Spain and Italy, where strong regional government have contributed to reinforce coherence between ESF and SPSI OMC Objectives.
- ❖ There is still a lack of ‘joined-up’ working between different subjects involved in different SPSI agendas and ESF and OMC officials at national level. This has helped to ‘create separate worlds’ and has contributed to inhibiting greater coherence and complementarity, in particular with respect to the second and third SPSI OMC strands (Social protection and Healthcare and long-term care).

1.4 Coherence and complementarity at the level of indicators - evaluation question 4

The context in which indicators are used in ESF and SPSI OMC

At the end of 2001 the European Council held at Laeken (Belgium) adopted a first set of 18 commonly agreed indicators, designed to help monitor the Member State’s performance in promoting social inclusion and national progress towards the four key EU Objectives agreed upon during the December 2000 European Council of Nice. With the first revision of the Laeken indicators in 2003, Member States were encouraged to add national indicators to highlight specificities in particular areas, and to help interpret primary and secondary indicators. With the streamlining of Social Inclusion, Social Protection, and Healthcare and Long-term care into the SPSI OMC, common pension and healthcare indicators were added, as well as overarching indicators for social outcomes and the nature and scale of social policy interventions.

ESF indicators differ from the SPSI OMC indicators in many respects: the aim, the object measured, the level of analysis. Whilst SPSI OMC indicators are intended to describe and improve the understanding of social inclusion, social protection, health care and LTC at national and EU level and to monitor their development over time and across countries on the voluntary targets set, ESF indicators are mainly intended to monitor a) the *outputs* of the activities undertaken, b) the *results*, in terms of the direct consequence of the activities realised, and c) the *impacts* intended as the longer term consequences of the activity. These indicators are mainly set at the level of a single measure, a single programme and/or a single activity. ESF Indicators are *performance indicators* that address effectiveness (a comparison of actual and planned outputs as well as some results), quality of management, and financial implementation. An additional ESF type of indicator is the *regional or sectoral indicator* intended to describe the context in which the programme and the measure is realised.

It is exactly at this level that coherence and complementarity between the programmes can be considered, as context indicators are usually set at national and or regional level and in many cases are socio economic indicators, which in some way reflect SPSI OMC indicators. They are mainly used during the ex ante evaluation phase to assess problems and the relevance of interventions; and during interim and final

evaluation periods to assess the progress/development towards expected results and impacts. However the 'context' type indicators of SPSI OMC, in addition to focusing on socio-economic aspects, also cover important dimensions of social inclusion such as poverty, education, health and pensions, in order to capture the multi-dimensional nature of social inclusion.

ESF indicators are more directly tied to specific interventions, whereas SPSI OMC indicators tend to be tied to broad policy objectives.

Comparative assessment of the use of indicators in ESF and SPSI OMC

This assessment of the coherence between ESF and SPSI OMC indicators has in part been undertaken by comparing the indicators presented in the selected OP and the national indicators included in national NAPs and NSRs¹¹⁵. For each selected OP a description of the most relevant indicators has been provided and compared with the national indicators contained in the relative NAPs/NSRs. NAPs/NSRs indicators have been grouped by key dimensions (1.Poverty, 2.Labour market, 3.Healthcare, 4.Social protection, 5.Education), after having been distributed in the three strands of OMC overarching objectives: a. Impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion; b. Adequate and sustainable pensions; and c. Accessible, high-quality and sustainable healthcare and long-term care. Only national indicators that are considered to be relevant in relation to the key dimension of SPSI OMC Overarching Objectives have been taken in consideration for the analysis. Similarly only OP indicators that are considered to be relevant in relation to the key dimensions of national indicators have been taken in consideration for the analysis.

As far as the key dimensions are concerned, it can be reported that that the highest coherence regards the two key dimensions that are mostly related to the ESF mission: labour market and education.

As shown by the analysis undertaken on Fiches C¹¹⁶, a significant portion of OPs are classified with high or medium-high coherence considering labour market indicators (over 72%) and education (32.8%), whereas for poverty and social protection it is possible to see about 80% of OPs are classified with low or null coherence, while more than 90% Ops concerning healthcare are classified with low or null coherence.

In detail, the following national indicators can be identified in the OPs analysed.

- A medium–high level of coherence can be seen with respect to the Labour market:- For Access and participation in the labour market, the indicators that are most frequently present in both programming documents, and where the coherence is the highest are context indicators: 1) People living in jobless households, 2) Employment rate, 3) Long term unemployment rate; 4) Employment rate of older workers, 5) Activity rate; 6) Effective labour market exit age. In addition, frequently found is the description of the level of *Regional cohesion* through the indicator: “Regional disparities – coefficient of variation of employment rates”.
- In some cases, at the OPs level, the minimum set of indicators has been improved by adding output indicators to monitor the activities and the target in the implementation of the programme, such as number of people involved in interventions disaggregated by socio-demographic variables (sex, age, level of qualifications, etc.), number of hours per type of programme, etc.
- A medium level of coherence can also be identified with respect to Access to education:- The majority of objectives and interventions in OPs with relevance to similar objectives/interventions in NAP/NSR are focused mainly on young people and students, as well as education and training institutions. As a result, 60% of OPs show a medium or high coherence for OP and national indicators set against SPSI OMC Overarching objectives and indicators. In terms of indicators, these OPs incorporate in particular context indicators related to the analysis of the characteristics of young and students, focusing on level of education (in some cases disaggregation by age is available, as well as nationality/immigrants/ethnic minorities characteristics, while gender is not always indicated) and the characteristics of the disadvantaged (early school leaver or those at risk of early leaving). In some cases output indicators are

¹¹⁵ See Annex 3C of this Report: Fiches C on indicators.

¹¹⁶ See Annex 3C of this Report: Fiches C on indicators.

used to monitor the main dimensions of the activities involving the target groups of the programmes implemented.

- As far as Poverty, Healthcare/LTC and Social Protection dimensions are concerned a low or null coherence has been found. Where coherence has been found the reference is to the level of unemployment rates for target groups and or disaggregated by socio-demographic variables, population in subsidised employment, persons depending on social security benefits, population serviced by primary and secondary health care and welfare structures, number of structures for the rehabilitation of people with special needs, etc.

The literature review¹¹⁷ and the analysis of fiches C have already underlined a general lack of coherence between ESF and indicators as operationalised within NAPs/NSRs, and in particular as far as the key dimensions of Poverty, Healthcare/LTC and Social Protection are concerned. This lack of coherence is mainly due to the contrasting characteristics of the indicators themselves and to their contrasting purposes, with ESF indicators primarily intended to monitor and evaluate the programme implementation at different stages in its evolution, and SPSI OMC indicators being primarily intended to describe and analyse broader structural phenomena, processes and trends. Differences also exist with respect to the unit of analysis: actions/interventions in the first case (ESF) and territorial level in the second (SPSI OMC).

Exploration of the issue of the most relevant stakeholders with respect to indicators for SPSI OMC as compared to ESF has been undertaken through a review of a) interview data¹¹⁸, b) considerations expressed during the stakeholder dialogue¹¹⁹, and c) responses to the on line-survey¹²⁰. Main findings that emerged include:

- 1) There is a limited degree of coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC indicators;
- 2) there is a growing awareness of the need for convergence;
- 3) and there are examples of development in this direction;
- 4) the role of Commission geographical desks in supporting Managing Authorities and beneficiaries in the introduction of SPSI issues is relevant and should be reinforced.

The broad consensus amongst those interviewed is that, on the whole, *there is a limited degree of coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC in the use of indicators*. It is generally accepted that the monitoring and reporting of ESF indicators does not systematically integrate national SPSI indicators. However, the indicators picture is one of *slow but steady progress towards creating a system of measures and benchmarks that is beginning to help policy makers, programme managers and other stakeholders assess the extent to which ESF and SPSI OMC Objectives and interventions converge*.

It has also been reported that there is a *move towards increased collaboration between the Social Inclusion and the ESF Unit within the DG Employment, together working with the ESF geographical desks, resulting in promoting a higher level of cohesion and complementarity*. It was only after 2000 that the ESF geographical desks started receiving data related to social inclusion, no longer limited only to employment and the labour market. Furthermore, the Social Inclusion Unit counted on the geographical/country specific expertise of the ESF geographical desks and by developing closer links with the ESF geographical desks, it can be seen that complementarity began to be established.

The online-survey showed a growing awareness of the need for convergence between ESF and SPSI OMC common targets and indicators. The majority of the respondents consider it to be essential or at least useful to enhance their coherence and complementarity for all the 3 OMC Objectives, but with a specific emphasis on the first one related to poverty.

In relation to Social Protection and Healthcare/LTC, the survey results show that common indicators and targets play a relevant role in expected enhancement of coherence and complementarity: amongst those who

¹¹⁷ See Annex 1 of this Report: ESF and SPSI OMC literature review: main characteristics and preliminary elements of coherence and complementarity.

¹¹⁸ See Annex 2 of this Report: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity.

¹¹⁹ See Annex 6 of this Report: Stakeholders dialogue main conclusions.

¹²⁰ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

feel that ESF should intervene more, in the future in the field of social protection, the vast majority considered it to be essential or at least useful to have a set of common targets and indicators to enhance the coherence and complementarity between ESF and the 2nd SPSI OMC strand. Similarly, with respect to the 3rd SPSI OMC strand, amongst those who feel that in the future ESF should render support for the modernization and improvement of Health Care, the vast majority considered it to be essential or at least useful to have a set of common targets and indicators. In contrast, for those who do not agree with this progressive enlargement of ESF action, the majority do not see the usefulness of coordinating indicators and targets.

Differences can be detected when looking at Member States grouped in typologies combining “political-institutional” and “welfare policy” regimes¹²¹. New Member States are more willing to enhance the coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC with respect to common targets and indicators, whilst Northern countries are less inclined. This can be related to the fact that Northern Countries are more accustomed to ESF logics but also the fact that have a longer tradition (and a greater use of national funds) for social issues. It is worth underlining that with regard to the second and the third SPSI OMC Objectives (Social Protection and Healthcare and long-term care), the majority of Northern Countries responding to the on-line survey think that a greater coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC common targets and indicators would be useless (respectively 59% and 50%).

In addition this study has found examples of positive development occurring in the 2000-2006 period, towards an increasing coherence between SPSI OMC indicators and ESF ones.

Box 12 – Examples of positive development in increasing coherence between SPSI OMC indicators and ESF ones

Northern Ireland has a large proportion of very disadvantaged groups, for example long-term unemployed and households characterised by multi-generational unemployment. Previously indicators available described only the number of qualifications achieved or the number of people placed in employment which did not provide a clear picture of the added value of the project being assessed. However, the ESF Unit for Northern Ireland has introduced new indicators that are able to describe the features of the context in which the project has worked well and has obtained from the Commission approval to modify the targets in order to better qualify the outputs obtained and to measure the results and the impact with specific reference to the actual socio-economic situation of the territory. The intention has been to improve and enhance their target setting and monitoring of social inclusion data, the task was experienced as challenging, but rewarding for the partner organisations. A key success was for example that by the end of the programme all their intermediate bodies were reporting on gender. “We have come an extremely long way since the start of the 2000-2006 programme in improving the indicators to capture our ‘performance’ regarding different types of socially excluded groups and different types of social exclusion.” The mid-term review and evaluation found extremely positive evolution of the programme with respect to increasing coherence and complementarity with the SPSI OMC, because there was a clear transition in their thinking around data (indicators and measures) that better matched the SPSI OMC. “The mid-term review did not however, significantly change our emphasis of policy fields further towards SI, since 6 of our 7 objectives already matched the SI agenda”. The main reason for this coherence has been described as due to the fact that both the administration and the management at EC and Irish state level of ESF are identical to SPSI OMC – they are being managed in the same way, share many of the same partners, have a similar monitoring structure – so there is high congruence between them.

In *Scotland* following the mid-term review, indicators have been revised to be more in line with the SPSI OMC indicators, as well as measures and target groups, in order to mesh more closely with the SPSI OMC: the Commission accepted the fairly significant changes made to the programme design. Initially the development of shared understanding of the SPSI OMC-ESF linkages was worked up and captured through the inclusion of a new section in their annual implementation report, that specifically focused on the issue of coherence and complementarity, but this section appeared in this report only in 2006, and they designed into the 2007-2013 a horizontal priority – a specific social inclusion horizontal theme, which means that every project funded through this programme has to have a specific social inclusion aspect.

Greece too has adjusted ESF indicators to the local context, whilst in *Latvia* there are examples of measurement of the effectiveness of a project through the assessment of ESF impacts to improve quality of life.

¹²¹ For more details, see Annex 3 - Mapping exercise analysis and main results - and Fiches B database in Annex 3B in this Report - Data Base Fiches B and Methodological Note.

Again from the survey¹²², with respect to the role of the different actors in the definition of indicators it is interesting to note that as expected, the main role has been played by National government officials, Regional authorities and Public Employment Services; but civil society has played virtually no role at all. This later finding is striking when considering that one of the essential elements of SPSI OMC is the involvement of civil society, and it is suggested that the contribution of civil society in the definition of what to observe in the description of social exclusion at national and local level would have provided added value to the process.

Summing up: how coherent ESF is with SPSI OMC at the level of indicators

- ❖ ESF indicators differ from the SPSI OMC indicators in many aspects: the aim, the object measured, the level of analysis.
- ❖ As a result, there is limited coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC indicators, as operationalised within NAPs/NSRs, and in particular as far as the key dimensions of Poverty, Healthcare/LCT and Social Protection are concerned. This lack of coherence is mainly due to the contrasting characteristics of the indicators themselves and to their contrasting purposes, with ESF indicators primarily intended to monitor and evaluate the programme implementation at different stages in its evolution, and SPSI OMC indicators being primarily intended to describe and analyse broader structural phenomena, processes and trends.
- ❖ However, the evaluation shows slow but steady progress towards creating a system of measures and benchmarks that is beginning to help policy makers, programme managers and other stakeholders assess the extent to which ESF and SPSI OMC Objectives and interventions converge.
- ❖ The role of geographical desks in supporting managing authorities and beneficiaries in the introduction of SPSI issues is relevant and should be reinforced as well as the implementation of benchmarking systems that could be enhanced by the Commission and implemented by the Member States.
- ❖ New Member States are those more willing to enhance the coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC with respect to common targets and indicators, whilst Northern countries are less willing.

¹²²See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

2. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Q5A- Q5B)

2.1 ESF suitability as a tool to progress for delivery on the common social objectives of the SPSI OMC – evaluation question 5A

On the basis of the findings of this study, it is something of a challenge to make generalisations about the suitability of ESF as a tool to support progress in the social inclusion and social protection fields. This ex post evaluation study on the 2000-2006 programming period has underlined a number of times that *the creation of SPSI OMC was an ongoing process (especially for the strands of social protection and healthcare) that was only fully implemented during the later stages of the ESF 2000-2006 implementation and thus with a moderate effect.*

However, *a number of conclusions can be drawn from the overall study* in order to answer to the evaluation question 5A in relation to the different OMC strands.

ESF and 1st SPSI OMC strand (Social Inclusion)

The findings of the whole study (previously explored under questions 1-4) show that there is a *relatively high degree of coherence and complementarity between the ESF and the 1st SPSI OMC strand* and that, particularly following the mid-term review, this coherence and complementarity increased. From the country analysis during the mapping exercise¹²³ an increase in the importance of social inclusion interventions in the context of ESF occurred for instance in countries as different as Luxembourg and Portugal, Italy and the UK, France and the Czech Republic. As reported in answering Evaluation Question 1¹²⁴ all Member States have at least one of their national ESF objectives that is related to social inclusion issues. Furthermore, the evaluation study shows that the majority of countries had objectives directly related to the worst forms of social exclusion (e.g. promoting social integration of people facing persistent poverty and eliminating social exclusion among children) for which ESF has been considered important. The interviews with Commission Officials and stakeholders¹²⁵ confirmed this finding, as did the on-line survey¹²⁶ where 62% of respondents answered that it played an ‘important’ role. 11% of the managing authorities even stated that the ESF played a ‘crucial’ role in fighting social exclusion in their country/region (this figure is higher, 18%, in Southern Europe).

The importance and utility of ESF for social inclusion was especially noted with regard to tackling the main characteristics of social exclusion, i.e. its multidimensionality. The multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion is widely recognized not only within the relevant literature¹²⁷, but also by the large majority of the stakeholders interviewed¹²⁸. *The ability of ESF as a financial instrument to cope with social exclusion multidimensionality* was confirmed by the case studies¹²⁹ which demonstrated that the very notion of success is linked to the ability to implement complex projects strongly centred on the needs of the individuals. This is even more apparent in the case of the Equal projects, which in this respect were often mentioned as good practices¹³⁰.

¹²³ See Annex 3 Mapping exercise analysis and main results and Annex 3A of this Report: Country Fiches A.

¹²⁴ See Paragraph 1.1 of this Report.

¹²⁵ See Annex 2 of this Report: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity.

¹²⁶ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

¹²⁷ See Annex 1 of this Report: ESF and SPSI OMC literature review: main characteristics and preliminary elements of coherence and complementarity.

¹²⁸ See Annex 2: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity and Annex 6 of this Report: Stakeholders dialogue main conclusions.

¹²⁹ See Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

¹³⁰ The innovative content of the EQUAL Community Initiative is acknowledged in most of 2004-2006 NAPS/INCLUSION reports. EQUAL is described as a laboratory for new ideas for the EES and the social inclusion process. Its mission being to promote a more

On this basis it can be said that the whole study showed that *ESF eligible intervention typologies offer a wide spectrum of instruments to tackle the manifold disadvantages of target groups*. In particular, the possibility to *combine multiple intervention typologies in a single project enables the addressing of the multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion*. From the case studies, this finding is quite evident. For instance, the French project *Reconciliation Family handicap* which addresses both the access of disabled people to training, education and integration in society and the reconciliation of the professional and private life of disabled children's parents and especially lone mothers, combines networking, studies and research with training, mediation and awareness raising and dissemination activities. Also the Slovenian project *Learning for Young Adults PLYA* (a recognised non-formal education programme targeted at young drop outs who were unemployed), whilst concentrating on the individual and addressing personal issues (motivation, self respect, interests etc) also targeted education, training, the relationship of the individual with the school and larger environment, as well as employment. In this way, it integrates within the same programme teachers' training, and integrated pathways for access to the labour market. The British, the German and the Italian cases use both assistance to persons, and assistance to structures in an effort to increase the capacity of the project to fight social exclusion. Furthermore, the German case highlighted that risks of social exclusion are considered to be in continuous change, according to developments in society and economy. Therefore, interventions need to be continuously adapted to the actual situation to tackle better disadvantages that cause social exclusion¹³¹. *This characteristic is particularly enhanced in EQUAL projects* also with regard to the great importance given to the ability of creating strong "networking" between different systems/services and/or actors/target groups that could support the implementation of complex projects structured along different interventions typologies. With regard to this later aspect, it is important to note that amongst the managing authorities surveyed¹³², 38% fully agreed and 28 % partially agreed with the need to implement "complex projects to tackle multiple disadvantages instead of projects aimed at one specific target group" (these results did not show strong geographical variation when broken down by country, meaning that in this case, different institutional and socio-economic contexts did not have a strong effect, thus reinforcing this finding).

Most of these interventions are related to specific ESF Policy Fields (Policy Field B and E in the case of the OPs; and thematic fields Combating racism, Business creation, Reconciling family and professional life, Reducing gender gaps and desegregation in the case of EQUAL) that consider already within their main scope social inclusion issues. Less coherence was found in other Policy Fields or Thematic fields in which social inclusion issues were less evident or, at least, less explicit. This suggests that Member States typically experience to some degree difficulty in thinking 'outside the box' or beyond their *modus operandi*, in relation to fields where social exclusion is least visible or rather most challenging to extricate. For example Policy Field C that may include within its target groups typology people that might be at risk of social exclusion (such as young school drop-outs) could have also been used to promote pathways of integration between different systems of education and training not just as a tool to increase flexibility, but also as a tool to combat social exclusion.

Greater attention to institutional factors such as the connection between ESF and SPSI OMC "two worlds" at the level of Ministries and/or Department, and governance issues such as those needed to increase networking and improve stakeholders patterns of participation, could enhance the possibility of exploiting the full potential of both instruments thus increasing their coherence and complementarity¹³³.

Summing up: ESF suitability for the 1st SPSI OMC strand (Social Inclusion)

The evaluation study finds that:

- ❖ The ESF financial instrument is a suitable tool to progress the delivery of the social inclusion strand within the SPSI OMC overarching Objectives.

inclusive work life through fighting discrimination and exclusion based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation has made of EQUAL the tool able to promote shared objectives and interventions referring to social inclusion. For more details, see Annex 3D of this Report.

¹³¹ For further details on the case studies, please, see Annex 5 of this Report : Summary and analysis of the case studies.

¹³² See Annex 4 of this report: Online survey main findings.

¹³³ On this point, see paragraph 1.3 of this Report.

- ❖ The possibilities that ESF offered in terms of target groups and interventions to tackle social inclusion were generally taken up by Member States, particularly after the mid-term review.
- ❖ In particular, complex projects in which different intervention typologies were used proved to be a better approach –when compared with others - to tackling social exclusion, especially when explicitly addressing the multidimensional nature of social exclusion. ESF capacity to reach individuals was also related to the ability of creating “networks” amongst different actors and different systems of reference. In this way ESF allowed reach to target groups that are usually less targeted as a priority in Member States.
- ❖ However, when social inclusion issues were less evident or, at least, less explicit, the full potential of ESF eligible intervention typologies were not always adequately explored¹³⁴. This is particularly true in ESF Policy Fields and EQUAL thematic fields in which social inclusion issues were more “hidden”, for example in Policy Field C.

ESF and the 2nd SPSI OMC strands (adequate and sustainable pension)

With respect to the 2nd SPSI OMC objective the situation is very different from strand 1. When looking at the literature review¹³⁵, only some *forms of indirect coherence and complementarity* were found, mainly relating to lifelong training approaches within an active ageing strategy, but *no explicit links were identified*. This was confirmed by the analysis carried out of the ESF CSFs¹³⁶ showing that even if there were 19 countries out of 25¹³⁷ that presented at least one objective coherent with the 2nd SPSI Overarching Objective, this assessment of coherence was just based on considering the *indirect effect that the ESF lifelong learning objective (within an active ageing strategy) may have in sustaining social protection elements*. This means that instead of speaking of low level of coherence, the problem is that the issues addressed by ESF OPs are rather marginal in the broad context of social protection issues tackled by national policies.

The three objectives of the Pension OMC (Adequacy, sustainability and modernisation) were not considered eligible under ESF and this means that *ESF suitability in the light of the 2nd SPSI OMC Overarching Objective, can only be seen in an indirect way supporting longer working lives and active ageing*. In detail the evaluation study showed that the main suitable intervention typologies were those within ESF Policy Field C especially for those interventions concerned with lifelong learning for active ageing.

As more than one informant pointed out during the stakeholder dialogue¹³⁸ there is too large a gap in the financial resources mobilised by ESF and the cost of pensions, and therefore the suggestion that ESF can make a difference is unrealistic. Also amongst managing authorities surveyed¹³⁹ the *consensus around the potential and appropriateness of ESF to support these fields is much lower than in the case of social exclusion*. The key message is that there is less confidence in, and agreement with, the suggestion that ESF should in the future function as a support to the SPSI OMC in relation to the areas of pension OMC; and if these concerns are to be addressed through ESF it will be only in a limited, partial or indirect capacity. The same conclusion is also consistent with the findings of the interviews with Commission Officers and stakeholders¹⁴⁰ also considering the lack of EU competence in this strand.

Other issues included in the social protection strand apart from indirect support through active ageing support, were scarcely investigated (for example, all those aspects related to the facilitation of access to resources and services) and this can be a question of scarce reciprocal “knowledge” of the two worlds (SPSI OMC and ESF) that was especially reported for the 2nd SPSI OMC Strand¹⁴¹. In connection with this and in

¹³⁴ For more details on which were the interventions typologies that were more used and, on the contrary, which were those less used, please, refer to the Paragraph 1.2 of this Report and Annex 3A of this Report: Country Fiches A.

¹³⁵ See Annex 1 of this Report: ESF and SPSI OMC literature review: main characteristics and preliminary elements of coherence and complementarity.

¹³⁶ See Paragraph 1.1 of this Report.

¹³⁷ The six countries that presented no objective coherent with 2nd SPSI OMC Objective are Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, The Netherlands and Portugal.

¹³⁸ See Annex 6 of this Report: Stakeholders dialogue main conclusions.

¹³⁹ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

¹⁴⁰ See Annex 2 of this Report: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity.

¹⁴¹ See Annex 6 of this Report: Stakeholders dialogue main conclusions

terms of the intervention type that should be prioritised within social protection, it was reported that there should be an increase of networking activities and an increase of multilevel governance in this field. The online survey¹⁴² showed that less than a fourth of managing authorities surveyed were involved in the preparation of social protection national documents and of this, 14% only at an informal level. Thus, there is the need to join National Ministries responsible for drafting national policy documents on social protection and regional/local Government for ESF to jointly explore possibilities of interrelations. The UK case study (South West Opportunities for Older People SWOOP) confirmed this finding, tackling the complex issues of improving the work opportunities for the elderly people through the activation of a very large partnership extending across levels of government¹⁴³. Differences can be detected amongst countries, with Northern countries more keen to increase coherence between SPSI OMC and ESF by greater joint working and an increase in partnerships, and Southern countries, by the development of common indicators¹⁴⁴.

Summing up: ESF suitability for the 2nd SPSI OMC strand (adequate and sustainable pension)

The evaluation study finds that:

- ❖ The ESF financial instrument was assessed to be a suitable tool to progress for delivery of the second strand within the SPSI OMC overarching Objectives only in an indirect way with regard to *supporting longer working lives and active ageing*.
- ❖ With respect to pension issues (the main part of social protection interventions at national level) *there is little to be gained in a re-orientation of the ESF regulatory framework to support them* and the question of suitability should therefore be treated cautiously.
- ❖ In relation to *other elements* included in the second strand within the SPSI OMC overarching objectives (to facilitate access to resources and services), the ESF financial instrument was not considered to be a suitable tool also because of a lack of reciprocal knowledge between the SPSI OMC and ESF.
- ❖ Differences are detected when considering different member states, with the Nordic countries wishing to increase coherence by an increase of joint working, and the Southern states by using comparable indicators.

ESF and the 3rd SPSI OMC strands (health, and long term care)

With regard to the 3rd SPSI OMC overarching objective, the findings of the evaluation study showed a *very low degree of both direct and indirect coherence and complementarity with the ESF*. When analysing the ESF CSFs¹⁴⁵, *coherence was found for just 5 countries* (Greece, Finland, Poland, Portugal, and Sweden), and all of them in the field of developing continuous training in the workplace within health sector and after the mid term-review. The decisions of these particular countries to program and implement interventions in some way related to the health sector was the result of the political will to reinforce health sector through training instruments during that period¹⁴⁶.

In detail, most of the interventions assessed as coherent were under “Assistance to structures and systems” type interventions, aimed at modernising and reorganising the health care sector. Participants in the Stakeholder Dialogue¹⁴⁷, suggested that the main way in which ESF might support modernization and improvement of Health Care, was through improved training for health staff and by increasing awareness amongst health staff of the social determinants of health and inequalities in health status. It was also

¹⁴² See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

¹⁴³ See Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

¹⁴⁴ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

¹⁴⁵ See Paragraph 1.1 of this Report.

¹⁴⁶ See Annex 2 of this Report: Interviews: main findings on coherence and complementarity and Annex 6 of this Report: Stakeholders dialogue main conclusions.

¹⁴⁷ See Annex 6 of this Report: Stakeholders dialogue main conclusions.

recognized that health issues are, firstly, more closely linked to social inclusion issues and, secondly, more accessible to intervention at the regional level.

Other areas of interventions (for example, measures to develop health programmes for vulnerable categories within the workplace, or measures to enhance awareness in the field of health and safety at work, or counselling and personalised guidance on health and related lifestyle issues in order to promote participation and reintegration in the labour market) *were only marginally adopted both in the ESF OPs and in the Equal Projects*. Long term-care issues were considered in terms of increasing the social economy sector, by providing support for elderly to continue living in their homes. This aspect was more developed within EQUAL projects than ESF OPs.

It is therefore concluded that there is *some potential for raising awareness and proposing solutions for interventions that take advantage of the existing scope within the ESF regulatory framework for linking inclusion and health*. The case studies conducted in this field, notably the one undertaken in Finland, demonstrate that there is the possibility of real synergy between ESF and health related issues (in the specific case occupational health), but that ESF is not entirely equipped to deal with them¹⁴⁸.

Summing up: ESF suitability for the 3rd SPSI OMC strand (healthcare and long term care)

The evaluation study finds that:

- ❖ The ESF financial instrument was assessed to be a suitable tool to progress for delivery of the third strand of the SPSI Overarching Objective with regard to developing continuous training in the workplace within the health sector. When this happened, it was reported to be supported by strong political will and prioritisation.
- ❖ Other areas of interventions were scarcely explored and this occurred more with respect to EQUAL projects than OPs interventions.
- ❖ Given the few number of countries in which coherence was detected, it was not possible to consider different behaviours amongst different countries.

2.2 Recommendations: how ESF can be improved to ensure a better coherence and complementarity with the SPSI OMC – evaluation question 5B

Overall study findings and conclusions presented in the previous chapters mainly showed that the level of coherence between ESF and SPSI OMC could be better enhanced and explored by both ESF managing authorities and national member states authorities. This is particularly true for the 2nd and 3rd SPSI OMC Strands (where coherence was assessed as modest), but, in some way, also for the 1st SPSI OMC Strand even if in this case coherence proved to be already high.

However, this general statement presents different meaning in relation to the three SPSI OMC Strands. The on line survey¹⁴⁹ enabled the detection of a number of differences.

To illustrate, of the managing authorities surveyed¹⁵⁰, as far as the social inclusion objectives (1st SPSI OMC Strand) are concerned, almost two thirds fully agreed that in the future, it will be more and more important to use the ESF as an instrument to reinforce social inclusion policies in their country/region. However one should be aware that this view is shared by the overwhelming majority of the respondents from Eastern and Southern Europe (respectively 83% and 81%) but only by 40% of the respondents from Northern Europe (where in addition 21% disagree and 39% only partially agree).

¹⁴⁸ See Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

¹⁴⁹ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

¹⁵⁰ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

In contrast, with regard to social protection issues (2nd SPSI OMC Strand) 50% indicated that ESF should intervene more in this area (but only 18% of this 50% said that ESF should “intervene a lot”); whilst the other 50%, indicated that ESF should not intervene in this area or just in a minor way (out of the 50%, 26,8% “a bit” and 23,9% “not at all”). This finding has to be qualified by breaking down the results by country. Thus we find that 77% of the respondents coming from the countries with per capita income below the EU average believe that ESF should intervene more in the future in the social protection field, while only 37% of respondents from the countries with per capita income above the EU average agree that ESF should intervene more in the future in the social protection field.

Finally, with regard to healthcare issues, 40% of the on-line survey respondents¹⁵¹ believed that in the future ESF should support significantly the modernisation and improvement of healthcare. It is noted that, this proportion falls to 22% in the countries with per capita income above the European average, and climbs to 82% in countries with per capita income below the European average.

In any case, the study finds that in order to exploit the full potential of the ESF, relevant changes are needed in the governance and in the regulation going even further than what was specified in the ESF 2000-2006 Regulation¹⁵² and also than what has already been achieved in the 2007/2013 programming period¹⁵³. Again differences can be detected with regard to the three SPSI OMC Strands.

With regard to the 1st SPSI OMC Strand, the managing authorities surveyed¹⁵⁴ were quite aware of the subject of the need for changes to increase coherence and complementarity. Almost all of them - 94% - believed that in order to enhance the coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC a set of common objectives is essential or at least useful, similarly 90% believed that the same applies to a common set of targets and indicators, and 94% believed that changes in governance are needed. However, to qualify this conclusion, it is important to point out that there is some significant variation if the results are broken down by country. Thus we find that 68% of respondents coming from countries with per capita income below the European average believe that common objectives are essential, as compared to only 20% of respondents from the countries with per capita income above the European average. The same applies to the need to have common targets and indicators (54% as compared to 20%) and changes in governance (63% versus 35%). In other words, respondents from countries with per capita income below the European average are much more in support of the need to change, than those coming from the countries with per capita income above the European average.

With regard to the 2nd SPSI OMC Strand, as far as common objectives, common targets and indicators, and changes in governance are concerned, there are quite strong differences identifiable amongst countries. The general pattern to emerge, is that countries with below average per capita income typically consider it essential and useful to establish a common set of objectives, a common set of targets and indicators, and changes in governance, as compared to countries with above average per capita income which don't support these proposals. Specifically, with regard to a common set of objectives: none of the countries below EU average per capita income think that this would be not important in comparison to 45% of the countries above EU average per capita income that do think it would be useless. Similar patterns can be found with regard to changes in governance and also with regard to the establishment of a common set of targets and indicators, although it is noted that in this later case, some countries below EU average per capita income also believe (14%) that this would be useless.

Finally, looking at the future of the ESF/OMC relationship with regard to the 3rd SPSI OMC Strand, a common set of objectives, is considered not important only by 9% of the survey respondents from the countries with per capita income below the EU average, but by 53% of those from the countries with per capita income above the EU average. The same applies to a common set of targets and indicators (essential for 54% compared to 26%) as well as changes in governance (essential for 54% compared to 18%)¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵¹ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

¹⁵² The Regulation (EC) N° 1784/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 1999 on the European Social Fund identify within ESF task that of promoting equal opportunities for all in accessing the labour market, with particular emphasis on those exposed to social exclusion.

¹⁵³ The suitability of ESF as a tool for promoting SI OMC has been further developed in the 2007/2013 programming period as evidenced by the Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion¹⁵³, and by the Joint Report 2010.

¹⁵⁴ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

¹⁵⁵ See Annex 4 of this Report: Online survey main findings.

Nevertheless, the evaluation study also concludes that there is the possibility to enlarge the scope of ESF in the case of health care. The ESF Regulation for the 2007-2013 programming period has already identified some “niches” in which the ESF is able to make a difference (for example training people for health care service occupations, and promoting well-being within the workplace).

On basis of this evaluation, the main recommendations are detailed below and aim at:

- improving the governance system;
- introducing changes in the next ESF regulatory and policy framework (EU 2020) and in SPSI OMC;
- revising the monitoring and the evaluation processes;
- improving trans-national exchange as a tool to increase knowledge sharing and learning.

The following recommendations, to be really effective, should be taken into consideration when:

- defining the future role of SPSI OMC and ESF in the context of the EU 2020 Strategy;
- defining a next ESF Regulation;
- defining a successor to the current Social Policy Agenda.

Moreover, given the differences previously underlined according to the three different SPSI OMC Strands, the following recommendations should be used with more emphasis in relation to the social inclusion objectives, with more attention in relation to healthcare objectives and in a more cautious way in relation to the social protection.

I. IMPROVING THE GOVERNANCE OF THE ESF

1) ***Greater political commitment to achieve better coordination between the SPSI OMC and ESF***

Several steps have already been taken in the direction of a better coordination between SPSI OMC and the Lisbon Agenda at EU level¹⁵⁶ supported also by several key stakeholders¹⁵⁷. However, the policy options outlined till now have mainly concentrated on identifying new coordination mechanisms to ensure the effective mainstreaming of the SPSI OMC priorities into NSRs, as opposed to the actual integration between NSRs and ESF which are typically designed and programmed separately. This evaluation study has found that the efforts made (2000-2006) to develop coherence and complementarity between these “two worlds” were, according to the stakeholders interviewed based to a considerable extent on the personal interest and motivation of officials on both sides.

¹⁵⁶ For example:

- The March 2007 European Council stressed that the *common social objectives* of the EU should be better reflected within the Lisbon agenda;
- The note of the Council presenting the Joint Report 2008 underlines that “Social and economic policies can and should be mutually supportive” and that « in recent years social protection reforms and active inclusion policies have contributed to higher growth and more jobs»;
- The Social Protection Committee (SPC) appointed a working group to identify examples of positive mutual interaction between the common social objectives and those of greater economic growth and more and better jobs. The report of the working group highlighted how economic, employment and social policies are closely inter-related and mutually supportive. Well-designed social protection systems and social inclusion policies are productive factors contributing considerably to the economic achievements of each Member State. Ongoing pension and healthcare reforms have a positive impact both on the sustainability of public finances and on labour market behaviour.

¹⁵⁷ For example:

- According to the European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN) the proposals on an improved coordination for the SPSI OMC should include active steps to work towards a new strategic architecture for the Post Lisbon scenario. This should draw on proposals for a post 2010 vision based on 4 equal and coordinated pillars: Economic, Employment, Social and Environmental – which can deliver a social and sustainable strategy for post 2010. Moreover all EU policies should be properly coordinated to deliver on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion. But the OMC on Social Protection and Social Inclusion must continue to be seen as the key instrument, with the Commission as the driver and the Council (through the Social Protection Committee and the Employment Committee) and the Parliament playing a key role as ambassadors for the strategy.
- According to the Social Platform, there is the need to increase visibility and political commitment to SPSI OMC, and improve its coherence with the wider post-2010 strategy: to make a meaningful impact on social objectives of the EU, SPSI OMC must be given the same weight as the Growth and Jobs agenda, through commitment to quantified targets and mechanisms of accountability.

Furthermore, as also previously reported, the level of interest and commitment varies considerably between member states. For example, the evidence suggests willingness to increase the coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC is lower in member states with per capita incomes above the European average. This means that a *stronger central steer in terms of ensuring that the SPSI OMC Objectives are on the ESF agenda, is required.*

It is therefore necessary *to understand if actually there is a political commitment at the national level, to use the ESF for improving social inclusion, social protection and healthcare.* Only afterwards will it be possible to highlight the link between different OMC strands and ESF priorities, in order to create a *European framework of common intervention principles and general objectives.*

This implies in the first instance the need to *raise the political saliency of the issue and commitment* at the Member States level, but also at the EU level. There are a number of mechanisms through which this objective could be addressed. The following are two examples:

- A pan European conference exploring the actual and potential impact of ESF on SPSI OMC in relation to the three different Strands.
- Common guidelines drafted by Commission Units involved in SPSI OMC and ESF reinforcing the attention of Member States and ESF managing authorities to use ESF to support social inclusion, social protection and healthcare and long-term care. Focusing specifically on the need to address the multidimensional nature of social exclusion, identifying the specific areas in which ESF can make a difference in improving the sustainability of the pension system and the functioning of healthcare and long term care services, and exploring possibilities of 'ring fencing' ESF financial allocations to the different OMC strands.

2) *Better coordination of the SPSI OMC and ESF based on more effective collaboration between the units in charge in the administrations*

Literature suggests that political commitment in isolation would not be sufficient in itself to achieve the level of coherence and complementarity between ESF and SPSI OMC that could be aimed for in the future. Improved co-operation and collaboration between the agencies responsible for ESF and SPSI OMC in Member States, would further strengthen the integration of the two instruments.

There is a *need to improve in the Member States the channels of communication and collaboration between agencies*, departments and individuals who are currently separately responsible for ESF and SPSI OMC respectively. The Belgium experience of the ESF-NAP Impact Assessment Cell as well as of the Federal Public Service for Social Integration ESF cell, shows that creating joint bodies or giving responsibilities for both the ESF and the SPSI OMC to the same institution could actually improve the coherence and complementarity between the two.

This can be done, for example, through:

- Improving co-operation and collaboration (regular meetings, dissemination and knowledge sharing events, etc.) between the agencies responsible for ESF and SPSI OMC in Member States especially for those SPSI OMC Objectives (like the 2nd and 3rd) that till now have had less opportunity of joint working with ESF.
- Explore the possibilities by the agencies responsible for ESF and SPSI OMC in Member States of drafting integrated strategy.

This implies developing a *multi-level governance framework*, with clearly defined roles amongst the different levels of governance and/or public-private stakeholders, along with identification of the policy objectives to be implemented at the regional, national and European levels.

3) *Improve the involvement of civil society/NGOs*

This evaluation study, as reported in the answer to Evaluation question 3, has found that civil society/NGOs have very limited involvement in the design and programming of both NSRs and ESF Programs, despite the fact that logic suggests that their engagement in this activity would add value and relevance. Analysis of ESF interventions and the case study data, show that some of the best results were actually obtained when NGOs were involved in the preparatory phase of the interventions. This was highlighted in the German, Italian and Spanish case studies, where the existence of some intermediary body between the managing authority and the final beneficiaries was considered one of the most important success factors in ensuring coherence between ESF interventions and SPSI OMC Objectives. This is not surprising as the role of NGOs in addressing social inclusion issues (and in some cases social protection and healthcare) is paramount since NGOs are involved in day to day research, interaction with target groups and monitoring of situations on the ground, and thus have a unique perspective to bring to the table. NGOs have a ‘grounded knowledge’ that other stakeholders involved in the design and programming of SPSI OMC and ESF often do not have. Ways of further involving NGOs and civil society especially at national and regional level, could, for example, encompass:

- Extensive consultation, at the stage when the programming documents are still in a preliminary version, with NGOs representatives in order to use them as sounding boards for grass roots needs;
- Developing and implementing some sort of “representative bodies” of the NGOs, in order to enable a continuous exchange of views and experiences with the public institutions. These could take the form of “user committees” to work both at the ministerial level to participate in the preparation of NSRs and at the Operational Programmes level in order to provide continuous advice;
- Guidelines for consultation practices and cross-border dissemination of good practices;

II. CHANGES TO ESF REGULATORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK AND TO SPSI OMC

4) *Make the links between ESF and SPSI OMC more explicit*

In the immediate term the evaluation highlights the need to make the links between ESF and the SPSI OMC more explicit. In order to support better coherence and complementarity, the next ESF Regulation should:

- better correspond to the objectives and targets set up in the three strands of the SPSI OMC. This should be explored separately for the three OMC objectives given the different considerations made with regard to ESF suitability for each of them;
- better define how ESF could contribute to delivery of policies and interventions aimed to reduce social exclusion and poverty and address SP and health and long term care.

For example, it is generally well-accepted that low-paid jobs militate against full integration into society. In turn, low pay and poverty are associated with multiplier effects, such as poor health, that reinforce cycles of deprivation. In the current programming cycle, 2007-2013, steps have been taken, for example under Article 3.1.c, to extend the previous scope of ESF regulation beyond promoting sustainable employment and combating discrimination in the labour market. Other steps have been taken as well to better define how ESF can contribute to healthcare objectives. Future ESF policy should build on these advances to operationalise a broader, more holistic understanding of social inclusion, for example by focusing on the quality of jobs as well as the quantity available in the labour market.

This could be achieved, for example, through:

- Introducing references to the three SPSI OMC over-arching objectives within the communication strategy on the ESF;
- Incorporating references to the three SPSI OMC over-arching objectives in the instruments used by auditing bodies to monitor and ensure compliance to ESF regulations;
- Highlighting the contribution of the ESF to promoting the three OMC over-arching objectives in national reports.

At the same time, in the design of the new OMC cycle, particular attention should be given to the identification of potential linkages with ESF. Ways of identifying potential linkages could encompass:

- improving the operational features of the SPSI OMC Objectives in order to make them more fundable by ESF;
- introducing explicit reference to ESF possible contribution as a suitable tool to reinforce SPSI OMC in the context of the future EU 2020 Strategy;
- introducing explicit reference to ESF contribution to support the social impact of the crisis in the 2011 Joint SPSI Report;
- involving ESF Commission Units to define new policy development under the SPSI OMC strategy both with respect to social integration and to healthy and dignified ageing in order to identify possible elements of coherence and complementarity with future ESF.

5) *Support convergence in the way ESF eligible actions are defined by Member States*

As shown in the answers to the previous evaluation question, perceptions of how ESF can be used, in what circumstances, and for whom, vary considerably from country to country. In turn, Member States' interpretation of EC rules on ESF may sometimes constitute a blockage limiting the policy fields, the intervention typologies, and the target groups that are addressed. The European Commission could help in increasing awareness and understanding of how and in what circumstances ESF can be applied to support the SPSI OMC:

- by issuing specific guidelines on the use of ESF for meeting SPSI OMC Objectives able to answer the more frequent doubts and questions on the eligibility of specific interventions, target groups etc.
- by selecting and disseminating good practices illustrating how rules and procedures can be more creatively applied to broaden the scope of interventions.

6) *Enlarge the scope of target groups to be addressed by the ESF*

Given the multidimensionality of social inclusion, as well as the high number of issues that can be tackled by social protection and healthcare and long term care objectives, traditional 'targeting' strategies are seen to pose a number of limitations when implementing useful and effective ESF interventions that aim to be coherent with the SPSI Overarching Objectives. The evaluation study¹⁵⁸ shows that it is difficult (if not impossible) to make direct and strict linkages between a specific target group and a specific type of intervention and that there is the need to build a regulatory framework that can keep pace with the changing nature of social exclusion (but also social protection and health and long term care) that evolves in response to changing economic and social dynamics¹⁵⁹.

These limitations may be solved through two approaches:

- The first approach is the easier one, and maybe the less innovative: increase the target group typologies that are considered eligible for ESF. This would allow the inclusion of specific target groups typologies that currently (and especially in the future) are posing severe problems of social inclusion. For example, during the stakeholder dialogue¹⁶⁰, several target groups were identified such as citizens whose opportunities are restricted by high levels of debt; citizens with very low income (in work poverty); people with HIV/AIDS; and people suffering from depression. New target groups identification could be effective not only for taking into account new problems (such as, for example, new forms of poverty that specifically arise in this economic crisis period), but also in order to increase coherence with the target

¹⁵⁸ For more details, see the analysis on the mapping exercise made on Fiches B, Annex 3 and Annex 3B of this Report.

¹⁵⁹ For more details, see stakeholders dialogue main conclusions in Annex 6 of this Report.

¹⁶⁰ Ibidem.

groups addressed by future NSRs¹⁶¹. However, the solution of simply enlarging the target group typologies may not be wholly effective in tackling the multidimensional nature of social exclusion. The hardest target groups to be reached are in fact those that are considered “multi problematic” i.e. those that can be included in different target groups (rather than ‘belonging’ to just one target group), for example, a disabled, unemployed person, with low educational attainment, or an immigrant lone woman with minor children. Furthermore, introducing a new target group into the regulatory framework is also likely to create an ‘internal market’ for providers of services that address the needs of the new target group, thereby diverting resources from other target groups or creating ‘displacement and substitution effects’ towards those target groups that, although currently addressed, are under recognised and explored: for example, the digitally excluded; Roma; carers; sex workers¹⁶².

- The second approach involves identifying different, but strictly interconnected scenarios of needs, instead of identifying a list of target groups to be considered eligible. As underlined before, social exclusion (but also issues related to welfare answers in terms of social protection and healthcare) is continually evolving and represents different dimensions. ESF interventions create ‘transformed needs’. For example an ESF intervention aimed at promoting the integration of unemployed people through adult learning may give rise to a need to increase the supply of adult trainers. This means, that although ‘target groups’ – i.e. specifying the typical social, economic and cultural characteristics of people who face or are at risk of social exclusion - are a useful construct to help shape intervention strategies, future ESF policy, regulations and procedures should reflect the complex and multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion, focusing more on ‘scenarios of needs’ (for example, in this economic crisis period, one scenario is the increase of new forms of poverty in different target groups and not only in one. This alternative strategy should be, of course, counterbalanced by conditionality or performance targets to be set, but, it could allow the interception of different people suffering from similar problems taking into account, at the same time, changes and evolution of needs. This approach would thus better take into account the complexity, contextuality and evolutionary nature of needs. It would also give an answer to the lack of “granularity” or specifications of conventional targeting strategies - these tend to be too generic and homogenised, putting together under a broad target group heading people and scenarios of social exclusion that are in fact greatly diverse. For example, the needs of asylum seekers are frequently subsumed within the needs of immigrants, although the reality is that they are very different in practice.

7) **Design interventions around the needs of the individuals**

The ESF should continue to support interventions that add value compared to national interventions. This support could encompass, inter alia: reinforcing a commitment to over-arching European policy agendas and instruments (such as the EU 2020 strategy; highlighting and mainstreaming particular target groups and ‘scenarios of need’; and promoting and reinforcing an ‘OMC culture’ - one that supports the case for the three over-arching objectives of the SPSI OMC. Specifically it is suggested that:

- In order to fight social exclusion (1st SPSI OMC Strand), it is important that the interventions should be constructed around the needs of individuals (with reference to ‘target needs’ rather than target groups). For example, in order to support individuals into employment (as a pathway to inclusion) it needs to be recognized that integrated interventions may be necessary that address individual’s actual position on the ‘pathway to employment’ i.e. focus on individual pathways and needs. In the same vein, it is important to recognise that instead of traditional ‘single activity’ interventions, the more costly and time intensive integrated approaches that address complex multiple needs of individuals, even for a relatively small number of beneficiaries, should be encouraged¹⁶³.
- With specific reference to intervention typologies, even though the evaluation study shows that one of the more typical (and traditional) ESF interventions, training, is still considered as adding value, such as the current focus on quality jobs and employment, other types of interventions should be considered as

¹⁶¹ For differences between ESF and NAPs/NSRs target groups, please see Annex 3 of this Report.

¹⁶² For more details, see Annex 6 of this Report.

¹⁶³ For more details see Annex 6 of this Report.

necessary in the future (prevention for people with underpaid jobs at risk of social exclusion, access to social services/housing). This means that interventions should be more multi-faceted as is shown in the case studies regarding access to decent housing in the Czech Republic and on care giving in France¹⁶⁴ and go beyond the current definition of social inclusion. This means that also in relation to the 1st SPSI OMC Strand, ESF scope and interventions should be widened and better explored giving, for example, more attention to interventions aimed at reaching better youth, homeless and tackling child poverty.

- Interventions to address social exclusion should avoid over-emphasising the 'individual' and 'end user' context. Although making a difference to people's lives should remain a key objective of ESF supported interventions, there is room for interventions that aim at the 'bigger picture' – that is addressing structural and systemic weaknesses in the social, economic and cultural spheres of member states which contribute to maintaining inequalities. This means, that together with the action directly addressed to people (assistance to persons intervention typology), also interventions aimed at modifying structures and systems and accompanying measures should be emphasised¹⁶⁵.
- The ESF operational system could benefit from building in more capacity to support collaboration and 'joined up working' between stakeholders working at national and regional levels and within different agencies and units of the overall delivery infrastructure. It is important to recognise that both traditional 'single activity' interventions that reach a large number of beneficiaries, and the much more costly and time intensive integrated approaches that address complex multiple needs of individuals (and which reach only a small number of beneficiaries) continue to be important.
- With specific regard to the 2nd SPSI OMC Strand, there is a need to better reflect and explore what ESF interventions could be useful and for which specific issues within the social protection objectives, whilst with regard to the 3rd SPSI OMC Strand, there is a need to promote full use of possible support in health and care.

III.RESTRUCTURING THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

8) *Identify a common set of indicators between ESF and SPSI OMC*

Europe is facing a major methodological challenge by trying to measure the relationship between ESF and SPSI OMC in the absence of appropriate EU-wide comparative indicators. This evaluation has shown that *ESF indicators require modification both with regard to OMC indicators and in order to better capture the impact of the actions/interventions in the context where they have been implemented*. Output and result indicators are currently too crude to accurately measure the impact of the projects on social inclusion and social protection. There is a need to focus on capturing the positioning of the programme in the local context, the potentiality and effectiveness of the programme, and more generally the effectiveness of ESF in fighting social exclusion. The recommendation therefore is:

- To accurately capture the multi-dimensional and dynamic nature of social inclusion and the differences in social protection systems it is necessary to adopt within ESF a portfolio of regional and local indicators based on the Overarching portfolio of indicators developed in the context of the SPSI OMC including information on the socio-economic context and on regional cohesion, and more specific information according to the nature of the programme as shown in the example below.

An example based on the Overarching portfolio of indicators¹⁶⁶

Context information:

- GDP growth

¹⁶⁴ See Annex 5 of this Report: Summary and analysis of the case studies.

¹⁶⁵ See paragraph 1.2 of this Report and Annex 3 of this Report.

¹⁶⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2006/indicators_en.pdf

• Employment rate, by sex; Unemployment rate, by sex, and key age groups; Long term unemployment rate, by sex and key age groups • Social protection expenditure, current, by function • Jobless households by main household types • Net income of social assistance recipients as a % of the at-risk of poverty threshold for 3 jobless household types. • At-risk of poverty rate before social transfers (other than pensions) <i>Overarching portfolio</i> (to be considered in particular for programs dealing with poverty and social inclusion) • Risk of poverty 1b Intensity of poverty risk • Income inequalities • Health outcome, inequality in health • Educational outcome and human capital formation • Access to labour market • Participation in labour market (only for programs dealing with social protection) • Financial Sustainability of social protection systems • Pensions adequacy • Social benefits adequacy • Employment of older workers • Regional cohesion (only for programs dealing with healthcare and long term care) • Inequalities in access to health care • Healthy Life years • The proportion of the population covered by health insurance • Total health expenditure per capita and as a % of GDP • Regional dispersion of healthcare supply
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Increase the use of supporting figures able to describe the local context and the role the program intends to play in it. While it is important to know what has been achieved in each of the programs, it is equally important, in order to judge the overall effectiveness of Programme implementation within a region or a Country, to know what is being achieved in the context in which the program is set. This allows one to measure, to compare and to contrast results with specific reference to the actual socio-economic situation of the territory. In some of the case studies this emerges as a clear need and a relevant added value. Examples where steps in this direction have already been taken include *Northern Ireland, Greece and Scotland* as seen in the answer to evaluation question number 4. An accurate description of the local context is also important in order to better put into perspective the possible effects of the ESF in a given country.

Hard outcomes may be insufficient indicators of a beneficiary's increased progress towards active inclusion in particular for target groups that are facing multiple barriers. Some *soft outcomes relating to achievements in personal and interpersonal and social skills can represent crucial indicators of success*. The recommendation is to *measure soft outcomes* from training, support or guidance interventions realised: it may allow the measurement of distance travelled by the beneficiary/final user towards social inclusion, as a result of the programme.

To improve the comparability of indicators it is necessary to *increase the co-operation between the Indicators Sub-Group of the Social Protection Committee, ESF desk officers as well as the Evaluation Unit, managing authorities at all levels and the agencies responsible for pan-European data collection*.

9) Reinforce the evaluation capacity at all levels

The introduction of new indicators implies a greater technical capacity at all levels to use them in monitoring and evaluation activities. To this end specific support in the form of training, common guidelines, and learning events is needed in order to:

- Increase impact evaluation, also using “hard” quantitative methodologies including counterfactual analysis¹⁶⁷; as suggested in the recent contributions this could take the form of prospective impact evaluation.
- *Introduce qualitative evaluation methods and indicators* (for example case studies, decisional process analysis, etc.) to support evidence-based learning on what works, for whom and under what circumstances. Here again one of the basic questions should be: “what would have happened without the interventions realised by the programme?”
- *Better use of ex-ante evaluation*: the recommendation here is to focus it more on the learning process, by applying what has been learned from the evaluation of previous programming rounds into designing future programmes.
- *Mainstream participative evaluation* involving a broad range of stakeholders. A key objective of SPSI OMC is to commit the Commission and Member States to ensure “good governance, transparency and the involvement of stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring of policy”. Civil society has been reported as not having been involved in the process of the definition of indicators. Main NGOs umbrella organisations working in the field of social inclusion and social protection will be able to provide added value if involved in the definition of what to observe in the field of social exclusion both at national and local level.

IV. TRANSNATIONALITY AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

10) *Transnational learning and sharing*

ESF has generated significant innovation in policy making and institutional learning, both at the national and regional/local levels, especially in the case of well-focused Community Initiatives (such as Equal). Given the complexity of the issues at stake in the case of social inclusion, but also in the case of social protection and healthcare, it would be particularly relevant to stimulate more pro-active approaches and mobilise partnerships at the regional, cross-border and inter-regional levels. In particular transnational projects are able to contribute to two different dimensions that the evidence collected shows as highly relevant, and sometimes even crucial in tackling the issues of social exclusion. The first is the need for more scientific approaches to the problem; the possibility to compare experiences across national borders offers an invaluable opportunity to strengthen the analytic foundations of interventions in the most difficult cases, answering the question if and why the intervention will work. The second dimension is how to solve difficult governance issues, for instance the involvement of NGOs or the translation of ESF eligibility criteria into national criteria. It is also important to work with EU-funded European networks as potential drivers and facilitators of transnational mutual learning with the aim of building European resource/knowledge centers on specific priority themes and of reaching out to a much wider variety of stakeholders. The evidence suggests that the transnational requirement should not be ‘compulsory’ at the project level. Rather, incentives and ‘value added’ should be highlighted within actions aimed at supporting transnational cooperation and collaborative learning. These could include pilot and innovative actions or the further encouragement of transnational projects explicitly aimed at the exchange of good practices. The social protection and social inclusion website could be used more effectively to publicise SPSI OMC objectives and how the ESF can support them. The Commission could more actively facilitate projects with similar interests to identify each other and learn from each other – for example through concertation events and exchange programmes, including peer-review exercises and “twinning activities”.

¹⁶⁷ The counterfactual is an estimate of the circumstances that would have prevailed had a new policy or policy change not been introduced. By comparing counterfactual outcomes (often referred to as either control or comparison group outcomes) with outcomes measured for those units subject to the new policy or policy change, causality or attribution can be inferred.

Table B: Operationalising the Recommendations

Recommendation	Some examples of possible actions	Lead Actors/Partner(s)	Timeframe
I. IMPROVING THE GOVERNANCE OF THE ESF			
1. Greater political commitment to achieve better coordination between the SPSI OMC and ESF	- A pan European conference exploring the actual and potential impact of ESF on SPSI OMC in relation to the three different Strands. - Common guidelines drafted by Commission Units involved in SPSI OMC and ESF reinforcing the attention of Member States and ESF Managing Authorities to use ESF to support social inclusion, social protection and healthcare, specifying the need to address the multidimensional nature of social exclusion, identifying the specific areas in which ESF can make a difference in improving the sustainability of the pension system and the functioning of healthcare and long term care services, and exploring possibilities of 'ring fencing' ESF financial allocations to the different OMC strands.	European Commission; Member States; ESF Managing Authorities European Commission; Member States; ESF Managing Authorities	During the process for the preparation of the EU 2020 Strategy
2. Better coordination of the SPSI OMC and ESF based on more effective collaboration between the units in charge in the administrations	- Improving co-operation and collaboration (regular meetings, dissemination and knowledge sharing events, etc.) between the agencies responsible for ESF and SPSI OMC in member states especially for those SPSI OMC Objectives (like the 2nd and 3rd) that till now have had less opportunity of joint working with ESF. - Explore the possibilities by the agencies responsible for ESF and SPSI OMC in member states of drafting integrated strategy.	Member States Ministries, agencies responsible for ESF and SPSI OMC Member States Ministries, agencies responsible for ESF and SPSI OMC	Before the drafting of new 2014-2020 Ops On going the implementation of Ops
3. Improve the involvement of civil society/NGOs	- Institutionalize a protracted consultation, when the programming documents are still in a preliminary version, with NGOs representatives in order to use them as sounding boards for grass roots needs and to explore linkages between the ESF and SPSI OMC could be improved - Establish 'User Committees' at ministerial level in Member States to advise in the development of NAPs - Develop specific guidelines and benchmarks on "good governance and participation", drawing on case studies, peer review, best practice and evaluate progress through the National Strategic reporting cycle and Joint Report	Managing Authorities Member States Member States	Before the drafting of new 2014-2020 Ops. On going the implementation of OPs Before the drafting on national policy documents and on going
II. CHANGES TO ESF REGULATORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK AND TO SPSI OMC			
4. Make the links between EFS and OMC more explicit	- Introduce references to the three SPSI OMC over-arching objectives within the communication strategy on the ESF for promoting and reinforcing an 'OMC culture' - one that supports the case for the three over-arching objectives of the SPSI OMC - Incorporate references to the three SPSI OMC over-arching objectives in the instruments used by auditing bodies to monitor and ensure compliance to ESF regulations - Highlighting the contribution of the ESF to promoting the three OMC over-arching	European Commission ESF auditing bodies in member states European Commission	Actual programming period During the process for the preparation

Recommendation	Some examples of possible actions	Lead Actors/Partner(s)	Timeframe
	objectives in national reports. - Drafting working document aimed at identifying the contribution of the ESF to promoting the three OMC over-arching objectives in national reports - improving the operational features of the SPSI OMC Objectives in order to make them more fundable by ESF; - introducing explicit reference to ESF possible contribution as a suitable tool to reinforce SPSI OMC in the context of the EU 2020 Strategy; - introducing explicit reference to ESF contribution to support the social impact of the crisis in the 2011 Joint SPSI Report; - involving ESF units to define new policy development under the SPSI OMC strategy both with respect to social integration and to healthy and dignified ageing in order to identify possible elements of coherence and complementarity with future ESF.	European Commission Social Protection Committee, ESF Units Social Protection Committee, ESF Units Social Protection Committee, ESF Units Social Protection Committee, ESF Units	of the EU 2020 Strategy
5. Support convergence in the way ESF eligible actions are defined by Member States	- Issuing specific guidelines on the use of ESF for meeting SPSI OMC Objectives able to answer the more frequent doubts and questions on the eligibility of specific interventions, target groups etc. - Selecting and disseminating good practices illustrating how rules and procedures can be more creatively applied to broaden the scope of interventions.	European Commission; ESF Managing Authorities European Commission; ESF Managing Authorities	Before the drafting of new 2014-2020 OPs.
6. Enlarge the scope of target groups to be addressed by the ESF	- ESF regulations should consider moving from a 'target group' approach to a 'scenarios of need' approach. Although specific target groups should be referred to as 'indicative examples', the emphasis on setting eligibility criteria should be on addressing multi-dimensional aspects of exclusion - The scope of target groups, as "indicative examples" should be expanded to include a broader range of types and situations	European Commission European Commission; ESF Managing Authorities	During drafting new ESF Regulation for the 2014-2020 period
7. Design interventions around the needs of the individuals	- Support Managing Authorities, through 'steering' the strategic direction of Operational Programmes, in striking a balance between funding 'assistance to persons' initiatives and assistance to structures and accompanying measures that address structural weaknesses in the social and economic infrastructure of member states - Increase the programming of complex projects able to address with different kind of interventions (training, but not only) in order to address complex multiple needs of potential beneficiaries - Increase attention to changing needs for disadvantaged target groups - Explore possibilities to enlarge interventions spectrum for 1st SPSI OMC Strand	European Commission; ESF Managing Authorities ESF Managing Authorities ESF Managing Authorities ESF Managing Authorities	On going during the actual and next programming period

Recommendation	Some examples of possible actions	Lead Actors/Partner(s)	Timeframe
III. RESTRUCTURING THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM			
8. Identify a common set of indicators between ESF and SPSI OMC	- Explore what ESF interventions could be useful and for which specific issues within the social protection objectives - Promote full use of possible support in health and care with regard to the 3rd SPSI OMC Strand - Adopt within ESF a portfolio of regional and local indicators based on <i>the Overarching portfolio of indicators</i> developed in the context of the SPSI OMC that could be used and compared in OPs Annual Report - Facilitate increased co-operation between agencies responsible for pan-European data collection and agencies responsible for supporting ESF and SPSI OMC to support coherence and complementarity of data collection through instruments like the European Household Survey - Increase use of local context indicators in monitoring - Develop a set of indicators able to measure soft outcomes	ESF Managing Authorities, European Commission ESF Managing Authorities, European Commission European Commission; Member States, ESF Managing Authorities European Commission; Member States Agencies responsible for European data collection ESF Managing Authorities, European Commission ESF Managing Authorities, European Commission	2014-2020 ESF programming period
9. Reinforce the evaluation capacity at all levels	Improve training, learning and issue national guidelines in the fields of impact evaluation, participatory evaluation, qualitative evaluation and improve the use of ex-ante evaluation	Member States ESF Managing Authorities	Before drafting 2014-2020 national CSFs and OPs
IV. TRANSNATIONALITY AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING			
10. Transnational learning and sharing	- Increase the use of the social protection and social inclusion website more effectively to publicize SPSI OMC Objectives and how the ESF can support them - Increase the involvement in peer reviews of officials and social partners at local and regional levels - Increase the close joint working with EU-funded European networks as potential drivers and facilitators of transnational mutual learning with the aim of building European resource/knowledge centers on specific priority themes - Increase specify “twinning activities” between networks and regions within ESF regulations to support knowledge exchange on how to use ESF in coherence to SPSI OMC objectives - Promote broader mutual exchange in the SPC and amongst Government and other stakeholders on good practices, new methodologies, indicators and results	European Commission ESF Managing Authorities Social Partners European Commission, Regional Authorities, Managing Authorities Regional Authorities, Managing Authorities European Commission, Social Protection Committee, Member States	On going during the actual and next programming period

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