



# EUROCITIES STATEMENT ON THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

## INTRODUCTION

The EU has set itself a number of ambitious targets for 2020. Achieving those targets should improve the quality of life of those living in Europe and boost Europe's competitiveness globally, by focusing on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. EURO CITIES believes that Europe 2020 will not be successful without the full support and involvement of cities.

The lack of local level involvement in the Lisbon process has been widely recognised as one of the main reasons of the failure of the Lisbon Agenda to fully achieve its objectives.

We believe that ESF should remain part of the structural funds. Furthermore, better integration between ESF and ERDF is necessary to help us deal with complex issues and to combine physical renewal and economic development with support to people.

Europe has now a unique opportunity to learn from past mistakes and address shortcomings. This can be done by strengthening the role of cities in the post-2013 ESF.

**EUROCITIES calls for:**

1. The important role of cities in delivering ESF objectives to be recognised by:
  - a) explicitly mentioning cities in the regulations governing the future ESF
  - b) introducing an obligation for Member States to be able to demonstrate that cities were involved in defining priorities and operational programmes.
2. The creation of a dedicated financial instrument or mechanism to enable cities to foster social innovation, territorial cohesion and integrated local development.
3. A stronger dialogue between cities and the European Commission on the monitoring and implementation of ESF post 2013.

## WHY CITIES MATTER - KEY MESSAGES ON THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

1. Cities make a positive contribution to delivering the ESF objectives of fighting unemployment and social exclusion.

The legislative framework for employment policy and welfare state arrangements is typically established at national level. However, it is at the local level that social problems and their inter-linkages, connections and reciprocal influence become evident. As a result, cities have a

better understanding of the complex and integrated nature of social problems as well as a better knowledge of local needs and emerging issues.

Cities have in-depth expertise on policies and practices that work and that do not work. We also have better insight into the results (both hard and soft outcomes) of programmes aimed at empowering people to break the cycle of social exclusion, worklessness and improve their inclusivity and employability.

Cities can make a decisive contribution to fighting unemployment and social exclusion. However, to ensure we can play our part fully, our role should be clearly acknowledged and we should be actively involved in defining priorities and operational programmes.

**The important role of cities in delivering ESF objectives should be recognised by:**

- a) explicitly mentioning cities in the regulations governing the future ESF;
- b) introducing an obligation for Member States to be able to demonstrate that cities were involved in defining priorities and operational programmes.

## **2. Cities need better access to ESF to successfully deliver Europe 2020**

We believe we are in a unique position to deliver Europe 2020, including the aim of ensuring territorial cohesion as required by the Platform against Poverty and the Lisbon Treaty.

As city governments, we are the closest level of government to people and communities. We can offer leadership, ownership, accountability and visibility, as well as political support for delivering Europe 2020 at the local level.

We are also the best level of government to work in partnership with local stakeholders and implement integrated solutions to complex and interlinked problems. At the same time we are ideally placed to test locally-based innovative approaches to social issues faced by excluded and deprived communities.

However, cities need adequate funding to implement social innovation, territorial cohesion and integrated approaches. In a time of financial constraints and severe cuts to public budgets, the European Social Fund is even more necessary than in the past to support cities.

**A dedicated financial instrument or mechanism should be created to enable cities to foster social innovation, territorial cohesion and integrated local development.**

## **3. Cities need a stronger and regular dialogue with the European Commission on ESF**

We believe a stronger dialogue between cities and the European Commission, through our European network EUROCITIES, can enhance policy development and delivery for citizens.

By providing a channel to cities and detailed information of what is happening at the local level, a stronger partnership and exchange at EU level can add value. It can identify bottlenecks in delivering ESF objectives and solutions to deal with these challenges, including methods for simplifying administrative requirements. A better informed programme will improve cities' access to ESF and their ability to deliver integrated and customised solutions. This will ensure better implementation of ESF on the ground.

**A stronger dialogue is needed between cities and the European Commission on the monitoring and implementation of the post-2013 ESF.**