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The Future of Work

Also: Relocation Grants, Horizon Europe, Startup Europe,
Funding for Upskilling and Reskilling, and more...



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Letter From the Editors

The definition of “work-life balance” has changed significantly throughout the years. Several factors, including advancements in technology and uncontrolled factors (like COVID-19), have all played a part in our overall examination of what constitutes a good work-life balance.

Whilst the future of work is unknown, it will undoubtedly be shaped by the rise of digital innovation. In this issue of Funded Europe, we explore the influence this has and will continue to have on the future of work – what our working life and culture look like, and further, the consequences of a changing working landscape on offices, homes, and cities.

Read on for a deeper look at some of the innovation and technological changes in the field of workforce development in this changing work environment and labour market of the digital era. Janice Raposo explores whether innovation will create innovative, sustainable cities that attract foreign workers and foreign direct investment, while Linn Engen ponders if we will see a continuation of the increase in remote work and the rise of the digital nomad. Adele Lebano and Vanessa Del Pozo Sanchez focus on the means, both political and financial, that can facilitate a fruitful relationship, or capture the way ethical and policy concerns are interpreted by funding schemes at the national and EU level. Gregory Clare looks at the financial implications of workforce development, and in our cover piece, Charlotte von der Brelie shares her thoughts on compound words facilitating the path to the future of work.

Hopefully, we here at Grants Office Europe can contribute an interesting read to your day, or provide some food for thought. Further, we aspire to inspire you to take a closer look at the numerous funding opportunities sprinkled through this issue that may support your next project idea.

As always, our objective is to provide a broad context to the various grant funding programmes open across Europe, in this case Horizon Europe, the Creative Europe Programme, and many more!

Kind regards,

Adele Lebano and Charlotte von der Brelie

Editors,
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Fachkräftemangel - Why grants are crucial to propel workforce development to the forefront of labor policies

Charlotte von der Brelie, Germany

One skill that Germans excel at is to create difficult compound words that will be ever confusing to foreigners. It is a long-standing national tradition to give a trend or policy a name and it wouldn't be authentic if it weren't a long compound word - such as Fachkräftemangel. Fachkräftemangel, the national shortage of skilled labor, has been at the forefront of public consciousness for the last decade. Simply coined "labor shortage" in English or economic terms, Fachkräftemangel describes an economic situation in which a significant number of jobs for employees with certain qualifications cannot be filled because there are no suitably qualified skilled workers available in the labor market. This situation creates an Arbeitsmarktungleichgewicht- a labor market imbalance – we truly are masters of the compound. This labor market imbalance has been at the forefront of policymakers' decision-making processes for several years and has resulted in a few fruitful measures designed to combat the situation.

The federal government of Germany has published a strategy termed the skilled worker strategy, or also Fachkräftestrategie, in which various methods were introduced to support companies in attracting and retaining qualified skilled workers. They determined several important fields of action:

Training

With the Continuing Education Act and the Training Guarantee, the BMAS, the Federal Ministry for Labor and Social Affairs, has developed concrete measures to directly support young people at the beginning of their working life.

Continuing education

Digitalization, climate change, and demographic change are significantly changing the labor market, which reiterated



Workforce Development Measures address the lack of skills in the digital realm.

the need for professional reorientation and job and industry changes that will continue to increase.

Immigration of skilled workers

To be able to build a sustainable labor market, bureaucratic obstacles must be removed, particularly regarding foreign professionals.

Employment potential

To fulfill the plans made under the skilled worker strategy, the better use of existing resources is an important way to strengthen the labor market. Certain groups of people do not always have good access to regular full-time positions, and this is a point the BMAS plans to address.

Work culture

The work culture is changing, and consistent further development is becoming increasingly important. We want to improve the quality of work and actively shape the change in the work culture.

Innovative network

The BMAS is actively trying to support the knowledge-sharing and advancement of securing skilled workers on site and creating a network to raise the potential of the regional skilled worker base jointly.

Digital approaches

The topic of artificial intelligence is omnipresent, and digital approaches are particularly interesting for attracting skilled workers and supporting and relieving employees in their work.

To be able to address one of the challenges posed by these difficult compound words, there are several laws and grants in effect that aim to support individuals and companies in securing a developed workforce, through education and training, as well as the immigration of skilled workers.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Continuing Education Act to strengthen the promotion of initial and further training, addresses structural change and transformation. The main aim is to further develop political support instruments for employees and those seeking training, to avoid unemployment, to strengthen further training, and to secure the skilled labor base.

Part of the Continuing Education Act is the training guarantee. This guarantee is intended to give all young people without a vocational qualification access to fully qualifying vocational training, preferably in a company.

Another measure is the qualification allowance, of which the target group is companies and their employees who are threatened with job losses due to structural change, but for whom further training can enable future-proof employment in the same company. The employees receive this qualification allowance, anchored in the Continuing Education Act, during their training.

The Act on the adjustment of the vocational training allowance and the training allowance is intended to make training assistance simpler, easier to understand, and more transparent for citizens. The law also raises the vocational training allowance and the training allowance in line with the BAföG rates.

The Sixth Educational and Training Services Working Conditions Ordinance, a ministerial decree, sets a minimum rate for teachers, which will also increase in 2026.

The Qualifications Opportunities Act opens further new training opportunities for employees.

The Work of Tomorrow Act builds on the Qualification Opportunities Act by promoting further vocational training in times of structural change and helping to further develop training support.

The Citizen's Income Act supports jobseekers with targeted advice and measures for further training and qualifications to help them find good, long-term employment.

IMMIGRATION OF SKILLED WORKERS

The Skilled Immigration Act is an umbrella term for the measures of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and for Home Affairs, and the BMAS. This includes the Residence Act and the Employment Ordinance.

The right of residence for opportunities gives people who have come to Germany for humanitarian reasons the opportunity to work permanently in Germany. This measure is a further development of the Residence Act and is therefore being handled by the BMI.

The law on the further development of skilled worker immigration implements changes to the Employment Ordinance and it supports targeted immigration of skilled workers from non-EU countries. This primarily includes simplification through the 'recognition partnership' between employers in Germany and skilled workers with foreign qualifications.

These measures, addressing current and future labor shortages, will be slow to take effect and further measures might be necessary. Nonetheless, this might be a case where a lexeme that consists of more than one stem has effectively created a similar phenomenon in real life, a policy that stands on multiple feet to address and define a, and urgent problem. If that's the reason we have compound words, I am all for it, no matter how complicated and long they get.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charlotte von der Brellie is the Senior Grants Development Consultant for Germany at Grants Office Europe. She studied International Relations and International Political Economy, with a strong background in OSINT she now focuses those skills on grants, tenders and public procurement.

Lisboa, Capital Europeia da Inovação, abre portas a Novas Oportunidades de Financiamento

Janice Raposo, Portugal

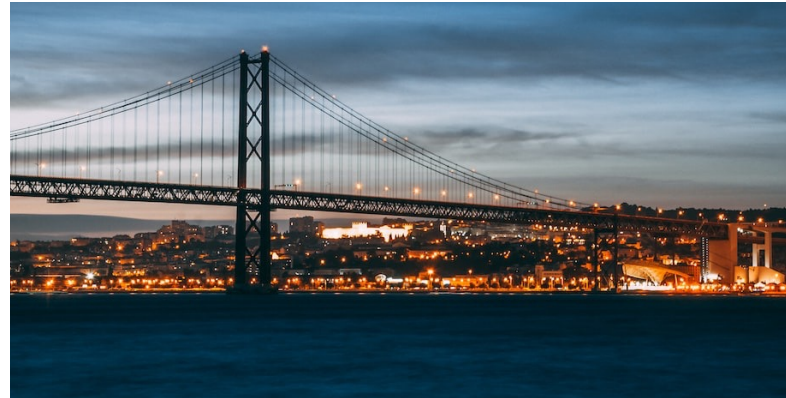
Que Lisboa é cada vez mais Lisbon, já todos sabemos. A nova Capital Europeia da Inovação afirma-se cada vez mais como uma cidade atrativa para nómadas digitais e para investimento estrangeiro. Mas se por cá, está à procura de financiamento público em Investigação & Inovação (I&I) e habitação, então este artigo é para si!

Lisboa foi a vencedora dos European Capital Innovation Awards 2023 (iCapital), tendo-lhe sido atribuído o título de Capital Europeia da Inovação, durante a cerimónia oficial em Marselha (França). Esta foi a nona edição do concurso organizado pela Comissão Europeia. Para concorrer, as cidades europeias teriam de ter pelo menos 205 mil habitantes e ter impulsionado a inovação, promovendo o bem estar da comunidade, por exemplo, através de parcerias entre empresas e universidades.

O prémio iCapital, no valor de 1 milhão EUR, foi recebido por Carlos Moedas, presidente da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa. Segundo o mesmo, o prémio vai ser investido através da Unicorn Factory Lisboa – plataforma inédita para a criação de programas e centros de apoio a startups e scaleups – para desenvolver projetos de inovação social, usando a tecnologia como elevador social.

Nos últimos dois anos, o ecossistema das start-ups e scaleups tem vindo a crescer na capital portuguesa, oferecendo diversas oportunidades de inovação em diferentes áreas, incluindo os novos espaços de trabalho e o futuro do trabalho. Uma das sessões de destaque da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa foi a Iniciativa Future of Work, com o objetivo de refletir sobre a direção que a cidade deve tomar em resposta às evoluções no mercado de trabalho, progressos tecnológicos e desafios enfrentados pelas empresas e pela sociedade civil.

No entanto, os programas comunitários em Portugal podem também ser uma via de acesso mais fácil para pôr ideias



inovadoras de negócio em prática, ou ainda para financiar projetos piloto. O Portugal 2030, acordo de parceria entre Portugal e a Comissão Europeia de 2021 e 2027, disponibiliza 23 mil milhões EUR para projetos que contribuam para o desenvolvimento da economia, da sociedade e do território português. Deste montante global, 3.9 mil milhões EUR vão ser dedicados à inovação e transição digital. Convidamo-lo assim a explorar as seguintes oportunidades:

- Subvenção não reembolsável: [SIID- I&D Empresarial - Operações Individuais – Outros territórios](#)

Se o seu objetivo é criar ou desenvolver novos produtos, processos ou sistemas e ainda melhorar produtos ou processos existentes, poderá obter financiamento através deste aviso. Micro, pequenas e médias empresas (PME), independentemente da sua natureza ou forma jurídica, incluindo as Small Mid Caps, podem candidatar-se.

A dotação total é de 32 milhões EUR, sendo 6 milhões destinados a Lisboa, com uma taxa de cofinanciamento máxima de 40%. As candidaturas estão abertas até às 18h do dia 30 de dezembro de 2024.

- Subvenção não reembolsável: [Creative Innovation Lab - Soluções inovadoras para os setores audiovisual e criativo](#)

Esta oportunidade da Comissão Europeia apoia projetos que criem, desenvolvam e/ou promovam ferramentas, modelos ou soluções inovadoras no setor audiovisual europeu e em outros setores culturais e criativos (SCC), que incluam a inteligência artificial e mundos virtuais. Empresas, organizações sem fins lucrativos, instituições de ensino, fundações, entre outras entidades europeias, podem concorrer se estiverem estabelecidas num país participante do programa Europa Criativa.

O orçamento disponível é de 7.4 milhões EUR, a ser distribuído entre os projetos selecionados. A taxa máxima de cofinanciamento pela Comissão é de 70% do total dos custos elegíveis. As candidaturas estão abertas até às 16h do dia 25 de abril de 2024.

Estes são apenas dois exemplos que podem ser usados para criar negócios ou impulsionar a inovação, uma vez que essa necessidade é uma constante num mundo altamente tecnológico. Muitos avaliadores de projetos privilegiam soluções inovadoras que integrem inteligência artificial e aproveitem novas tecnologias sustentáveis. Fica a sugestão!

Por outro lado, os fundos destinados à inovação não só facilitam a implementação de novas tecnologias e práticas, como também impulsionam a inovação em outros setores mais consolidados, como o da habitação. Através da aplicação de tecnologias inovadoras, como a construção sustentável, a utilização de materiais de baixo impacto ambiental e a implementação de sistemas inteligentes de gestão de energia, é possível criar soluções habitacionais mais acessíveis, eficientes e sustentáveis.

A crise da habitação é um fenómeno europeu, no qual Portugal se destaca com um cenário cada vez mais agravante, já que tem enfrentado desafios sem precedentes no que diz respeito à habitação acessível. Em Lisboa, a procura é cada vez mais elevada em proporção à oferta, afetando principalmente as camadas mais jovens da população. Neste contexto, Plano de Recuperação e Resiliência (PRR) surge como uma solução proativa para lidar com este desafio, ambicionando dedicar 15.1 mil milhões à resiliência até 2026, o que inclui um total de nove investimentos na área da habitação. Eis uma oportunidade de financiamento atualmente disponível:

- Investimento RE-C02-i05: [Parque público de habitação a custos acessíveis](#)

Esta oportunidade tem como principal objetivo garantir a existência de habitações com rendas acessíveis no parque de habitação pública. Para tal, o programa destina-se a municípios, visando a construção de novos edifícios com altos padrões de eficiência energética e a reabilitação de estruturas existentes para melhorar o seu desempenho energético. As despesas elegíveis incluem aquisições, empreitadas, trabalhos e fornecimentos relacionados com a acessibilidade e a sustentabilidade ambiental, entre outros.

Com uma dotação total de 167.8 milhões de euros, as candidaturas encontram-se abertas até 31 de maio de 2024, sendo que segunda fase de submissão de candidaturas vai ser definida de acordo com a dotação orçamental disponível.

Se Portugal tem sido um dos maiores beneficiários dos fundos da União Europeia, Lisboa tem aproveitado esses recursos para impulsionar a sua inovação, sustentabilidade e resiliência. No entanto, ainda há um longo caminho a percorrer nos próximos anos para que Portugal cumpra os objetivos estratégicos da

União Europeia, visando uma Europa mais inteligente, verde, conectada, social e próxima dos cidadãos. Assim, convidamo-lo a descobrir quais serão as oportunidades de financiamento nos próximos meses. Esteja atento à próxima edição da FUNDED para obter mais informações, ou entre em contacto connosco!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Meet Janice Chantre Raposo, the Grant Development Associate for Portugal at Grants Office Europe. She is deeply engaged in various activities involving European countries, like conducting webinars and research. Her educational background in media studies has been further complemented by her recent master's degree in management and communication from the IAEYON School of Management. Janice has considerable experience in communications and projects funded by the EU. Her love for languages and writing is evident from her fluency in Portuguese, English, and French and her good command of Spanish. She keeps a close watch on available funds and opportunities!

Connect with Janice on [LinkedIn](#)

Can digital nomads increase population in rural areas? How relocation grants are being used by regional governments to attract remote workers

Linn Engen, UK and Ireland



AGING POPULATION AND DEPOPULATION

Small and medium-sized towns around the world are facing economic challenges due to depopulation and aging populations. When a substantial proportion of adult citizens are retired and living on pensions, the result is an economically strained region. Some political leaders have called the situation unsustainable. For example, in 2023, Japan's prime minister Fumio Kishida said that the country is on the ['verge of not being able to function as a society'](#) due to an imbalanced age demographic. In many countries, there is an urgent need to increase the number of taxpayers to sustain welfare systems.

In addition to Japan and Hong Kong, Southern Europe is one of the regions worst affected by having a declining, aging population. This is due to decreased birth rates, increased life expectancy, urbanisation, and emigration. Young people have been leaving their rural hometowns in favour of metropolitan cities or abandoning their home countries altogether, relocating to places in central or northern Europe, leaving regions in Italy, Spain, and Portugal deprived.

This trend in emigration has been going on for decades. Facilitated by the EU's free movement agreement; young migrants have been able to seek out employment or university studies in cities known for their universities and labour markets. Regions in southern Europe, with economies reliant on farming, struggle to remain attractive to young professionals. Almost a quarter of the Italian population is 65 years or older. In Spain, the number of inhabitants above the retirement age amounts to about 20% of the population, and in some rural areas this number is even higher. The town of Zamora is predicted to have the oldest population in Europe by 2050, followed by three other Spanish regions, which are expected to be at the very top of the list in two to three decades time. Portugal has a comparable situation, with a population that declined and aged during the 2010s despite an increased influx of migrants. Depopulation is especially evident inland. Whilst coastal towns remain densely populated, small towns in Portugal's interior are vanishing at a rapid pace.

POST-PANDEMIC WORK TRENDS: DE-URBANISATION AND COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

The past four years has seen a dramatic change in the way people work. For example, IT and typical freelance sectors, such as copywriting and graphic design, are now dominated by remote workers. As a result of the post-covid realisation that many jobs can be done remotely, employees got used to the comfort of working from one's own home and employers have had to accept the fact that they must allow at least a hybrid work model to be considered by potential recruits, or intentionally downsize their office facilities. In Ireland for example, the proportion of people working fully remote is almost one in four. In the Netherlands more than half of the working population works remotely. More people are also self-employed than before the pandemic. The global freelance platform Upwork doubled its revenue in 2020 and has continued to grow.

The age bracket most likely to be working remotely are people in the 24-35 age bracket. According to Forbes, almost 40% of young professionals in America work fully remote, saving time and money by not having to commute to a physical workplace. And not being bound to a physical workplace brings the possibility of living in more remote locations. When there is no need to commute into expensive cities like London or Paris, there is rationale for trading a life in a metropolitan city with a more affordable one in a small town.

Could this be a reverse of the previous urbanisation trend? According to recent figures, it might be just that. During the Covid-19 pandemic, when the allure of living a big city life disappeared with social venues temporarily shut down, people left. Capitals such as London and Washington saw a sharp decline in inhabitants during 2020 and 2021, especially in the inner cities. Since then, people have started to slowly move back, although inner cities remain less populated than they were prior to 2020.

One reason for this depopulation is the current cost-of living crisis, which made it even less affordable to live in urban areas. Increased rents, in combination with the prospect of working remotely elsewhere is giving young professionals reason to reconsider their choice of work. A growing population of so-called digital nomads has taken the freedom of remote work one step further than their remote, home-office counterparts. They work predominantly online and are either employed through a remote work contract or freelance as they travel to various parts of the world for as long as they like, or for as long as their travel documents permit. Countries with reliable internet access, low cost of living and a pleasant climate have become meccas for this new group of remote workers.





PUBLIC INCENTIVES TO ATTRACT DIGITAL NOMADS

Remote workers who consider themselves digital nomads represent a new type of long-term tourism and policy makers have begun to explore the best way to adapt and stimulate economic growth. Whilst some countries are already popular amongst digital nomads, thanks to their natural scenery or low cost of living, governments are working hard to attract these remote workers. Regional governments are taking measures to increase their region's appeal by way of digital nomad visa programmes and subsidised costs for accommodation and even relocation grants. There are also dual tax agreements, making it easier for remote workers to be tax compliant in several tax residencies at once.

Two successful examples of recent funding campaigns are Finland and Estonia. Tallinn has become a start-up hub and remote workers can enjoy a cost of living that is lower than the European average, thanks to a digital nomad visa scheme. In 2021, Finland issued grants aimed at international technology professionals with their own online businesses to persuade them to relocate. The scheme was oversubscribed, and helped its grantees with necessary administration, accommodation, childcare, and integration into the Finnish tech eco-system.

Southern European countries have taken notice and started their own public funding initiatives. Italy offers tax incentives to stimulate repopulation, and many regions have their own grant

schemes in addition to the federal ones. The region of Sardinia distributes individual grants of up to €15,000 to people that move to the island's smaller towns. This relocation fund is worth approximately €45 million. And to increase birth rates, parents are paid a monthly grant of €600 per child if they move to these sparsely populated regions. Furthermore, Italy offers incentives that will help families with young children purchase property in deprived areas. This grant scheme is worth about €70 million in Sardinia alone. The government is also using policy to influence the private sector to consider relocation of its premises. A tax credit scheme, estimated to be worth €120 million, is intended to incentivise enterprises to move some of their business activity to the island. Other Italian regions offer similar grants to stimulate relocation and economic activity. Santo Stefano offers new-business grants of up to €44,000 per business, paired with subsidised rent for new residents.

Spain and Portugal are taking a similar route and are attempting to increase rural investments and repopulation by providing grants to migrants or natives that decide to invest in properties in small villages. For example, the Portuguese government's Inland Employment PLUS scheme gives close to €5,000 to individuals that move to eligible regions, if they are either self-employed or get hired locally. These grants are not a strictly southern European phenomenon. Switzerland has an almost identical relocation scheme and offers up to €50,000 to families willing to relocate to certain villages with less than three hundred inhabitants.

POINTS TO CONSIDER FOR POLICY MAKERS

There are success stories when it comes to these types of initiatives. Madeira, Finland, and Estonia report to be coping well with the influx of digital nomads. However, there are reasons for policy makers to use caution when considering incentives to attract affluent migrants. When people with salaries from abroad move to low-cost countries they risk pricing locals out of their hometowns. Rent in Bali and Lisbon have increased drastically because of an established digital nomad population. People earning local salaries are unable to compete with the buying power of expats, which can cause inequality and social tension. But it does appear that regions who genuinely need to increase populations are better off introducing digital nomad schemes, than those looking for foreign investments, rather than population growth.

Countries that have suffered from depopulation and have the infrastructure in place to host a growing number of people are more likely to cope well with migration. The successes in Finland, Estonia, and the Swiss Alps could be attributed to schemes that were either time limited (Finland), had a cap on the number of employees (Switzerland), or continue to be closely monitored (Estonia). One reason could also be that these countries actively tried to attract foreigners. Some countries have seen this development because of their exotic location, climate, or status as a developing country rather than a welcoming migration policy. In these instances, policy making becomes precarious. On the one hand, remote workers that decide to relocate to a deprived area for a prolonged period inject money into its economy. On the other hand, they compete with the locals not just on the free market for food and housing, but also for natural resources and infrastructure.

To prevent the digital nomad movement from becoming a potential type of colonialism, safeguards should be added to protect local communities from exploitation. Grant makers should take their native population into account and consider subsidies that increase their relative bargaining power. For example, there could be a limit to the number of properties a migrant can purchase whilst on a digital nomad visa or a cap on the number of apartments that can be rented out for short-term stays. Relocation schemes could be made beneficial to natives and people moving in from elsewhere. In areas suffering from an

aging population, it could be wise to invest in childcare grants that would incentivise locals to have children, in addition to attracting a remote workforce.

The grant schemes in Southern Europe usually have caveats that aim to increase the chances of integrating these migrant populations into the local community. The grantees may need to live in the area for a certain amount of time to keep their relocation grants or prove that they are serious about the move in other ways, like learning the local language through subsidised language courses. If thoughtfully planned, grant schemes of this kind can help communities grow in a sustainable way.

SOURCES:

[Depopulation: Spain's aging population: Four provinces will have the highest average age in Europe by 2050 | Society | EL PAÍS English \(elpais.com\)](#)

[4 Countries in Europe That Will Pay You to Move There \(2024\) \(euronerd.com\)](#)

[Japan's ageing population poses urgent risk to society, says PM | Japan | The Guardian](#)

[Thousands apply to be a Finn for 90 days in migration scheme | Finland | The Guardian](#)

[Remote Work Statistics & Trends In \(2024\) – Forbes Advisor](#)

[The Problem With Indonesia's Plan to Attract 'Digital Nomads' – The Diplomat](#)

[The Pandemic Prompted People to Move, But Many Didn't Go Far - Stateline](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Linn Engen is the Grants Development Consultant for the UK and Ireland at Grants Office Europe, helping public and private sector organisations identify funding opportunities suitable to their projects. She has a master's degree in industrial engineering and has a passion for sustainability and innovation.

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EU Programme Snapshot

European mini-slate development



SUMMARY

The objective of the European mini-slate development support is to foster the competitiveness of European independent production companies and to increase their economic weight on the market. The aim is also to increase the capacity of audiovisual producers to develop projects with the potential to circulate throughout Europe and beyond, and to facilitate European and international coproduction. The support will also provide an entry point for emerging talent, giving them the opportunity to direct a short film supported by the strong foundation provided by experienced companies.

Expected result:

- A stronger position on European and international markets for companies selected under European mini-slate development.
- Increased quality, feasibility, cross-border potential and market value of European works supported.

The estimated available budget for this call is 5,6 Million Euros, with a funding rate of 70% per project. The call will open on April 4th, 2024 with a submission deadline set for September 10th, 2024.

ELIGIBILITY

In order to be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must:

- be legal entities (public or private bodies) be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - Creative Europe Participating Countries:
 - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
 - non-EU countries:
 - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the Creative Europe Programme or countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement and where the agreement enters into force before grant signature ([list of participating countries](#))

Following countries are considered countries with a low audiovisual capacity:

- LCC group A: Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Romania
 - LCC group B: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg,
 - Malta, Slovakia and Slovenia
 - The following third countries are also considered within LCC group B, subject to the conditions being fulfilled for their participation in the MEDIA Strand: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Republic of Serbia.
- be independent European audiovisual production companies, based in countries with a low audiovisual capacity (LCC group A and LCC group B), that can demonstrate recent experience in producing internationally distributed works⁴.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

[F&T Web link](#)

Where is work going? Looking at the future of work through a public funding lens

Adele Lebano, Italy

What is the future of work? The global Covid-19 pandemic brought this question to the forefront, and there are many intertwined, and sometimes opposing concerns about the answer. The pandemic brought a change in how and where people work, with long term effects of spatial displacement of people out of offices and into their homes; from location-based employment to remote, many are left to wonder if these changes are here to stay and how will they affect the relevance of work within people's lives? Will working from the kitchen table make work more integrated into our lives? Is it going to enable greater freedom in the fulfillment of work activities, making employees less dependent on external control and more on the substance of the tasks?

Another pressing question is linked to AI and the way it will integrate (or substitute) human work. Is AI going to make many of us in positions of thought leadership, from scientists, doctors, teachers, artists, and journalists, irrelevant? Or will AI result in more meaningful work because it will allow us to "give up" some of our more empty, busy tasks?

According to the American Forrest Research article, "Future of Jobs Forecast 2022", by 2040 around 63 million jobs will be lost in the areas of India, China, South Korea, Japan, and Australia, due to automation processes. Goldman Sachs echoes that in the next decade, due to AI and automation, 300 million jobs will be lost globally. A more optimistic view sees this current development as an opportunity for those with the skills, talents, and creativity to use digital technology for innovation and advancement.



According to the American Cognizant, an organization that monitors job offers and professional profiles of the future with a focus on algorithms, automation, AI, customer experience, environment, fitness and wellness, healthcare, legal and financial service, transportation, and employment culture, there will be employment growth in sectors related to the health and safety of people, and environmental sustainability (source Danilo Broggi, [Il futuro del lavoro umano nella rivoluzione dell'intelligenza artificiale](#), Linkiesta, October 2023). As Broggi reminds us, in order not to lose oneself and one's job in the AI revolution, specific skills and training are key. Among these are creativity, emotional intelligence, and STEM skills.

The future of work is marked by the ways in which we as humans are going to interact with intelligent machines, the core of the so-called 5.0 Transition. This latest transition is the target of a significant amount of public funding, which in Italy alone amounts to over \$6 billion from 2024 on, to be deployed to innovate human skills and advance technological transformation.

As we look closely at the Italian grants landscape, we notice funding is becoming more and more dedicated to projects not merely aimed at digital innovation, but those that will have a large impact on reskilling or upskilling the Italian workforce. [GOL \(Garanzia Occupabilità Lavoratori\)](#) is one of the instruments of the Recovery and Resilience Plan, co-managed by National governments and Regions, aimed at supporting people in finding or changing employment through this transition. In addition to these long-running national initiatives, there are smaller, local grants, such as the ones by the Chambers of Commerce. These grants are dedicated to digital and green transition projects expecting to use between 20% and 50% of the investment for training and education. This is, for example, the case for a recently adjudicated [call of the Sicilian Region](#) that awarded resources to projects that included building competences for the digital transition of the SMEs applying for it.

The centrality of digital skills for social inclusion and the fight against poverty are regarded as essential to secure a decent future, where work is an essential component. The Region of Marche, in the center of Italy, has published the [Training and employability of vulnerable people](#) call, addressing organizations that can provide training opportunities for people undergoing restriction orders of judicial authority. At the national level, the [National Plan for Inclusion and Fight against Poverty](#) has a total budget of four billion Euros and is being implemented through both national and local calls. And organizations who can rely on an international partnership were able to access the call of the [European competence center for social innovation](#), aimed to unlock skills and support vulnerable youth integration in the labour market.

I would like to conclude borrowing some important remarks from

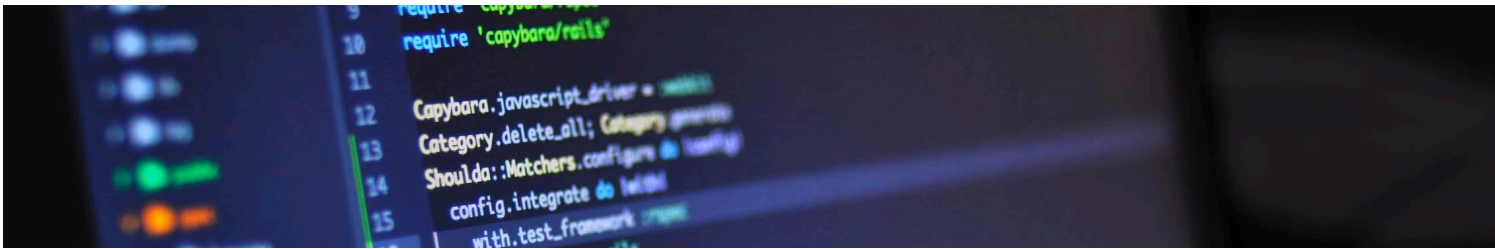
Adrienne LaFrance's March piece in the Atlantic. LaFrance reminds us how everyone can play a role in defining how the future of work and human life in general will look and how invasive technology will turn out to be. The first step for doing so is setting ideals and norms about the use of technologies so that our intellectual output does not become "a mere training manual for the AI"; so that humans remain ends and not the means. Because "there is an extraordinary power in defining ideals, and we can all begin to do that for ourselves, for our networks of actual, real-life friends; for our schools; for our places of worship". What sort of innovative project to encourage by funding opportunity is one of the ways we can shape our future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As the Grants Development Consultant for Italy at Grants Office Europe, Adele Lebano has gained a rich experience through her former positions in academia, business, and the public sector across a variety of European countries and the United States. Her passion for rigorous research, effective communication, freedom, equality, and inclusion are evident throughout her writing and consulting.

EU Programme Snapshot

Startup Europe



SUMMARY

Project results are expected to contribute to the following expected outcomes:

- Increasing the market footprint of European start-ups in strategic digital technologies and deep tech[1] innovation, notably Artificial Intelligence, Advanced Computing, Cybersecurity, Next Generation Internet, Blockchain, Internet of Things, Metaverse, Energy, Greentech, AgriTech, and Fintech;
- Better connection of start-ups, including European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and European Innovation Council (EIC)-supported start-ups and Seal of Excellence holders, to relevant local and/or European ecosystems, communities, and potential new markets;
- A scaling up of capabilities in matching technology solutions developed by highly innovative European Union (EU)-funded digital and deep tech start-ups with investment and growth opportunities in collaboration with other initiatives such as: the EIC, the EIT and the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), InvestEU, the Digital Europe Programme, Women TechEU, public and private buyers, or investors and corporate innovation ventures, and start-up villages.

ELIGIBILITY

Target group(s): Start-up ecosystem builders, business angel organisations, venture capital entities, accelerators, incubators, start-up associations, clusters.

In pursuit of the above outcomes the projects are expected to prioritise:

- Start-ups that have either already achieved market-product fit or have raised at least a round of financing (seed or later); and
- Start-ups established in 'moderate' or 'emerging' innovator countries and/or regions; or
- Women-led start-ups.

Any legal entity, regardless of its place of establishment, including legal entities from non-associated third countries or international organisations (including international European research organisations) is eligible to participate (whether it is eligible for funding or not), provided that the conditions laid down in the [Horizon Europe Regulation](#) have been met, along with any other conditions laid down in the specific call topic.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

[F&T Web link](#)

Horizon Europe: €95.5 Billion of funding for 2021-2027

Marie-Christine Noujaim, France

The European Union (EU) offers a range of funding programmes with competitive funding mechanisms aimed at promoting innovation and addressing key societal challenges. EU competitive grant programmes are financed directly by the EU budget. They are thematically organised and aim to reflect the main orientations of EU policies in various fields. One of such programmes is Horizon Europe.

Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation with a budget of €95.5 billion.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

The general objectives of the Horizon Europe programme are:

- to strengthen the EU's scientific and technological foundations
- to boost the EU's competitiveness, including that of its industry
- to concretely translate the EU's strategic political priorities
- to contribute to meeting global challenges, including the objectives of sustainable development

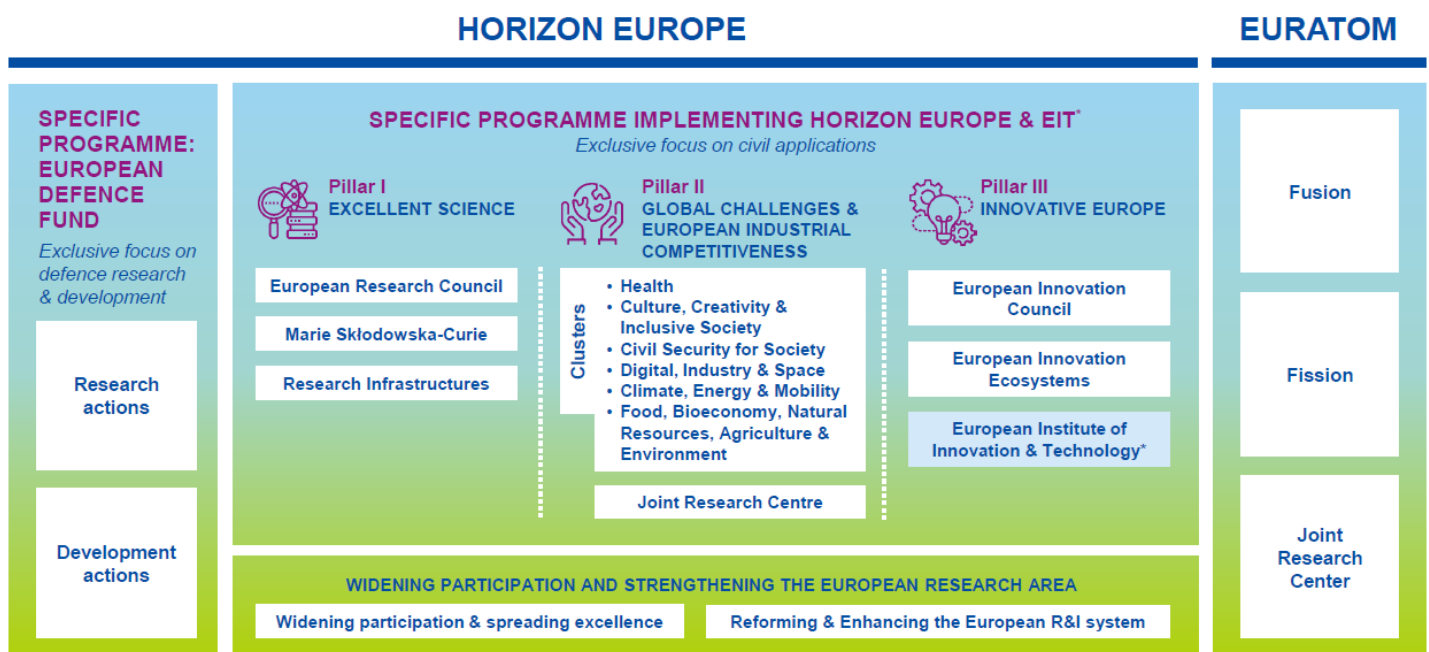
PILLARS

Horizon Europe has 3 pillars:

- excellent science
- global issues and European industrial competitiveness
- innovative Europe

MAIN MISSIONS

Horizon Europe focuses on 5 main missions: climate change, cancer, oceans and water, carbon-neutral cities, and soil health. These missions aim to provide concrete solutions to some of the greatest challenges facing the EU. They set ambitious goals and will deliver tangible results by 2030.



* The European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) is not part of the Specific Programme

CALL PRIORITIES

The first Horizon Europe Strategic Plan (2021-2024) sets out the key strategic call orientations for the targeting of investments in the programme's first four years:

- Promoting an open strategic autonomy by leading the development of key digital, enabling, and emerging technologies, sectors, and value chains to accelerate and steer the digital and green transitions through human-centred technologies and innovations
- Restoring Europe's ecosystems and biodiversity, and managing sustainably natural resources to ensure food security and a clean and healthy environment
- Making Europe the first digitally enabled circular, climate-neutral, and sustainable economy through the transformation of its mobility, energy, construction, and production systems
- Creating a more resilient, inclusive, and democratic European society, prepared for and responsive to threats and disasters, addressing inequalities and providing high-quality health care, and empowering all citizens to act in the green and digital transitions

EXAMPLES OF CALL FOR PROPOSALS TACKLING THE FUTURE OF WORK TOPIC

User-centric technologies and optimized hospital workflows for a sustainable healthcare workforce

Actions under this topic must contribute to at least three of the following outcomes:

- Healthcare professionals will benefit from assistive technologies that are user-centric and improve workflows within the hospital setting, resulting in optimised procedures or new capacities while easing workload and promoting job satisfaction.
- European healthcare systems will benefit from the

automation and improvement of already-existing processes and/or the availability of new technologies. These innovations will provide increased functionality or new capacities.

- Patients will benefit from an improved experience throughout the entire care journey, including increased quality and efficiency of healthcare services derived from the automation or improvement of existing hospital workflows, and/or access to novel treatment modalities.
- Healthcare providers will benefit from new and innovative workflows and/or capabilities for improved cost-effectiveness and efficiency of care delivery, enhancing access to care, and improving the experience of both hospital staff and patients.

Enhancing working conditions and strengthening the work force through digital and data technologies

Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Enhanced working conditions in agriculture (including increased safety of workers and reduced drudgery) through innovative digital solutions exploiting the potential of augmented reality.
- Lowered environmental impacts and production costs and increased product quality in and through the use of digital technologies, through robotics and augmented reality in particular.
- Reduced share of risky or unattractive actions/tasks to be performed by workers through automation-based solutions.
- Mitigated shortage of work force in agriculture in some sub-sectors through automation-based solutions.

SOURCES AND USEFUL LINKS

- [Horizon Europe](#)
- [Funding & tender opportunities](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marie Christine Noujaim is the Grants Development Consultant for France at Grants Office Europe. Marie Christine specializes in French funding opportunities, as well as European structural and competitive funding for public and private sector entities. She has participated in several EU-funded projects and has spoken at international webinars, including the TandEM webinar "Empowering Youth as agents of integration and social cohesion" and the Grants Office Europe webinar on France's recovery plan "France Relance".

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The Financing of the Future of Work

Gregory Clare, Europe

According to the European Union, the future of work is digital. Therefore, the focus has been to actively encourage stakeholders to reskill and upskill workers with knowledge of digital technologies and applications. It is estimated that 32% of Europeans lack basic digital skills and would benefit greatly from this type of education, so the funds needed to bridge this digital gap are vast. It seems, however, that stakeholders, particularly businesses, are being directed towards funds managed by Member States, such as the Just Transition Fund and the European Social Fund. For those familiar with these funds, by the time they become local Calls for Proposals, they have undergone extensive refinement, representing modest sums.

This approach may be an effort to engage the numerous SMEs that form the backbone of the European economy. However, with an overall EU objective of ensuring [80% of adult EU citizens have basic digital skills and 20 million citizens are employed as ICT specialist by 2030, this method seems to be relatively inefficient.](#)

WHAT IS OUT THERE?

We have observed that the IT industry's concerns have not gone unnoticed by the EU. For 2024, we are seeing tens of millions of euros being allocated for advanced digital skills through the Digital Europe programme, thus marking the beginning of significant funding allocations, as outlined below.

These grants range from master's programmes for future IT professionals, to on-the-job training courses and traineeships. Rather than distributing these funds to individuals, in the form of education vouchers, or small business entities, the grants

prioritize cross-border consortia comprising educational institutions and businesses. These consortia are expected to direct their efforts toward individuals, SMEs, startups, and the public sector. There are, however, some caveats.

First, let's examine the Lump Sum Grants for Digital Europe. This mechanism provides a fixed ex-ante sum to cover both direct and indirect project costs. Beneficiaries are not required to report on actual costs; however, the activities are evaluated based on a detailed budget or predefined parameters set by the granting authority. Upon completion of an activity, each beneficiary receives their allocated sum for that activity. Failure to properly implement the action will result in a partial payment or no payment at all.

Simple grants cover only 50% of total project costs, necessitating the acquisition of additional funds, including in-kind contributions and possible complementary national funds. While Member States offer co-financing mechanisms, securing funds from these entities may pose a challenge, particularly for cross-border consortia where contributions may not be evenly distributed among Member States.

Last, let's discuss the Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs). These initiatives offer modest funding ranging from €1 to €2 million, with a funding rate of 100%. It's important to note that CSAs do not support training and educational initiatives; rather, they focus on activities such as standardization, dissemination, awareness-raising, communication, networking, coordination, support services, policy dialogues, mutual learning exercises, and studies.

Topic	Budget (EUR) - Year : 2023	Stages	Opening date	Deadline	Contributions	Indicative number of grants
DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-05-SPECIAL-EDU - DIGITAL-LS DIGITAL Lump Sum Grants	30 000 000	single-stage	21 November 2023	21 March 2024		3
DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-05-CYBERACADEMY - DIGITAL-SIMPLE DIGITAL Simple Grants	10 000 000	single-stage	21 November 2023	21 March 2024		3
DIGITAL-2023-SKILLS-05-SPECIAL-PROGEDU - DIGITAL-CSA DIGITAL Coordination and Support Actions	2 000 000	single-stage	21 November 2023	21 March 2024		1

WILL YOU BE APPLYING?

On the surface, these funding mechanisms appear promising, especially for educational institutions and community organisations. However, not without some challenges. Enterprises seeking to implement large-scale on-the-job training initiatives may encounter challenges. The lump sum schemes, while attractive, may not align with the needs of large private sector initiatives. Cross-border projects, in particular, require coordination with multiple local stakeholders for implementation and funding. Given the current landscape where large IT enterprises are downsizing, the feasibility of these commitments remains uncertain.

Only time will tell if these efforts will have their intended positive impact and we will continue to monitor the climate. If you see an opportunity in deploying the training initiatives that the EU is promoting, the consultants at Grants Office are here to assist you. With a solid understanding of the overall funding landscape, a vast understanding of requirements, and a proficient grant writing team, we are well prepared to help you navigate the competitive EU grant landscape.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gregory Clare is one of the Senior Grants Development Consultants at Grants Office Europe. His area of expertise is the funding landscape in the Netherlands and the EU, with a particular focus on digitalisation processes in education and the developing labour market. As a former grant writer and fundraiser in the Lebanese, Syrian and Turkish context, he is also adept to developing compelling projects for non-profit organisations seeking European funding. His spare time is filled with as much sports as possible and he claims to be an expert on European film.

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- A listing of the European, national or regional agencies for which you have submitted grants
- A listing of the grant programs for which you have been a proposal reviewer, if any
- 2 writing samples (preferably narratives from successfully funded projects)

EU Programme Snapshot

Region of Lombardy. Life-long/ learning education ESF+ 2021-2027



SUMMARY

These investments are aimed at meeting the reskilling and upskilling needs of employees and self-employed workers. They are intended to respond effectively to the challenges of the ecological and digital transition and widespread research, innovation and competitiveness in global markets. The aim is to support continuing education as the key tool to address recovery from the pandemic, the digitization process, and the response to the climate crisis.

The total budget for the scheme is 15 Million Euro. The voucher has a maximum value of € 2,000 per year per individual worker/freelancer. Each worker can benefit from one or more training paths until the total value of the voucher is reached. The maximum cost reimbursable to the enterprise for the use of the paths differs according to the level of skills to be acquired:

- Training paths with skill levels to be achieved traceable to EQF between 6 and 8: up to € 2,000 per worker;
- Training paths with skill levels to be achieved traceable to EQF between 4 and 5: up to € 1,500 per worker;
- Training paths with skill levels to be achieved traceable to EQF 3: up to € 800 per worker.

The next deadline for applying is 28 November 2024.

ELIGIBILITY

Entities eligible to apply for training vouchers are enterprises having production unit/operational headquarters located in the territory of Lombardy Region.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

[Aviso Formazione continua FSE+ 2021-2027 – seconda edizione - Ucl \(unioncamerelombardia.it\)](https://www.unioncamerelombardia.it)

A Comprehensive Guide to EU Funding Instruments for Upskilling and Reskilling

Vanessa Del Pozo Sánchez, Europe

In an era marked by rapid technological advancements and transformative changes in the global economy, the European Union (EU) recognizes the critical importance of upskilling and reskilling to ensure the competitiveness of its workforce. To address these evolving challenges, the EU has established a range of funding instruments, each with its own focus and application process. This article provides an overview of key EU funding instruments dedicated to upskilling and reskilling initiatives from 2021 to 2027.

INVESTEU

Managed through the European Investment Bank Group, InvestEU provides repayable finance, including debt and equity finance. With a total budget of €26.2 billion, the Social Investment and Skills Window (SISW) under InvestEU allocates €2.8 billion to target students, learners, SMEs, mid-caps, and training providers. The initiative covers both the demand and supply side of skills, emphasizing a holistic approach.

This programme is managed by the European Commission. It operates through the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group and other implementing partners, such as national promotional banks and institutions (NPBIs) and other financial institutions. The European Investment Advisory Hub (EIAH) provides technical assistance and advisory support for project preparation and implementation. Additionally, the InvestEU Advisory Hub provides guidance to potential investors and project promoters.

EFSI 2 SKILLS AND EDUCATION GUARANTEE PILOT

Operated through the European Investment Fund and financial intermediaries, additionally, national promotional banks and institutions (NPBIs) in participating countries may also be involved in managing and implementing specific projects under the programme. The European Commission provides strategic direction and oversight to ensure the programme's objectives are met, particularly in promoting investment in skills development and education across the European Union.

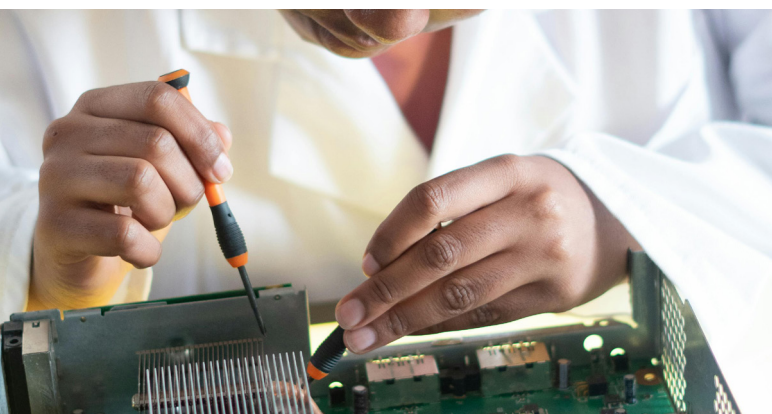
This debt financing initiative aims to stimulate investments in education, training, and skills. With an expected volume of €50 billion, the Skills and Education Guarantee Pilot focuses on benefiting students, learners, SMEs, mid-caps, and training providers.

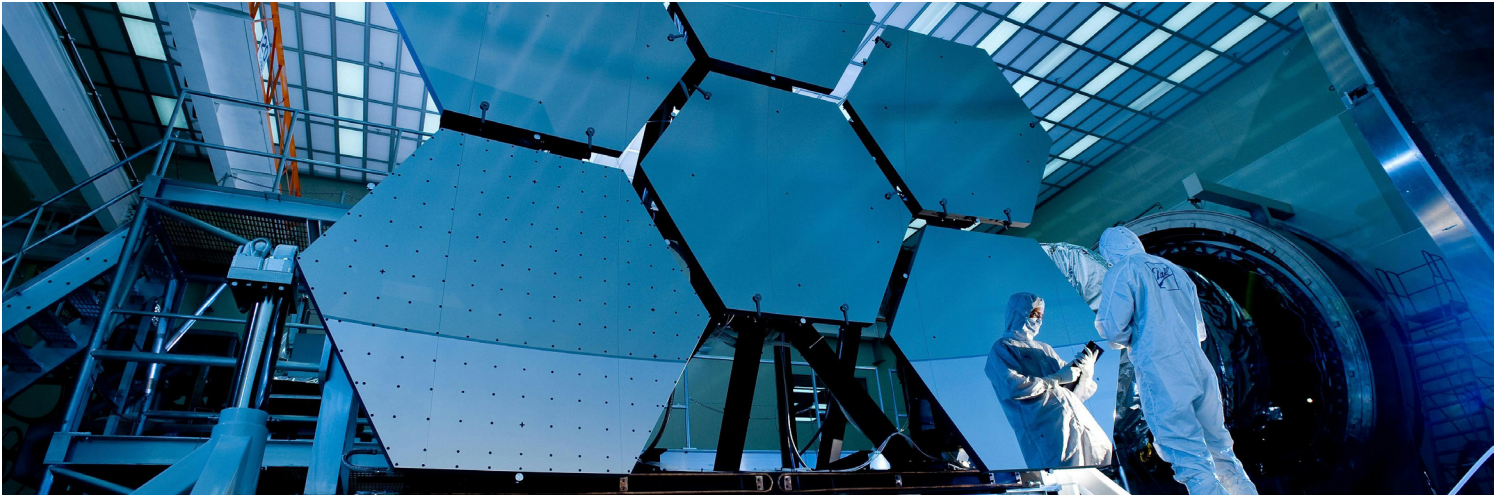
RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE FACILITY (RRF)

The RRF, with a substantial budget of €672.5 billion, offers grants and loans. The application process is closely linked with the European Semester and each country's recovery and resilience plan. The RRF focuses on developing skills to support the green and digital transition and enhance overall economic resilience. The management of the RRF involves close coordination between the European Commission and the member states to ensure effective utilization of the funds and achievement of the RRF's objectives.

REACT-EU (RECOVERY ASSISTANCE FOR COHESION AND THE TERRITORIES OF EUROPE)

Leveraging additional resources for the ESF/ERDF 2014-2020, REACT-EU allocates €47.5 billion for skills development and relevant infrastructure linked to crisis repair and the preparation of a green, digital, and resilient recovery.





EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND PLUS (ESF+)

With a generous budget of €87.3 billion, ESF+ grants support modernizing education and training systems, promoting equal access to quality education, providing flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities, and anticipating new skills requirements based on labor market needs.

The ESF+ management is a collaborative endeavor among the European Commission, member states, managing authorities, and stakeholders. The Commission allocates funds to each member state, which then appoints a managing authority to implement and oversee ESF+ programs. These authorities handle project selection, fund distribution, progress monitoring, and reporting obligations. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including progress reports, financial audits, and impact assessments, ensure the effective and efficient use of ESF+ funds.

EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND (ERDF)

Dedicated to infrastructure and equipment for education and training, ERDF has a budget of €200.4 billion. It focuses on the development of skills that support industrial transformation and smart specializations.

The ERDF is allocated to EU member states and regions based on development needs, with each member state designating managing authorities to oversee project selection, fund distribution, and monitoring, ensuring efficient and effective use of funds for regional development.

JUST TRANSITION FUND (JTF)

With a budget of €17.5 billion allocated for the period of 2021-2027, the Just Transition Fund (JTF) is managed by the European Commission under the oversight of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO). Its responsibilities include defining policy frameworks, setting funding priorities, evaluating project proposals, ensuring compliance with EU regulations, and coordinating with other relevant departments to align with broader EU objectives. The JTF primarily focuses on facilitating the reskilling of workers in regions impacted by economic and environmental transitions.

DIGITAL EUROPE PROGRAMME

The Digital Europe Programme (DEP) is overseen by the European Commission, operating within the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT). This encompasses various functions such as strategic planning, funding allocation, project management, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring and evaluation. With a focus on advancing high-level digital skills, the DEP dedicates €6.761 billion to initiatives aimed at bolstering digital competencies.

ERASMUS+

Erasmus+ facilitates learning mobility for learners and staff, strategic partnerships for upskilling and reskilling, and projects defining cooperation models with SMEs. The new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) contributes to this program.

Managed by the European Commission, specifically by the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC). Additionally, there are National Agencies in each participating country responsible for implementing and managing Erasmus+ activities at the national level.

EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL FUND FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT (EAFRD)

With a budget of €95.5 billion, EAFRD supports knowledge exchange and information in rural areas, contributing to the upskilling and reskilling of rural communities.

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) is managed primarily by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI). However, its implementation also involves collaboration with national authorities in each EU member state.

ESF+ EASI STRAND

With a budget of €676 million, the ESF+ EaSI Strand provides grants to support innovative approaches in the field of upskilling and reskilling.

European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF)

EGF, with a maximum annual amount of €186 million, is managed by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL). This Directorate-General is responsible for developing policies and initiatives to promote employment, social inclusion, and equal opportunities across the European Union. The EGF provides support to workers who have been made redundant as a result of major structural changes in global trade patterns due to globalization or as a result of the global financial and economic crisis. The management of the fund involves assessing applications for support from affected regions or sectors, disbursing funds, and monitoring the implementation of assistance measures in collaboration with national authorities and other stakeholders.

EUROPEAN INSTRUMENT FOR TEMPORARY SUPPORT TO MITIGATE UNEMPLOYMENT RISKS IN AN EMERGENCY (SURE)

SURE, already available from 2020, offers loans up to €100 billion. Is managed by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), specifically within its Unit for Social Investment Strategy. SURE was established in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to provide financial assistance to member states to help them protect jobs and workers affected by the economic downturn caused by the crisis. The management of SURE involves assessing requests for financial support from member states, disbursing funds, and monitoring the implementation of the agreed-upon measures to support employment and income maintenance.

The EU's commitment to upskilling and reskilling is evident through its diverse range of funding instruments. Whether through InvestEU, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, or Erasmus+, these programs collectively aim to equip the European workforce with the skills necessary to thrive in an ever-changing economic landscape. As these funding opportunities evolve, stakeholders, including individuals, businesses, and educational institutions, are encouraged to explore and leverage these resources to foster a skilled and resilient European workforce.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vanessa Del Pozo Sánchez is one of the Senior Grants Development Consultants for Grants Office Europe. Driven by reason, analysis, and the disposition to help others, she takes pride in producing plausible solutions for a broad range of problems, all as part of a system of human cooperation. As part of the team of Grants Office, her goals include support to public and private entities in their search for grants for high-tech projects in Spain.

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