



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Summary of the Partnership Agreement for Ireland, 2014-2020

Overall information

The PA covers four funds: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

The PA focusses on the following priorities:

- Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection, to enhance resource efficiency in the waste sector, the water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution;
- Enhancing research and innovation (R&I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest;
- Promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies;
- Extending broadband deployment and the roll-out of high-speed networks and supporting the adoption of emerging technologies and networks for the digital economy;
- Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators;
- Supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes;
- Supporting energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructures, including in public buildings and in the housing sector;
- Taking action to improve the urban environment, to revitalise cities, regenerate and decontaminate brownfield sites (including conversion areas), reduce air pollution and promote noise-reduction measures;
- Access to employment for job-seekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility;

- Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee;
- Active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability;
- Combating all forms of discrimination and promoting equal opportunities;
- Improving the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged;
- Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences.

Actions aimed at preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency, in line with Europe 2020 – Climate Change/Energy targets and also aligned with the objectives of the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020, will be a cornerstone in the ESI funded programmes for Ireland. Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation in line with Ireland's commitments on Europe 2020 R&D and innovation targets are central to Ireland's medium and long-term development strategy. Support will also be provided to extending broadband deployment and the roll-out of high-speed networks based on Ireland's Europe 2020 commitments in terms of employment, R&D and innovation. This will also contribute to the EU Digital Agenda objectives and contribute to national targets in respect of high-speed broadband availability. Next Generation Broadband is identified as a key infrastructure priority in the national capital investment programme and serves as a stimulus to innovation and job creation in SMEs in the regions. Support will also be provided to enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs in the agriculture fisheries and aquaculture sectors, again in line with Ireland's Europe 2020 commitments on employment, R&D and innovation. Interventions will also be undertaken in order to support the shift towards a low carbon economy with a view to enabling Ireland to respect its Europe 2020 climate change/energy targets and support the attainment of Ireland's target for renewable sourced energy and the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan.

Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility in line with the Country Specific Recommendation n° 3 will be a top priority in Ireland with a focus on issues highlighted in the country specific recommendations.

There is a strong imperative to tackle and reduce long-term unemployment levels and a need to increase the employment rate for women in the context of the NRP targets. ESF support will focus on improving the skills base of the unemployed, long-term unemployed and economically inactive. A strong emphasis is also placed on combating youth unemployment by ensuring that young people get the right skills that make them more competitive. Investments in these areas will be instrumental in helping Ireland to respond to the Europe 2020 priorities and country specific recommendations.

Actions aimed towards promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and all kinds of discrimination will be supported in line with Europe 2020 targets on poverty/social exclusion and employment. These will complement national policies, including the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, the Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work.

Chosen expected results

Investments are aimed at addressing main development gaps and thus strengthening social, economic and territorial cohesion, and at preserving and enhancing the environment. ESI funds will assist Ireland in achieving national targets of EU2020 and its flagship initiatives:

- Implementation of more carbon efficient farming practices, reduced soil erosion, improved water quality, increased use and production of renewable energies in agriculture, better nutrient management, enhanced biodiversity preservation and increased protection of sensitive landscapes;
- Increased number of industry partners engaged with funded strategic research centres in the regions;
- Increase the number of Licences as a result of research in the S&E Region;
- The number of SME clients of Enterprise Ireland in the BMW region spending more than €100,000 per annum on R&D;
- Increased levels of innovative practice throughout the agricultural sector and strengthened links between research, technological development and best practice on the ground;
- Extension of next generation broadband to unserved towns and villages;
- Increase in employment in micro-enterprises, especially in rural areas;
- To increase the average energy performance of Irish households;
- Improvement in the social, economic and physical conditions in selected urban centres, based on an urban development index.
- Unemployed persons or other job-seekers, including long-term and young unemployed persons, obtain employment or progress to education or training.
- More young people, in particular those who are not in employment, education or training, aged under 25 progress to education, training or employment.
- Persons from marginalised groups, including young people at risk, migrants and women, and offenders participate in social inclusion, re-integration or employability programmes.
- Disadvantaged and disabled students remain in tertiary education.
- Persons outside the labour force undertake second-chance education and training opportunities as well as more adults access literacy, numeracy and language tuition programmes
- Enhanced basic services for rural communities

Budget

In 2014-2020 Ireland is allocated around €2.19 billion for the development of the agricultural sector and rural areas from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). An additional €1.143 billion will be devoted to Cohesion Policy (ERDF and ESF (including YEI)) including €68.1 million for the Youth Employment Initiative and €68.9 million for European territorial cooperation. The allocation for European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) amounts to some €147.6 million. Details on the allocation are given in a table below.

Concentration of funds on limited number of priorities is one of the main principles of the reformed cohesion policy. For Ireland, thematic concentration, meaning the level of ERDF expenditure aimed at research and innovation (TO1), ICT (TO2), competitiveness of enterprises (TO3) and low carbon economy (TO4) in relation to allocation account for 89.2%. Thematic concentration is kept above the minimum requirements.

The share of ESF in the allocation of Structural Funds amounts to 57% or €542.4 million and is above the required minimum share of 51.7%. The specific allocation for young people (YEI) corresponds to €68 million, the total allocation to the OP (ESF+YEI OP) is therefore €610 581 980.

The whole territory of Ireland is classified in the 'more developed region' category.

At least 20 % of ESF need to be invested in social inclusion activities. Ireland has set an even more ambitious target as nearly 32 % or €194 million of the ESF allocation will be available for reducing poverty and social exclusion.

At least 5% of the ERDF allocation will be invested in sustainable urban development actions implemented in Ireland.

More than 20% of the ERDF allocation will make a contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. More than 80% of the EAFRD allocation is dedicated to environment and climate related actions.

7% of the EAFRD allocation will support the LEADER bottom-up approach for local development in rural areas.

Programmes architecture

Cohesion policy will be delivered by 3 operational programmes (OPs), as was the case during the 2007-13 period:

- 1 national OP co-financed by ESF, including the specific allocation of the Youth Employment Initiative (Employability, Inclusion and Learning OP)
- 2 regional OPs co-financed by ERDF (Border, Midland and Western Regional OP and the Southern and Eastern Regional OP);

Moreover there is 1 Rural Development Programme (financed by EAFRD) and 1 Fisheries programme (financed by EMFF).

Details on allocations to operational programmes are presented in table 2.

Table 1: Allocation: breakdown by thematic objective and by fund (except territorial cooperation).

Thematic objective	ERDF	ESF	YEI	EAFRD	EMFF	Total
	Euro					
1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	142 000 000	0	0	44 992 153	0	186 992 153
2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, ICT	75 000 000	0	0	0	0	75 000 000
3. Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, of the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and of the fishery and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF)	63 600 000	0	0	175 000 000	45 281 587	283 881 587
4. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors	84 500 000	0	0	348 000 000	0	433 500 000
5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management	0	0	0	704 800 000	0	704 800 000
6. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	40 000 000	0	0	704 800 000	93 570 392	838 370 392
7. Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures	0	0	0	0	0	0
8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	0	230 930 203	68 145 419	0	8 250 000	307 325 622
9. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	0	193 807 784	0	157 000 000	0	350 807 784
10. Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning	0	107 698 574	0	53 000 000	0	160 698 574
11. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	0	0	0	0	0	0
Technical assistance	4 106 528.70	10 000 000		3 000 000	500 000	17 606 529
Total	409 206 528.70	542 436 561.30	68 145 4190	2 190 592 153	147 601 979	3357982641

Table 2: Allocation to programmes

Operational programme	Thematic objectives covered	ESI Fund	Allocation (EUR)
OP Southern and Eastern	TO 1, 2, 3, 4, 6	ERDF	249 109 349.70
OP Border, Midland and West	TO 1, 2, 3, 4, 6	ERDF	160 097 179
OP Employability, Inclusion and Learning	TO 8,9,10	ESF + YEI	610 581 980 (ESF: 542 436 561.30 + YEI: 68 145 419)
Rural Development Programme	TO 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10	EAFRD	2 190 592 153
Seafood Development Programme	TO 3, 6, 8	EMFF	147 601 979