

ESF TRANSNATIONALITY NEWS

NEWSLETTER
JANUARY 2018 - No. 5



New year, new projects

This fifth edition of our Newsletter brings updates on the 2018 co-ordinated call, the new Long-Term Unemployment project, our new publication on Integrated Services, and developments on migrants and gender.

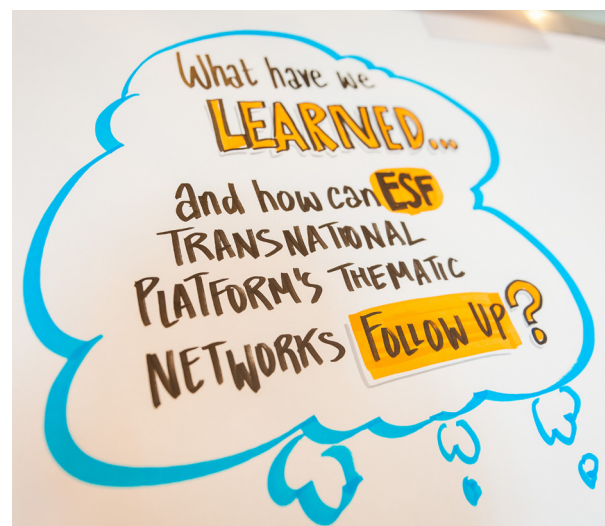
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The nine ESF Thematic Networks have now been working for 2 years, and they are producing an increasing number of outputs. The latest, featured on page 9, is a dossier showing how an integrated approach to service delivery is the best way to tackle intractable social problems.

The Employment network has seen two significant developments. Firstly, it has turned its focus to gender, and its next meeting will be held in Trento (Italy) to coincide with International Women's Day. Our gender expert Nathalie Wuiame explores the issue from an equality standpoint on page 8. Secondly, a new activity has been launched to improve services to Europe's long-term unemployed. Over the next two years, the LTU project, led by Eamonn Davern, will involve three groups of Member States in creating and piloting three packages to help national authorities address three issues: shared case histories, placement sustainability and targeted employability support.

The second round of Co-ordinated Calls for transnational ESF projects is now under way, with six countries taking part, while 14 others are implementing transnationality more flexibly. Meanwhile we give a unique insight into the Polish and Swedish transnational projects that started work a year ago.



All this work requires a stronger team, and we introduce our new personnel – Valentina Caimi, Marianne Geater, Nicolás Oliveri, Sophia Spilian-topoulou and Mihael Topolovec – on page 15.

Further information

Remember, these articles and more can also be read online at <http://www.transnationality.eu>

LEAD

Six countries launch 2018 co-ordinated call

The second round of coordinated transnational calls will be launched at the start of 2018. Six Member States have launched their calls in January and February – Belgium (Flanders), Bulgaria, Finland, Poland, Portugal and Sweden. The calls will cover the broad ESF themes of employment, youth, inclusion, social economy, learning and skills, migrants and governance. The commonly agreed application deadline for project promoters will be 11 May 2018, so we expect the projects to start in October–November 2018.

Preparatory phase in Flanders and Finland

The two Member States decided to use a 2-step procedure for the transnational call, which means that in the second half of 2017 they launched a preparatory phase to give their project promoters the time and funds to work on their project idea and find an appropriate foreign partner.

Flanders received 17 proposals by 31 October 2017. Those that have been approved will have until 11th May 2018 to set up partnerships within Flanders and transnationally, and to refine the project idea in a transnational context. As in 2016, this phase will be financed through a lump-sum payment of €15,000.

In Finland, the preparatory phase is new. We hope soon to update the information on our website regarding the Finnish call.

Flexible transnational calls in the 4th quarter of 2017

Some flexible transnational calls have also been issued, with their scope and timetable decided at national level:

- Sweden: call for transnational projects in migrant integration into the labour market (deadline 15 November 2017)
- Slovenia: call for transnational projects in access to employment through social economy (deadline 30 November 2017)
- Poland: calls for transnational projects in inclusion (deadline 15 November 2017) and for ESF networks in 3 specific themes (deadline 29 November 2017)
- Lithuania: call for transnational projects in inclusion and employment (deadline 30 November 2017)

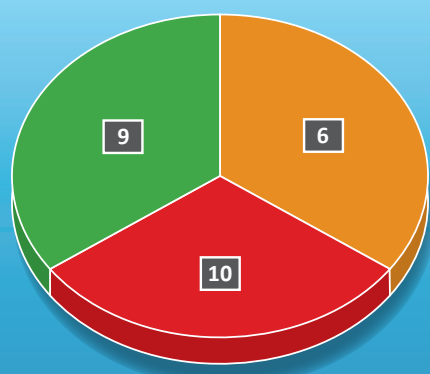
For updates please check on our website:

https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/partners-search/?f%5B0%5D=bundle%3Aesf_tnc_call_for_project

Partner search forum in Warsaw on 22-23 March

To help projects find foreign partners, AEIDL will co-organise with interested Member States a 2-day partner search forum. This will give organisations from around Europe who want to apply for ESF funding in their country the chance to talk with other organisations about potential cooperation on a transnational project. The event will take place on 22-23 March in Warsaw.

19 Member States envisage transnational projects



■ Co-ordinated call 2018
 ■ Flexible call
 ■ TN component

Further information

For more info on transnational calls please visit our online forum: <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/forums/impact-task-force> and/or contact Aleksandra Kowalska, Impact Task Force coordinator: ako@aeidl.eu.

For more information on the different approaches to making transnational calls please see:

https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/filedepot_download/1145/1199

POLICY

Three support packages to **fight long-term unemployment**

To encourage steps forward in addressing long-term unemployment, the European Commission, along with the ESF Transnational Platform and ESF Flanders, is launching a project to help Member States with less developed approaches to addressing the issue of LTU by offering an exchange of knowledge with countries that have developed successful practices.



Signals of economic recovery in the European Union have been recorded, with rising numbers of people regaining paid work. But encouraging statistics on falling unemployment do not count for much with those who find themselves outside the labour market for more than a year. With currently about 10 million – 4% of the active population¹ – being long-term unemployed (LTU), the European Union lacks the necessary measures to reintegrate them into the active workforce and to halt the expansion of poverty and social exclusion among the most vulnerable groups, such as the young, third country nationals and low-skilled workers.

A better activation approach to LTU is needed

Recent analyses² by the European Commission show that support to the long-term unemployed is lacking in the majority of Member States. This is due to financial constraints that only amplify the negative effects of general dysfunctions in the 'post-crisis' labour market. Active labour market policies, such as registration with the public employment services, unemployment benefits and life-long learning, are in general still underfunded and do not target the long-term unemployed closely enough. In particular, they tend to overlook the need for individualised ap-

¹ Eurostat, latest data for 2016. Compared to 2013 and 2014 when LTU rates for the EU were about 5%, there is a slight trend of decrease in numbers of LTU in the last two years. http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=une_ltu_a&lang=en

² Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the document proposal for a Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market, European Commission, 2015, SWD(2015) 176 <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14481&langId=en>



proaches and interinstitutional coordination. In contrast, countries that have invested in activating the unemployed – through individual skills assessments, training, unemployment benefits with strong job search requirements – have not only succeeded in preventing a surge in the numbers of the short-term unemployed, but have also managed to maintain low numbers of LTU. These countries also tend to be experiencing faster economic recovery.

While the need for action has been acknowledged in the EU's policy guidelines for economic development under the European Semester, the Council of the European Union has issued specific recommendations³ on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market. The recommendations encourage employment services and other social authorities in Member States to establish structured support for the LTU through individualised assessments, job integration agreements (between the client and the PES), guidance to encourage registration with the PES, and closer cooperation with employers.

New transnational ESF project on LTU

The European Social Fund plays an important role in developing measures to help the unemployed advance their employability potential. In the current programming period (2014-2020) at least 41% of ESF beneficiaries are unemployed, and a quarter of these are long-term unemployed.⁴ The European Commission has now launched a new two-year project to tackle long-term unemployment through transnational cooperation in the ESF. The project will be implemented in the framework of the ESF Transnational Platform and will develop tools for the better integration of the LTU into the labour market through more exchanges of information and practices.

Support packages on three themes

The project will set up three working groups combining experienced countries ('donors') and less experienced countries ('recipients') to develop support packages that Member State agencies can use in three areas:

1. developing ways to share a client's history among different actors, to enable the single point of contact model to work;
2. counselling and mentoring the LTU, so they make a success of their work placements and do not drop out;

3. providing targeted guidance, work experience and vocational training to the most vulnerable groups among the LTU.

The working groups will collate and synthesise existing good practice to develop modular packages of measures, which will then be tailored to the circumstances of each recipient Member State. The tailoring will be overseen by national advisory bodies bringing together the public employment services, ministries, trade unions, employers and civil society supported by national experts. The measures will then be piloted and feasibility studies prepared.

The project will be supervised by the ESF Thematic Network on Employment in order to ensure the closest link with PES, employment ministries and stakeholders working for the unemployed. The Employment Thematic Network will provide the coordination of three meetings per year under the expert guidance of Eamonn Davern, who previously worked on this topic at the European Commission.

Common characteristics of project candidates

During the project's call for participation, 37 applicants submitted examples of good practices, while 16 applicants expressed interest in implementing new practices in their countries. Under the theme of 'shared case histories' (theme 1) 'donors' (Belgium, Finland, Greece, Poland, Spain, UK and EU stakeholders) mainly proposed projects developing support systems of interlinked services and individualised training. The idea of training and individual coaching is also present in some of the projects proposed in theme 2 (placement sustainability) by Belgium, Finland, Greece, Spain and at EU level. For the third theme: targeted support for vulnerable groups, donors from Belgium, Finland, Greece, Spain and at EU level propose to apply these same methodologies to the needs of people with disabilities, older people, women and Roma. Among the countries that would like to improve their integration mechanisms for the long-term unemployed are Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Poland Spain, Slovenia and Slovakia.

³ Council Recommendation of 15 February 2016 on the integration of the long-term unemployment into the labour market, The Council of the EU, 2016. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32016H0220%2801%29&qid=1456753373365>

⁴ Commission Staff Working Document SWD(2015) 176, European Commission, 2015, p. 25.

Further information

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POLICY

Member State spending on **social inclusion** should go broader than only employment

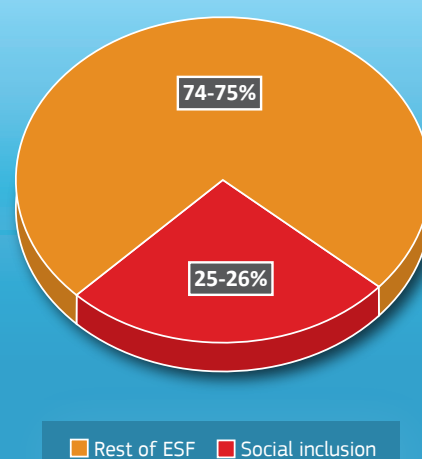
The ESF Regulation Article 4(2) states that “at least 20% of the total ESF resources in each Member States shall be allocated to promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination”. The good news is that data shows that at EU level Member States allocate on average 25.6 % of ESF funding to social inclusion. The bad news is that, according to research carried out by Patrizia Brandellero and Fintan Farrell for their new report on social indicators for ESF investments, “the common indicators are very much employment only focused rather than incorporating a broader inclusion approach”.

Ms Brandellero and Mr Farrell's report looks at how Member States currently account for delivering on this 20% target. As Mr Farrell explained when he presented the report at the November Thematic Experts' seminar, the 20% objective was introduced with the expectation that this would strengthen the use of structural funds to meet the needs of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion. At this stage in the process it is only possible to know that on average Member states have allocated 25.6% of ESF for the investment priorities under Thematic Objective 9 (see box below). The quality of programmes that will emerge from these allocations and the extent to which these programmes will achieve a significant impact on reducing poverty and increasing social inclusion is still to be seen.

“However, the 20% ring fenced for social inclusion is proving useful with, for example, programmes focusing on homeless people and supporting deinstitutionalisation. However initial indications would suggest that, in general, the approach is still overly employment focused without taken account of broader needs such as access to services and income supports as per the Active Inclusion Recommendation. This, despite the fact, that Active Inclusion is the investment priority most chosen under Thematic Objective 9.

It is still early days and there is still a lot to be shared and learned about how Member States are using the money invested under active inclusion, to see to what extent they are reaching out to individuals and communities experiencing high levels of poverty and exclusion and not just those easiest to reach. It is important to know to what extent they start from addressing the needs of the people concerned and not just their labour market skills. This is key work that the Thematic Network on Inclusion can contribute to in the next period. The Network is also working on suggestions to ensure “a more in-depth inclusion proofing of ESF funding” and

The social inclusion share of the ESF



ensuring that “spending included under the earmarked 20% has an effective impact in terms of reducing poverty levels and delivering social inclusion”.

According to Marie-Anne Paraskevas from DG EMPL, one issue that needs to be addressed is the fact that Member States can choose how to identify poverty. “There is no single indicator and there is resistance from some Member States to consider that the ESF can be used for social inclusion beyond a purely labour market focus. Ms Paraskevas welcomed the fact that 18 countries including the Czech Republic, Finland and Italy have chosen to use ESF funding to fight homelessness. She emphasised that this is an opportunity to use structural funds in a holistic way, access to housing is one of the key enabling services identified in the active inclusion approach. She added that the holistic approach also means that in working with homeless people that you must also ensure they can be supported to have access to inclusive labour markets.



A blurred reality on the streets

The move to a holistic and social inclusion approach, according to the experts supporting the thematic Network Inclusion, calls for an approach that starts by identifying who is at risk, what their needs are and how to respond to them, informed by the active inclusion approach (access to income, services and employment) and not only starting from a purely labour market integration approach.

This call for a new approach was backed by Rachel Marangozov, the expert for the Migrant TN who pointed out that in the UK for example more than 50% of the people considered as living in poverty come from working households. “The key factor here is income, not only employment”. Starting from a bottom-up and needs approach is important. Equally important is working on the definition of vulnerability as people increasingly move in and out of vulnerability. Defining mental health should also be a priority. The question is how do indicators capture this?

Outreach policies can no longer rely on the labour market alone. They have to reach wider. An effective policy must, for example, support transitions (from school to work, from a family unit to a lone parent household, from being a convict to being rehabilitated etc.). These types of situations are not permanent but individuals going through those periods often need support.

For Vladimír Kváča, expert for the Governance network, what is needed is more integration of services. “Within a single project it should be possible to deal with people in need from beginning to end”. The idea is that a project should be able to tackle both social integration and employment “and not be split artificially between the two because of the nomenclature of the funds”.

For Marianne Doyen from DG EMPL it would also be interesting to look into “integrated interventions covering soft and hard investments”.

At the end of the day, Mr Kváča added, it is all about the quality of strategy: “We need a good discussion on strategy, and strategy needs to be developed with the help of street-level bureaucrats i.e. those involved in the real work on the ground, those dealing on a daily basis with the clients of the services we are funding”. For others an effective strategy would be to reduce the number of indicators and add some focus. “What we want is a basket of compulsory indicators focusing the direction of what we want to measure,” said Ms Marangozov. Others agreed but pointed out that indicators will always be limiting.

Recommendations to improve impact

Having informed and discussed with other TNs how the ESF 20% target spending for social inclusions is being met and what the issues are surrounding this topic, the Inclusion TN will now seek to formulate recommendations, including on the use of indicators, to the European institutions, to help to ensure that earmarked spending delivers measures with a positive impact for people experiencing poverty and exclusion”.

Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination (Thematic Objective 9)

Investment priorities for T09

- i. Active inclusion;
- ii. Integration of marginalised communities, such as the Roma;
- iii. Combating discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation;
- iv. Enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, including health care and social services of general interest;
- v. Promoting the social economy and social enterprises;
- vi. Community-led local development strategies.

POLICY

AEIDL leads new project helping Migrant Entrepreneurs

The new EMEN project aimed at helping Migrants Entrepreneurs across the EU was launched last month. Led by Toby Johnson, also Team Leader of the ESF Transnational Platform, the European Migrant Entrepreneurship Network is a three-year COSME (Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises) project set up to form three communities of practice (CoPs).

The promotion of migrant entrepreneurship is a challenge across the EU and it is important to share approaches, practices and lessons learnt between public administrations, business development and financial organisations, social enterprises, non-profit organisations and educational institutions supporting migrant entrepreneurship at the local, regional and national levels.

Targeting advisers to migrant entrepreneurs, the project will identify and promote the quick implementation of best practices in supporting migrant entrepreneurs who may not be reached by traditional business start-up support services.

"I'm delighted to launch the EMEN project today. We have enthusiasm, we have an excellent solid set of partners which give us a 360 degree approach to the problem, and we have good support from the European Commission. I'm sure that by the time we meet in 3 years' time to celebrate the completion of the project, we will see many more initiatives under way to help migrants to set up their own businesses," said Toby Johnson at the launch event on 7 December.

The project will develop and promote support schemes not only for individual migrant entrepreneurs but also for social and inclusive enterprises benefitting migrants. EMEN will help service providers improve the quality of their existing services as well as innovating and expanding them. Ultimately, this will lead to a more inclusive society.

The project will build three communities of practice (CoPs) which will be open to all those who support migrant entrepreneurship. Each CoP will address a key component of a comprehensive ecosystem to support migrant entrepreneurship:

- **Coaching & Mentoring** (led by Social Impact gGmbH, a Berlin-based social innovation agency)
- **Access to Finance** (led by THUAS-FINE, the Research Unit for Financial Inclusion and New Entrepreneurship of the Hague Hogeschool)

- **Professionalisation and Diversity Management** (led by UNITEE, the only EU-level organisation representing entrepreneurs and professionals with a migrant background).

These three areas are key to supporting migrant entrepreneurship in the short to medium term. The CoPs will operate via web fora and teleconferences and will also meet physically at annual conferences as well as at workshops 'piggy-backed' onto other events. The project will enable peer learning among practitioners, and the knowledge gathered will be synthesised and disseminated through the project website, publications and presentations at relevant events.

The other partners of the project are DIESIS (the EU network supporting social economy development), confederations like Eurochambres, the ETUC and CECOP as well as REVES (the European Network of Cities & Regions for the Social Economy), ALDA (Association of Local Democracy Agencies), KMOP (a Greek NGO supporting disadvantaged groups) and EURADA (the European Association of Economic Development Agencies).

EMEN website: www.emen-project.eu

Project summary: <http://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/26223>



EMEN
European Migrant Entrepreneurship Network

Further information

For more information on COSME go to <http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme/>

POLICY

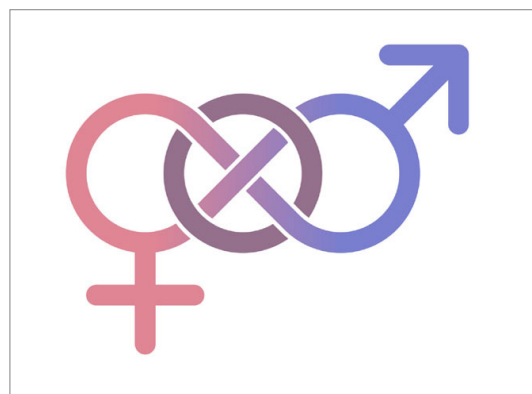
Gender – an issue of equality

The issue of gender has so far failed to be fully integrated in the work of the different ESF Thematic Networks, although there are many reasons why it needs to be addressed – not least because it is an obligation in the ESF. Nathalie Wuiame, the ESF Transnational Platform's recently appointed gender expert, thinks there are ways available to set things right.

Discussing the issue of equality between men and women in the EU at an internal Thematic Expert's seminar in November, the experts for the nine Thematic Networks admitted that attitudes to gender in their TNs vary from apathy and indifference to downright resistance. They felt that gender tends not to be discussed in the networks because of competing or higher priorities, a lack of consensus on its importance, or a lack of expertise or data. Given the number of issues such as ageing or sustainable development that are competing to be mainstreamed into public policy, it may be time to change approach, and talk about gender from an equality or economic perspective.

Either way, argues Ms Wuiame, not only is there a clear policy push to include gender in all network discussions, but it is also a question of efficiency. Taking a gender perspective improves knowledge of the diversity of the target groups and their specific problems, constraints and difficulties. Knowing our target groups allows for more efficient interventions. All it takes is to identify the problems generated by gender-blind policies to see how important gender mainstreaming is. Gender-blind policies, though they may appear to be unbiased, are often, in fact, based on information derived from men's activities and/or the assumption that all persons affected by the policies have the same needs and interests as males.

"Gender is a cross-cutting issue, which intersects with other variables such as age, class and origin, because in all these categories there are women and men. Their situations are different, because their experiences, perceived roles and responsibilities are different," says Ms Wuiame. "This means that Managing Authorities should be shown that gender is not an extra burden but is part of the analysis at every level. As funding authorities, it is part of their mandate to promote gender equality. It does not mean introducing new steps or a new topic but adapting process and procedures" or rethinking interventions. For example MAs can define work programmes with a gender dimension, they can ensure Equality Bodies are involved, and they can offer gender training for project coordinators, applicants and evaluators. Similarly, to ensure the participation of women, a



childcare allowance could be introduced.. MAs should also do more to raise awareness and develop gender policy in the ESF community and ensure there are more exchanges of good practices.

Ms Wuiame therefore calls on the Thematic Networks to ensure that the gender dimension is visible in the themes they discuss. They should include the topic in study visits, compile examples of good practice that take gender into account, and make visible what other networks have achieved. Before the end of the programming period in 2020, the networks should be able to show some concrete results in terms of contributing to gender equality, whether it is through the use of indicators for the desegregation of the labour market or some concrete practice or product.

The ESF needs to be smarter

"In a situation of budgetary tightness, the ESF needs to become smarter and ensure more than ever that it delivers value for money. We need to maximise the impact of our policies and become more relevant to target groups. It is vital for the ESF to ensure that all good practices are mainstreamed for a wider impact."

Ms Wuiame will also look into whether the ESF should target more institutional changes instead of standalone projects. "Perhaps we should think more widely, not just targeting projects but also the whole environment," she concludes.

What is gender mainstreaming?

Gender mainstreaming is not a policy goal in itself, but a means to achieve gender equality. Equality between women and men is recognised by the EU as a fundamental right, a common value of the EU, and a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion.

Gender is not about women only but about men's and women's roles, responsibilities and interactions. It is not only about non-discrimination but also about taking positive steps and

positive actions for women or for men according to their respective positions and vulnerabilities.

Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019:¹

1. Increasing female labour market participation and economic independence
2. Reducing the gender pay, earnings and

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/document/files/strategic_engagement_en.pdf

pension gaps and fighting poverty among women

3. Promoting equality between women and men in decision-making
4. Combatting gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims
5. Promoting gender equality and women's rights across the world

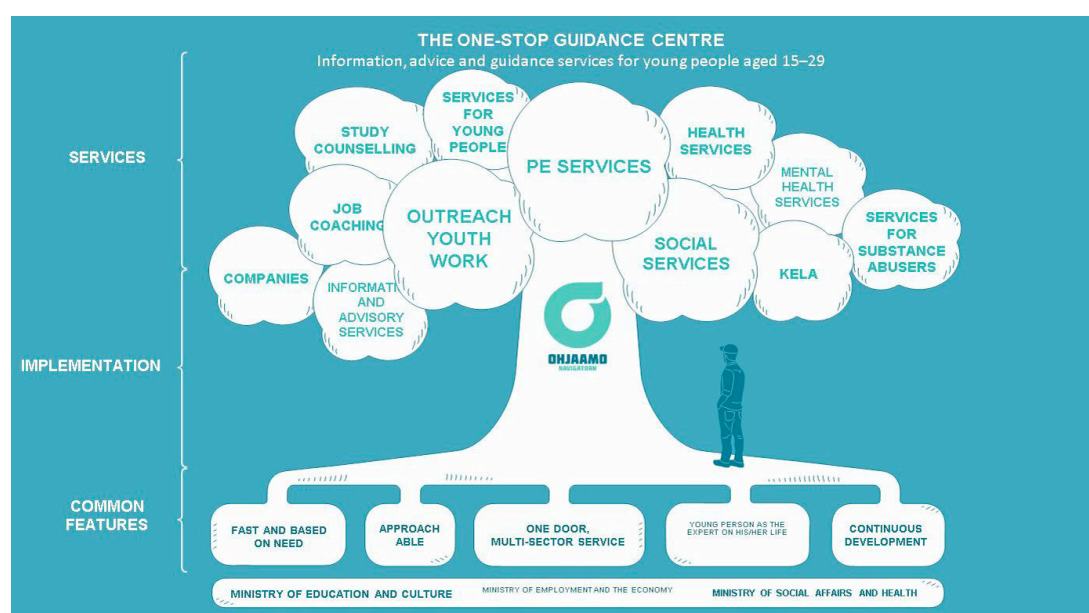
See also: *2017 Report on equality between women and men in the EU*²

² http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/annual_reports/2017_report_annual_gender-equality.pdf

POLICY

New dossier on **service integration**

The ESF Transnational Platform has just published its third Technical Dossier, entitled **Integrated services - early lessons from transnational work in the European Social Fund**.



Source: Kohtaamo-project, Finland

This 38-page booklet examines an issue that is common to many aspects of the ESF's work - how public authorities can deliver better services to citizens. Written by a team of experts under the leadership of Eddy Adams, it draws on evidence from the employment, inclusion, youth employment, governance and partnership thematic networks.

The theoretical and practical arguments for service integration are underpinned by 7 very varied case studies, from Housing First to hospitals to NEET integration.

Some key lessons are:

- multidimensional 'wicked' problems demand collaborative solutions
- integration can bring long-term benefits by reducing service dependency and curing the 'revolving door' syndrome
- a client focus requires delegation of authority to the front line, which in turn demands training and staff development
- services should be co-designed with their users

Service integration dossier:

https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/filedepot_download/1145/1202

GRASSROOTS

Crossing the Rubicon: supporting young offenders into the labour market

As part of its focus on activating NEETs (young people not in employment, education or training), the Youth Unemployment Thematic Network recently visited the Rubikon Centrum in Prague, an NGO working with young offenders to reduce re-offending rates. Eddy Adams, the TN's expert, explains how he found hope in Prague and discusses the lessons learnt from the visit.

It is easy for young people to make mistakes starting out in life. Some get in with the wrong crowd. Others dabble in drugs. A few will be in the wrong place at the wrong time after a few drinks. Most straighten themselves out, and research shows there are two main factors that help. One is being in a relationship. The other is finding work.

But finding work can be difficult for young offenders, particularly in parts of Europe where social attitudes are hard. In the Czech Republic, around 60% of people leaving jail go on to reoffend. Some will be career criminals, but most just want a 'normal life'. Yet shaking off an offending past is not easy. In the country with the EU's lowest youth unemployment rates, there is suspicion about anyone who can't find work. Employers can also be reluctant to give these young people a second chance.

This is the context in which Rubikon Centrum is operating. This Czech NGO provides a range of services to support ex-offenders to turn their lives around. Its 'Punkt Rodina' programme¹ uses a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) groupwork model with young people aged 15-18. Of those who completed the programme, only 16% went on

to reoffend. It also runs a pilot programme which enables offenders to start work in prison and continue that same employment on release.

The ESF has supported aspects of Rubikon's work, for instance in employability, adaptability and service quality², but maintaining funding remains an ongoing struggle. Many NGOs will recognise this situation. For Rubikon this uncertainty makes long-term planning difficult, and can make it hard to recruit staff. The importance of reliable long-term funding streams is a key message from our investigation of their work.

Trust, work and cooperation

The importance of trusted relationships is another important lesson. Young offenders do not trust easily. This is often for good reasons, and they can be particularly suspicious of formal institutions. Small NGOs like Rubikon offer a welcoming, non-judgmental setting, and a safe space where those leaving the justice system can consider their potential future.

Rubikon's staff team are quick to explain that they can't do this alone. The complex and varied support needs of this client group often require specialist input from other agencies. Many of Rubikon's clients have addiction and debt issues. The organisation has a strong working relationship with other specialist service providers who can play a role when required.

This is how it should be. Few organisations can provide the holistic support offer these young people need. But funding models do not always encourage this. In fact, the ESF can operate against this, encouraging competition between providers and a fragmented offer to potential beneficiaries. The need for joined up delivery models is another message from this work.

¹ <http://www.rubikoncentrum.cz/dalsi-projekty/punkt-rodina-prusvi-hy-uz-nedelam-kamo-tecka/>

² https://www.zivefirmly.cz/rubikon-centrum_f1153731



The final Rubikon message is about the importance of employers and the value of real work opportunities. Without work, these young people can't clear their debts. Without work, they have too much time on their hands. Both are likely to incline them back to a life of crime.

Supporting such young people is not easy. They often bring challenging attitudes and complex backgrounds. In the short term, it might look costly to provide the support they need. But in the long term, it's a no-brainer. For society, preventing them from following a life of criminal activity – with all of the social and economic consequences – is a solid investment.

Further information

For more details on Rubikon's work, see the minutes of the Youth Employment Thematic Network study visit in May 2017 – <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/content/minutes-youth-employment-tn-meeting-11-12-may-2017-prague>

See sharing paper 2 of the ESF Youth Employment Thematic Network: How can we promote employability amongst the most marginalised young people? Some ESF lessons – https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/filedepot_download/871/1435

Rubikon Centrum in Praga <http://www.rubikoncentrum.cz/en/>

GRASSROOTS

ESF and AMIF: Working together to transform the lives of migrant women

Recognising and developing 'soft' skills, such as confidence or self-esteem, may not count as 'hard' outcomes on ESF monitoring forms, but they are critical first steps for many migrants, particularly women-says Rachel Marangozov.

The recognition of migrants' skills is essential for their integration but equally important is boosting their confidence and self-esteem to allow them to progress towards their goals. During a recent study visit to Liège, in Wallonia, the Thematic Network on Migrants was impressed by how effective the *Univerbal*¹ project was in achieving this dual objective.

The project, which is hosted by Le Monde des Possibles², a training centre for migrants, and funded by the ESF and AMIF³ (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund), works on developing the language skills of migrants (both in French and in their native language) so they can provide a community interpreting service. The project also helps these women develop "soft skills" and this has a transformative effect on their lives – a process which one woman termed 'the butterfly effect'.⁴

"The *Univerbal* project really drove home how ESF and AMIF can deliver much more than training, language support and education provision for migrants looking to secure work. These funds can also deliver key 'soft' outcomes that enable life-changing results for migrant women. Gaining confidence and self-esteem have enabled many of these women to fully participate in their



The ESF Migrants Thematic Network on tour

local communities and has raised their aspirations for the future. These outcomes cannot often be captured on evaluation forms, and yet this is often the greatest added value of funds like ESF and AMIF – added value which extends beyond the lifespan of a single project," said TN expert Rachel Marangozov after the study visit.

"Finally I'm someone"

The term "soft skills" is often misleading because it implies that these skills are less important, when in fact, they are often the necessary foundations upon which further learning and skills can be acquired. As one woman explained to the network members, representatives of the Public Employment System (PES) and potential employers often asked her how she could take up paid work when she could not even express herself. This led

¹ <https://projetuniverbal.wordpress.com/>

² <http://www.possibles.org/>

³ See *ESF Transnationality News* of May 2016: p 3: Migrants-how can the ESF help?

⁴ In recognition of the good work it has undertaken, *Univerbal* was awarded the Silver Award by the European Network of Cities and the Region of the Social Economy (REVES) at the REVES Excellence Awards 2017.



her to lose her confidence and self-esteem. Thanks to the *Univerbal* project and its intensive and tailored support to improving and recognising her skills, she was empowered to 'finally be someone'. Another woman talked of how hard social relations and communications can be and how helpful *Univerbal* has been, assisting her in becoming an interpreter and helping other migrants deal with the technical language that is often used in settings such as doctors' appointments.

For the majority of women who took part in the *Univerbal* project, developing soft skills has resulted in **life-changing transformations** by boosting their confidence and self-esteem to participate in training, interpretation and social settings. While the value of developing and recognising soft skills cannot easily be captured in standard ESF monitoring forms, tick boxes or project outcome data⁵, what the *Univerbal* project shows is that they are key to transforming lives and enabling migrant women to gain the confidence and ability to progress towards jobs, integration and a better life.

The strengths of the project do not end there. Empowering migrant women with the skills and confidence to help other newcomers – in other words, **having support services delivered by beneficiaries themselves** is an effective tool. There is a level of trust between women in the same cultural and linguistic communities that other (native) support workers could struggle to obtain. There is also the shared experience of having 'walked in their shoes', a powerful factor in enabling these women to

empathise and support women in need of similar help, particularly if they have experienced trauma or abuse.

What is arguably the greatest long-term impact of a project like *Univerbal* – is that it **can reverse cycles of inter-generational disadvantage**. Migrant women are not just migrant women; they are, in many cases, also mothers. So there are often benefits for the next generation – an invaluable outcome that extends well beyond the lifespan of a single project.

Challenges remain

There are, however, challenges in providing such resource-intensive and tailored support. Often, the cost of providing this type of support means that a project cannot align its work with the policy frameworks. For example *Univerbal* had no money to provide the professional interpreting qualification which most employers require. So, while many women on the project had clearly gained important interpreting skills, invaluable soft skills and personal growth, little of this was recognised within the formal qualification frameworks of the region and so did not lead to paid jobs. In order to ensure jobs for beneficiaries similar projects could better align their work to the relevant qualification frameworks.

This is far from being a problem unique to the Walloon region. Across the EU, Member States want to achieve two goals that are not easy to reconcile: maintaining high-quality professional and occupational standards while also integrating migrants into the labour market. The idea of compromising on those standards creates tension.

Further information

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5 Methods to capture 'soft' outcomes within ESF projects include self-assessments, where participants score themselves against a set of indicators; numeric scoring systems of participants' needs, against which to judge distance travelled towards employment; or feedback from participants in the form of focus groups, project surveys or interviews. For more information see: <http://www.networkforeurope.eu/files/File/downloads/A%20Practical%20Guide%20to%20Measuring%20Soft%20Outcomes%20and%20Distance%20Travelled%20-%20Guidance%20Document%202003.pdf>

The three learning points of the TN's study visit

1. **Projects could relate their design and delivery more closely to regional or national recognition systems from the outset** to make recognition procedures less of a barrier to migrants' integration into work, education or training. *Univerbal* recognises this and works with Liège municipality and regional migration services to try and inspire legislative and other changes necessary to improve labour market access for migrant women.
2. Projects which tailor their support to the needs of migrants often do so through resource-intensive, individualised approaches which leave precious little capacity to better align their work with the relevant qualification frameworks. Given this, **Member States could be more proactive in making these linkages to ensure that a project's good work in developing skills carries all the way through to employment, education and training outcomes.**
3. **Regions and Member States could be more instrumental in extracting lessons 'from the ground up' to reshape and redesign recognition systems** to make it easier for migrants to realise their potential in education, training or employment.¹ This could include engaging more with projects to identify key results and develop joint plans to mainstream this learning beyond the formal lifetime of the projects.

¹ Some examples of this are provided in Marangozov R (2017), Background Paper: The Recognition of 'soft' and informal skills. <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/library>

PROCESS

Sweden and Poland focus on youth and lifelong learning in their transnational co-ordinated call for proposals

43 transnational projects have been selected by the four Managing Authorities (Finland, Flanders, Poland and Sweden) that published calls for proposals under the Common Framework in 2016. Here is a summary of the Polish and Swedish projects. We will report on the other projects in due course.

Sweden – focus on youth

Sweden selected six projects focusing primarily on helping young people (whether from a migrant background or not) to either stay in school or find a job.

The **Effective Mentoring (EM)** project is based on a highly successful mentoring system developed by the German city of Hamburg, and targets migrant children age 17-19 at risk of early school-leaving. The idea is to provide those children with a mentor (an older student or external volunteer with the same immigrant background as the youngster) to provide a positive role model and help them integrate into Swedish society. The transnational partners from Poland and Finland will tailor the mentoring model to their own circumstances and targets groups.

The **SeCISO** project focuses on school leavers (age 18 to 30) with psychosocial problems and mental health issues. The project partners, including partners from the Netherlands and Germany, will develop a toolkit focused on preventive measures. They will also help field workers to provide better guidance and counselling to these students/young adults, empower them and prevent drop-outs.

The **Bottom-up Integration** project looks at finding solutions for integrating migrants through mentorship and a bottom-up approach. The basic principle is that a bigger picture is needed about what immigrants themselves are experiencing and what affects their integration. With its Belgian, Finnish and German partners, the project will develop a unified sustainable method for mentorship projects from the migrants' perspective, taking into account current challenges and experiences across the EU.

Public procurement is a powerful tool to create job opportunities and social innovation but it has not been used to its full potential. The **Employment through Procurement** project is looking to develop methods to set employment requirements in public procurement

and ensure that more contracting authorities apply those provisions to provide jobs to newly-arrived migrants.. A Finnish partner is involved in this project.

In 2005, a unique social sciences course was developed by the Lund University School of Social Sciences. The concept was that marginalised and discriminated groups were invited to attend a social science course along with future social workers. These students had a background of abuse, mental illness, homelessness, disability, or a combination of these problems. The **Mending the Gap** project is looking up what happened to the 700 students (450 social workers and 250 "special students") and seeing how it can strengthen the support structure in order to continue with the programme and spread it elsewhere in Europe. Mending the Gap includes partners from Belgium and the Netherlands.

The **S2W INTEGRATE NEETs** project brings together partners from Lithuania, Estonia, Finland and Sweden to look at how best to help NEETs make the transition from school to work and get better integrated into society at large. Priority will be given to encouraging NEETs to take part in mobility programmes to strengthen their self-confidence.

For more information about Sweden's six projects: <https://www.esf.se/sv/Vara-fonder/Socialfonden1/Utllysningar/Samtliga-utlysningar-per-region/A-coordinated-transnational-call-for-proposals/>

Poland – from burnout to respite care

The 11 projects selected for this call focus on two main issues: the need for more lifelong learning activities for adults and better care facilities and options available for Poland's ageing population.

The **LIFT project**¹ addresses the issue of adult learning and active ageing by testing and implementing new

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/TPI-378>





solutions for collaborative learning in the workplace. Working with a Belgian partner, LIFT targets employees of all ages with special attention given to employees over 50 and newly arrived migrants. It will make them work in teams to build and share new knowledge and skills.

In Poland, 45.6% of employers say their employees need additional training – yet only 37% of the Polish adult population plans to take up some kind of additional training or education. This often leads companies to hire people who do not have all the competences required. This in turn generates additional costs for SMEs. The **Learning Network – New Perspective in Business**² project aims to increase the competitiveness of SMEs by building a network of businesses and enabling them to co-create and co-source employees. The project's transnational partner is from Belgium. Both countries are looking at solutions preserve the welfare state while promoting digital skills and the knowledge economy.

The **Edu Mobile**³ project, with the help of a German partner, aims to boost the offer of lifelong learning activities for adults by developing and implementing a mobile support system for learning. The new solution will respond to the needs of training institutions, increase the number of educational and training courses, publicise them better and promote the idea of lifelong learning. It also aims to facilitate communication between training institutions and potential trainees.

The **Development of a new counselling approach to enhance the effectiveness of labour market services**⁴ project will, with the help of a Finnish partner, increase the quality and effectiveness of employment services provided by public and non-public institutions, with a special focus on career counselling. The Finnish partner will elaborate solutions to improve the service provided by the Polish employment services. The main problems addressed are the fact that the education and skills of clients do not match employers' needs.

Time2grow⁵ works with Belgian and Finnish partners to address the problem of work-related burnout through better access to lifelong learning for all and the development of soft skills. It will also raise awareness of the issue and the need to improve the skills and competencies of the workforce. Burnout is still a little-known problem but is becoming increasingly important and has some serious social and economic consequences.

As people live longer, there is a growing demand for a care system that supports the elderly while allowing them to keep living at home. The **Home Harbour**⁶ project, helped by an Italian partner, looks at expanding and improving the available offer of day social welfare centres and providing a better and broader support system for the clients of the welfare centres and their families.

The aim idea of the **DUAL**⁷ project is to improve the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitate the transition from education to work, and strengthen the vocational education and training systems and their quality. The partner on this project is the Flemish organisation SYNTRA Vlaanderen.

The needs of families providing care for disabled relatives are not addressed sufficiently by the Polish support system. Recognising that these families should be afforded the opportunity to take short breaks, the **Family Relief**⁸ project, will, with the help of British and German partners, develop community-based short break programmes for carers of persons with disabilities.

In the **Parents you are not Alone**⁹ project, the Polish and German partners will import the German model of support for families with young children. Poland currently provides little support for families with newborns. The project will target hospitals in Warsaw and provide an early, comprehensive and interdisciplinary model of care for new parents and their children, including a website and a hotline offering advice on healthcare, issues relating to disabilities, vaccination, education and so on.

The objective of the **Development Zone**¹⁰ project is to develop and implement innovative solutions to improve the knowledge and skills of Polish middle and high school teachers to support their students to face the changing labour market. Thanks to its British partner, the project will use solutions that are proven to be effective in the British educational system and adapt those solutions to the Polish situation.

The **Dos**¹¹ project addresses the lack of quality management tools for care facilities for the elderly in Poland. With its British partners the project will develop a special standard "for the elderly" in nursing homes. Based on the existing Cared4 system, the standard will focus on the practical delivery of care tasks and will be clear and understandable to all staff working in nursing homes. Staff training will also be provided.

2 <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/TPI-385>

3 <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/TPI-363>

4 <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/TCA-420>

5 <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/TPI-372>

6 <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/TPI-397>

7 <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/TPI-243>

8 <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/TPI-423>

9 <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/TPI-384>

10 <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/TPI-410>

11 <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/TPI-406>

TOOLS

Staff changes at the ESF Transnational Platform

The ESF Transnational Platform has gone through a number of staff changes in recent months. Two people have left the team: Antoine Saint-Denis, who was in charge of policy and social innovation, and Jyostna Patel who was in charge of the migrants network and gender. Meanwhile, five new members of staff have joined the team.

Valentina Caimi joined AEIDL in January 2018 as Policy Adviser for the ESF Transnational Platform. She has 20 years of experience in EU policy advice and advocacy, project management and team leadership, in EU institutions, NGOs, social economy organisations, local authorities and vocational training institutions, in Brussels and in Italy. In particular, she worked at the European Parliament as Political Adviser on employment and social affairs for the Greens/EFA political group and for seven years as Policy and Advocacy Adviser at the Social Platform. She was one of the experts for the European Economic and Social Committee's opinion on the European Pillar of Social Rights and a member of the European Commission's Expert Group on Social Entrepreneurship (GECES). She graduated in Political Science and has Masters in EU Law and in EU Project Planning and Management. Valentina's mother tongue is Italian, she is fluent in English and French, and operational in Spanish.

Marianne Geater joined the team as Journalist in September 2017. She read Politics and History at the University of Edinburgh and holds a Master in Contemporary European Studies from the University of Sussex. She has been working as a journalist since 2004 covering R&D and environmental issues at EU level. Before moving to Brussels Marianne lived and worked in Australia, France, Spain, the Democratic Republic of Congo (RDC) and Indonesia. She is bilingual in English and French with a good grasp of Italian and is currently learning Dutch. A fan of insects and funny looking animals, Marianne also loves ballet, travelling to faraway places and crime novels.

Nicolás Oliveri Ibaldi joined AEIDL as Database and Events Officer in March 2017. He has a broad international experience both in Brussels and abroad. In particular, he worked at the European Network of Equality Bodies, European Commission (DG NEAR) and the Spanish Embassy in Bulgaria where he developed his interest in social issues and migration. He graduated in Economics and has a Masters in Applied Economics. Nicolas' mother tongue is Spanish. He is fluent in English and has a good grasp of Italian and French. Nicolas loves analogue photography and considers himself a genuine urban explorer.



ESF Transnational Platform Team

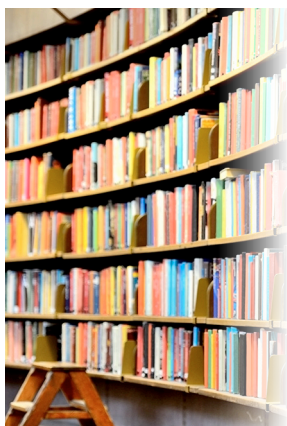
Sophia Spiliotopoulou joined AEIDL in October 2017 as the contract manager of the ESF Transnational Platform project and is also engaged in the AEIDL Business Development Unit. She has over 15 years of experience in the management of large EU-funded projects as well as experience in monitoring and evaluating projects and programmes. She has excellent knowledge of Greek and English and good understanding of French and Arabic. Sophia has a BSc in Politics from the University of Plymouth and an MSc in Industrial Relations and Personnel Management from the London School of Economics and Political Science. She is an amateur artist painting sea stones and has been a volunteer at the Petit Château in Brussels engaging in activities with migrant children.

Mihael Topolovec joined AEIDL as Network Manager in March 2017. He holds a Bachelor degree in Cultural Studies and a Master in Political Sciences from the University of Ljubljana. Mihael's strong belief in social justice and fundamental rights has led him to work for organisations such as ILGA-Europe, a Brussels-based NGO against discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation at European level, Equinet, the European Network of Equality Bodies, the European Anti-Poverty Network and the European Commission. Mihael is a Slovene native speaker with full English proficiency. He loves discussing society and politics and is also deeply interested in everything pertaining to art and culture particularly theatre, dance and literature.

TOOLS

Bye bye dropbox, hello library

Better than a dropbox, free and easy to use, the ESF Transnational Platform's online library and its new functionalities is set to make everyone's life easier.



The online library of the ESF Transnational Platform's website was launched a year ago but only recently has it been linked to the thematic fora, making it possible for the thematic networks to centralise all their documents in a single place.

As Yves Boisselier, the ESF Transnational Platform's web and database co-ordinator explained, this new functionality "offers better visibility and direct access to key documents that can now be found in one central place that is free and connected directly to the forum."

Previously contributions and documents were scattered in different parts of the forum. Anyone looking for a particular document had to remember where exactly it had been posted. Now, each TN expert can directly store key documents in a dedicated folder in the library. It is then simply

a matter of creating a link to the document and sharing it via e-mail or in a message in the forum. This will certainly be considered a blessing to those with slow internet connections and will avoid burdensome and heavy e-mails blocking one's inbox. The cherry on the cake is that the link remains valid even when the document is updated.

The Thematic Experts will be the ones managing their root folders in the library. Several options are open to them: they can create sub-folders that are either public (accessible anonymously to absolutely everyone), private (only accessible to registered network members) or even "extra private" (accessible only to core members, for example those working at EU level on topics and documents they do not want to be made public (even to members of their own TN) until they are finalised).

To access private folders users will need to ask the TN's permission to join the forum's community. It will be up to the expert to decide whether or not to accept new users. These folders are interesting to store draft documents of work in progress. They can be supported by discussions posted in private mode in the forum. To create a sub-folder of core members, the TN expert will need to get in contact with Yves Boisselier.

It is up to the experts to decide whether or not to open the folders in the library to subscribers of other TNs and whether to allow them to upload documents.

Finally it is now also possible to set up a notification system to receive alerts when a document is posted or modified and to flag specific documents. To access the library, go to: <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/library>

Events diary

30 Jan-1 Feb 2018	Governance TN, Study Visit, Helsinki, Finland
1-2 February 2018	Partnership TN, Brussels, Belgium
21-22 February 2018	Youth employment TN, Gdańsk, Poland
7-9 March 2018	Employment TN, Trento, Italy
13-14 March 2018	Learning and Skills TN, Zagreb, Croatia
15-16 March 2018	Simplification TN, Athens, Greece
20-21 March 2018 (tbc)	Social Economy TN, Brussels, Belgium
22-23 March 2018	Partner Search Forum, Warsaw, Poland
March 2018 (exact date tbc)	Inclusion TN, Spain (exact location tbc)
17-18 May 2018	Governance TN, Heraklion, Crete, Greece

ESF TRANSNATIONALITY NEWS

Your feedback is welcome

We welcome your feedback on the content of this newsletter and would encourage you to contribute and suggest content. Please contact us at: esf@aeidl.eu



Website:

<http://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality>

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