



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG

SPEAKING POINTS

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"Perspektiven in Bayern – Perspektiven in Europa,
Europäischer Sozialfonds Bayern 2014-2020"

5 December 2014 | Munich, Germany

Check against delivery

Sehr geehrter Herr Ministerialdirektor Höhenberger,

meine sehr geehrten Damen und Herren,

vielen Dank für die Einladung zur Auftaktveranstaltung für das Operationelle Programm des Europäischen Sozialfonds in Bayern.

Bitte erlauben Sie mir, dass ich meine kurze Ansprache auf Englisch fortsetze.

Introduction

- Thank you for your presence and interest. We're all here today to welcome **seven new years of support by the European Social Fund** and to discuss how to make the **most effective and efficient** use of the opportunities it offers.
- It is indeed very good news that the **Bavarian ESF Operational Programme** for the new period 2014-2020 has been already **adopted!** With this, you are one of the front runners not only in Germany – the 7th programme adopted – but also in the entire EU. To recall that that there will be as many as 187 ESF-OPs Europe-wide when this process is finished.
- So, in this context I would like to especially express my **appreciations to Mr Georg Moser (Head of Unit, Head of the Managing Authority)¹ and his colleagues.** The Commission and the Managing Authority have worked very closely over the last two years to finalise indeed an excellent programme.

¹ Georg Moser, Fondsverwalter, Verwaltungsbehörde ESF im Bayerischen Staatsministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, Familie und Integration (StMAs)

Relevance of the ESF

- As you have no doubt heard many times already, the European Structural and Investment Funds, including the ESF, will be even more than in the past helping Member States to achieve the **strategic goals for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth** that the Union has set itself in the EU2020 strategy.
- This is very important for our citizens and our economies. **The strategy is our route out of the financial and economic crisis.** It is way to ensure that Member States meet their **fiscal, economic, environmental and social commitments.**
- The intensity of the financial and economic crisis has diminished, but it is far from being over. Germany and many of its neighbouring countries are doing extremely well. So well that the key challenge for most German Länder is to find enough qualified workers for vacant jobs. But it is clear that for the EU as a whole the **economic challenges remain acute, and the crisis is mutating into a political and social one**, that will increasingly affect us all. We can see this in the **increase in joblessness**, in whole families slipping into **poverty, into disillusionment with the entire political process** and the rise of **protest parties and nationalism** in many Member States.
- **Unemployment** has been the most obvious, the most quantifiable but, sadly, also the most devastating effect of the crisis. It affects Europe's most valuable asset — its people, and especially its **youth**, together with their enthusiasm, passion and imagination, their desire to make personal progress, their skills and experience — **the driving force for our collective future prosperity.**
- With the **ESF being the EU's main instrument for improving access to employment, developing and upgrading skills and combating poverty and social exclusion, we can make a difference.**

For some Member States the **ESF is the main source of public investment** in these fields. For others, like Germany the **ESF**

complements your existing systems and accelerates and tests out adaptation and innovations to help meet future challenges such as demography and social inclusion. That's why I believe that the ESF is more important than ever.

- **Germany is allocating a bigger proportion of EU Structural and Investment Funds to the ESF for 2014-2020 (41%) than it did in the previous period.** We welcome this warmly. It is a clear signal that employment and social issues are high on the agenda – in economically high-performing Member States like Germany.
- It is true that also in Germany and of course in **Bavaria**, there are **social questions** and people that need our attention. With the help of the ESF they might find a job or training, or they manage to escape from the **risk of poverty**.

What are the achievements of the ESF?

- I wish to recall that in the **2007-2013** period, the **ESF** has invested approximately **75 billion Euro across the European Union**.
- Last year, more than 58,000 people took part in all ESF-measures in Bavaria². Almost 10,000 apprenticeship training positions have been created during the previous period³. More than 220,000 young people took part in training in the industry⁴. In Germany, in total, more than 4.3 million people have taken part in ESF measures.
- Those are all impressive results and I would like to congratulate the Bavarian ESF Authorities and all the different stakeholders involved, for their efforts to make the ESF a success story in Germany.

² Page 43, Table 2.3 , Annual Implementation Report 2013.

³ Page 71, Annual Implementation Report 2013.

⁴ Page 71, Annual Implementation Report 2013.

And what is the role of the ESF in the next programming period?

- For the **new programming period 2014-2020**, the objective of the ESF continues to be: **increasing the employment opportunities and the mobility of European citizens, promoting better education, and improving the situation of the most vulnerable people at risk of poverty.**
- The ESF is **flexible** enough to be implemented in a way that it addresses country or region specific needs.
- On the other hand, the new programming period is clearly **more results-oriented** than in the past. We have to be able to demonstrate that investing in European citizens through the ESF is worth it AND IT IS. So I do not want to see the budget cut another time, when the negotiations for the financing period from 2021 take place.

It sounds a long way off, but they will start in 2-3 years' time, and we need evidence of the impact of the investments we are launching today. Therefore we have put in place a reliable indicator system and a performance framework for each OP. The system is based on the principles of choosing and concentrating resources where they have the biggest impact.

- With the support of the ESF, individuals get the chance to gain new skills for the labour market, to manage the transition from school to work or to improve job prospects and social inclusion. Indeed, vocational training and lifelong learning opportunities form a large part of many ESF projects.
- In **Bavaria**, through the new OP, the ESF will address in particular the **demographic problems** of maintaining a skilled labour force, by tapping into underused skills potential among women, older workers and disadvantaged people but also by implementing actions for new entrepreneurs.

It will continue the good work done for **activating the long-term unemployed**, and will significantly support **social inclusion measures** and reduce poverty among vulnerable groups, including people coming from other countries. Focus is also given to equipping

young people with competences to move up the educational ladder and preventing early school leaving.

- The **ESF has a visible impact in Bavaria** and bears fruit in the long run. Mr Höhenberger already presented his priorities and has made clear the importance of the ESF for Bavaria. Here in Bavaria, thanks to European support, the state's activities in the labour market, its measures to promote vocational training, life-long learning, social inclusion and poverty fighting have been well supported.

Administrative complexity and simplification

- We are aware of the **high level of administrative complexity** related to the use of the European funding. But the complex procedures have been implemented to guard against fraud and to guarantee that European taxpayer money is spent properly.
- I would like to underline in this context the **important improvement introduced through the use of simplified cost options**. Bavaria has already used some flat rates in the previous period and will take advantage of more simplified cost options during 2014 and 2020. The COM highly welcomes this approach.

Conclusion

- To conclude: **the successful implementation of the new ESF depends on how we manage to give life to its priorities and planned measures**. The **ESF needs active stakeholders and informed participants** in order to achieve these goals:

That's why your work, your commitment and your creativity, Ladies and Gentlemen, are so important. With the ESF at your side, you are the ambassadors of a social Europe.

- Thank you very much for your attention!