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Country report – Finland

Metis GmbH in cooperation with Euréval

ESF Expert Evaluation Network
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The Finnish ESF programme has proved to be robust and relevant for the Finnish situation also in the face of the global economic crisis. No major changes were needed, but there has been frontloading on measures for job creation.

The Finnish ESF programme faced some technical problems in the beginning. There was about a year of delay in launching the programme. The monitoring system, which is the web based database EURA and which is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation, was late and incomplete. The main reason for these initial difficulties was the amalgamation of two ministries, the Ministry of Employment and the Ministry of Trade and Industry (and parts of the Ministry of Interior) into a new ministry, namely the Ministry of Employment and Economy. At the same time the regional level – the main coordinator of implementation – was reorganised, too. This major organisational reshuffle took about two years to complete, and it coincided with the launching of the ESF, causing considerable problems.

These problems have now been overcome and the programme is up and running, and in some instances has already almost reached its targets. But the delay has meant, that there were also problems in evaluation, since so far there have been very few findings on impacts in the actual target groups to report on. This was compounded with the monitoring database EURA being late and not functioning adequately for the purposes of evaluation indicators in the first phases of the programme.

This means that the evaluations analysed in this report are mostly reporting on how the very first phases of launching the programme have progressed, i.e. mainly administrative and institutional aspects. The evaluations have also quite a considerable overlap. More data on impacts are expected towards the end on the year 2011.

However, the actual evaluation design of the Monitoring Committee and the conducted evaluations have been quite robust and of good quality. The evaluation of the so-called national development programmes (thematic evaluations linked to the priorities, of which there are over 30), are for the most part still being planned, and only two evaluations have been so far commissioned.

During the current programme period 2007–2013, efforts have been made to make the evaluation work for the ESF programme for Finland more useful for the implementation of the programme through a so-called continuous/on-going evaluation design. This means that key evaluation questions and indicators were developed and agreed upon before launching the programme, in order to have more consistency in the evaluations. The purpose of continuous evaluation is to provide relevant and practical feedback at regular intervals regarding, for example, the relevance of the programme goals, the efficiency of implementation and execution, the functionality of programmatic guidance processes and the preliminary results and impacts of the activities.

In the evaluations, mostly of theory based design, a comprehensive set of administrative data, secondary data, questionnaires, stakeholder interviews, self-evaluation, evaluation workshops, company financial statements, etc. has been used. The evaluations have been connected to the monitoring databases, EURA - web browser-based information system, intended for the administration of projects, partly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), and OPAL - results from the labour training student feedback.
1.1 Aim and structure of the report

The aim of this report is to provide a concise overview of the evaluation activities in Finland in the current ESF programming period (2007-2013), including an inventory of evaluation plans and an analysis of the findings of the evaluations finalised.

The report is structured in the following manner:

- Following this first standardised introductory chapter, the second chapter provides an overview of the organisational/administrative and coordination arrangements and available evaluation plans in Finland as well as an overview of actual evaluations;
- The third chapter presents the overall findings from the finalised evaluations/studies, describing the scope of the evaluations, the methodological approaches and the findings per policy field;
- The final synthesis and conclusions summarise the findings presented according to the following evaluation questions:
  - Has an evaluation plan (or evaluation plans) been produced for this country and at what level? What is their content?
  - What types of evaluations have been produced at which level? To what extent have strategic evaluations and operational evaluations been carried out?
  - What are the scope, nature and methodological approach of the actual evaluation activities? How are they organised? What are the administrative arrangements?
  - What is the geographical and thematic coverage of the evaluations?
  - Which methodological approaches have been used in evaluations?
  - Which methods have been used for data collection?
  - Are there preferred areas (e.g. ESF policy areas, target groups, types of intervention, etc.) for ESF evaluations? Are there areas which are far less evaluated?
  - What are the (overall) findings of the evaluations? Are they of a quantitative or qualitative nature?
  - To what extent do evaluations address sustainability and Community Added Value (CAV)? What are the main findings? At what level are these questions addressed?
  - Which specific findings are available as regards target groups, types of interventions or key evaluation issues? Are they quantitative or qualitative in nature?

This report is intended to feed into a synthesis of all 27 Member States which will provide a global picture of the evaluation activities, the overall findings of the country reports per policy field, the methodological approaches and relevant trends identified.

1.2 Information sources and methodological issues

1.2.1 Information sources

Sources and reports have been identified through the following procedure:

- Consultation of the CIRCA website
- Extensive internet research on the following websites:
  - http://www.rakennerahastot.fi/
  - http://www.kajaaninlyopistokeskus.oulu.fi/proj/alupro/esr-strategian_arviointi.htm
  - http://www.tem.fi/
This research allowed the identification of the reports listed in chapter 2.2., Table 1.

1.2.2 Methodology of the country report

The elaboration of the country report was split into three steps:

- Evaluation plans and actual evaluation activities (planned, ongoing and finalised) were first screened;
- An inventory of the national evaluation plans and the actual evaluation activities was produced in order to get a first overview of the conducted/ongoing/planned evaluation work and further structure the evaluation/study questions for the analysis phase. The inventory was produced in Excel format and contains separate tables for the evaluation plan, the actual evaluation activities and their findings.
- Findings of the evaluations being implemented so far were analysed. This was facilitated by the use of an access data base into which the Excel data were fed.

This allowed both the separate analysis of each field as well as the analysis of cross-tabulations (i.e. combined analysis of two fields).
2 Evaluations

2.1 Overview of the evaluation plans

One evaluation plan (EP) was recorded in Finland.

The Finnish ESF monitoring plan was adopted by the monitoring committee on 4/12/2007.

The EP is based on a so-called 'continuous evaluation', where a number of evaluations were contracted out in 2008 at both programme and priority level for the whole programming period. The evaluators report yearly on the findings from the previous year.

The plan also includes:
- an evaluation of the ESF strategy (a one-off evaluation, now finalised),
- a yearly strategic evaluation, with an assessment of the relevance, consistence, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency,
- a yearly evaluation of the four priorities, with specific and thematic indicators.

2.1.1 General features of the evaluation plans

A total of two strategic evaluations were foreseen in the plan, and six at priority level (one for each priority). The evaluations use monitoring data of the EURA database, although there have been delays in its implementation.

The two strategic evaluations of the ESF are planned at programme level:
- The evaluation of the ESF strategy was expected to evaluate the ESF programme against the Lisbon strategy, and the changing situation in the labour market.
- The strategic evaluation of the ESF Programme was expected to evaluate strategic dimensions of the programme (relevance, consistence, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency of the programme), as well as the progress of implementation and analysis of indicators.

A list of indicators to be monitored was produced for each priority:
- Priority I: quantity of sickness leaves and well-being at work, and the improvement of skills of participants;
- Priority II: survival rate of firms after 3 years, and the share of placement in work or training by ESF measures;
- Priority III: share of satisfied participants in active labour market programmes (ALMP) training, and networks and partnerships;
- Priority IV: number of disseminated good practices and promotion of equality.

Each priority is evaluated each year starting in 2008 until the end of the programme. In the evaluations of the priorities the same indicators as for the strategic evaluation are to be used.

2.1.2 Organisational/administrative arrangements

The Monitoring Committee commissions the above evaluations as external evaluations, and the evaluations use the monitoring database, the indicators that are spelled out in the evaluation plan, and additional sources.

2.2 Overview of evaluations

Overall, Finland has launched quite a comprehensive set of evaluations, both at the programme and priority levels. The launching of the Finnish ESF programme was about a year late, however, which caused considerable problems also for the evaluation, since they have so far
had very little to report regarding findings on impacts in the actual target groups. Also the
monitoring database EURA was delayed and not functioning adequately for the purposes of
evaluation indicators.

This means that the evaluations recorded below are mostly reporting on first phases of the
programme, i.e. mainly on the administrative and institutional functioning of the first phases, and
therefore repeating similar findings. Some findings on impacts on target groups were provided by
the programme evaluator in May 2011, and more are expected towards the end of 2011.

In the overall design of the Finnish ESF evaluation, agreed by the MC, efforts have been to gear
all evaluations of the ESF programme towards supporting the implementation in a practical and
timely manner during the running of the programme. For this purpose an overall design of so-
called on-going evaluation has been used. The purpose of the on-going evaluation has been to
provide relevant and practical feedback in regular intervals, i.e. on the relevance of the
programme goals, the efficiency of implementation and execution, the functionality of
programmatic guidance processes, and the preliminary results’ impacts of the activities.

So far, there have been ten evaluations, four strategic and six operational. The evaluation of the
ESF strategy was a one-off evaluation; all the others are on-going in the sense that they are due
to be updated in the continual design. (They are treated as ‘finalised’ in this report, in order to be
able to report some findings). More evaluations, especially concerning the so-called
developmental programmes, which are thematic programmes under the priorities will be
launched in 2011. So far one has been commissioned, and another one tendered this year.

The evaluation of the ESF strategy (Ev1), which is already completed, assessed the ESF
programme against the Lisbon strategy and the changing situation in the labour market. The
evaluation concluded that the programme was strategically and from a long-term perspective
very relevant and coherent with the Lisbon strategy, but in the short term more financing was
needed on adaptability and activity in the face of the economic crisis.

The strategic evaluation of the ESF programme (Ev2), which is still on-going and which will be
repeated, concluded that implementation of the ESF programme progressed in a satisfactory
manner. Most progress has been achieved in Priority III (developing competence, innovation and
service systems that promote operations in the labour market), and the least progress has been
achieved in Priority IV (promoting immigrants to work and spreading good practices, and
promoting transnational and inter-regional ESF activities).

The evaluation of the ESF overall implementation (Ev3), concluded in its first report also that
implementation progressed mainly satisfactorily, best in Priority III, worst in Priority IV. In the
second report of May 2011 it was concluded that progress in Priority I (entrepreneurship) and II
(employment) has progressed well, in fact close to target, whereas Priority IV, concerning
immigrants is much below target due to the economic downturn.

The evaluation of Priority I ‘develop work organisations, the employed labour force and
companies as well as to encourage entrepreneurship’ (Ev4), which will be repeated, concluded
that measures on starting enterprises (SME) and development and diffusion of good practices
and well-being at work and skills have progressed quite well.

The evaluation of Priority II ‘promoting access to employment and sustainable inclusion in the
labour market, to prevent social exclusion and to decrease structural unemployment’ (Ev5),
which will be repeated, concluded that relevance of the priority has increased because of the
economic downturn. It is also too early to assess impact in target groups.

The evaluation of Priority III ‘develop competence, innovation and service systems that promote
the operations of the labour market’ (Ev6), to be repeated, concluded that the priority has
maintained its relevance, is progressing well, and has not been affected much by economic
downturn.
The content of Priority IV ‘promote the cooperation of transnational and inter-regional ESF activities’ is divided into promoting immigration for work and seeking and spreading good practices. The evaluation of Priority IV (Ev7), which will be repeated, concluded that the role of immigrant projects in regions has developed in a satisfactory way, but the priority has been very slow in getting started. The priority has been much affected by economic downturn.

The evaluation of a national guidance development programme under Priority II (Ev8), on-going and to be repeated, concluded that coordination, cooperation and co-development between guidance actors have progressed satisfactorily in regions.

The evaluation of development tools in Life Long Learning under Priority III (Ev9), on-going, and to be repeated, concluded that development is still quite fragmented in functional branches of guidance and educational activity.

In all evaluations there were statements regarding the late launch of the programmes and there were quite a lot of problems with bureaucracy and also in getting the monitoring database (EURA) running and delivering. Most of these problems have now been overcome.

Table 1. Overview of evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the evaluation/ study</th>
<th>Authority in charge</th>
<th>Type of evaluation</th>
<th>Evaluator</th>
<th>Period covered</th>
<th>Status of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESR Toimintalinja 4 - arviointi</td>
<td>Ministry of Employment and Economy</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Kari Hietala</td>
<td>1/2011 - 12/2011</td>
<td>Finalised</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2.1 Scope of the evaluations

The evaluations are either national strategic (4) or operational priority (6) evaluations. There has been an evaluation of the ESF strategy and two evaluations of the overall strategic implementation of the programme, four operational evaluations of each of the four priorities, and two operational evaluations of priority four.

The territorial coverage is national.

According to the evaluation plan of the MC, the purpose of the evaluations is to provide the monitoring committee and programme actors with feedback for improvement.

2.2.2 Methodological approach

In the overall design of the Finnish ESF evaluation, agreed by the MC, efforts have been to gear all evaluations of the ESF programme towards the support of the implementation in a practical and timely manner during the running of the programme. For this purpose an overall design of so-called on-going evaluation was used. The purpose of the on-going evaluation has been to provide relevant and practical feedback at regular intervals, i.e. on the relevance of the programme goals, the efficiency of implementation and execution, the functionality of programmatic guidance processes, and the preliminary results’ impacts of the activities.

Based on the principle, the aim of both the evaluation and reporting work is to produce systematic and comparable evaluation data that takes into account the programme life span. The indicators that describe the results and impacts of the programme and the various programme priorities have been defined in the ESF programme evaluation plan for the programme period 2007–2013.

During the first ESF evaluation round in 2007–2009, the indicators were further defined, and monitoring and indicator systems with their measurement that support on-going programme-level and priority specific evaluation, were created.

The indicators describe how well the programme has been able to meet its goals. By utilising the evaluation system created and the initial data, it is possible to use monitoring and on-going evaluation to support the implementation of the programme and its priorities and to promote the adoption of good practices.

The actual evaluations, both strategic and operational are TBE, theory based, and within them both process and impact evaluations are used. In Ev8 and especially in Ev9 elements of ‘developmental evaluation’ are also used, i.e. enhancing the self-evaluation skills of the officials implementing the priority, and co-developing life-long-learning assessment tools were used.

2.2.3 Data collection methods

In all evaluations, the use of administrative data has been one key component of data collection.

The main administrative source of data is the monitoring database EURA – a web browser-based information system intended for the administration of projects partly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and OPAL - results from the labour training student feedback.
Besides data from the monitoring database, secondary data, questionnaires for those implementing the programme, and for target groups, stakeholder interviews, self-evaluation and evaluation workshops of those implementing the programme and for instance financial statements of companies have been used as data sources in all evaluations.

The EURA database is used to obtain project-level volume data on the background information of the projects, the implemented measures and the persons targeted by them, as well as the direct impacts of the measures. The EURA data will also form the basis for monitoring the survival degree of new enterprises that are still in operation three years after their establishment.

Based on earlier experience of former programme periods, the aim was to get a more consistent overall methodological approach in terms of indicators. For this purpose, in the ex ante preparation of the Finnish ESF programme evaluation, a set of indicators were developed, which then have been used by the evaluators in reporting for the MC.

The programme-level indicators measure the impacts, results and accomplishments of all priorities in the ESF programme. The programme-level indicators defined in the programming document are mainly qualitative in nature. The indicators describe:

- Improvement in the capacities and skills of participants
- Placement in work, education or training or other measures through ESF measures
- Development of networks and partnerships
- Good practices, new operating models and innovations, and
- Promotion of equality

The indicators that describe the priority-level results and impacts describe the priority-level results and impacts of the programme. The priority-level indicators that require focused surveys defined in the programming document for the 2007–2013 period are:

- Number of absences from work in the target organisations
- Increased well-being and enjoyment at work in the opinions of the employed in the target organisations
- The number of new enterprises set up by the ESF support that are still operating after three years
- Functionality and benefit of information, guidance and competence systems created for population training
- Utility of the training experienced by the trained on-the-job counsellors and teachers
- Guidance system targeted at immigrants
- Employment of immigrants on the open labour market as an answer to the recruitment problems of the enterprises. Number of good practices developed and shared by the ESF activities that are based on international co-operation

The ESF project survey is conducted in standard form for all projects in the programme. The survey examines at project level the implementation of the general programme principles, the execution and progress of the programme and its priorities, the prerequisites for execution, the content, results and good practices of the projects, etc. The survey will also produce certain programme-level results that require focused surveys e.g. development of networks and partnerships, good practices, new operating models and innovations and promotion of equality. The survey is repeated annually.

The strategic evaluation has also used evaluation workshops with project people to obtain an overview of the launching phase.
3 Findings

This chapter deals only with the findings identified in the finalised evaluation reports. In the case of Finland, the final evaluation report of the Evaluation of ESF Strategy (EV1) is already available. For the remaining evaluations (Ev2 to Ev9), though still ongoing, finalised interim reports were available and could be used to identify findings.

The evaluations are mostly reporting findings from the very first stages of launching the programme, which restricts the findings mostly to programme administration issues. This is why there is also a great deal of redundancy in the findings. Also, due to the on-going evaluation design, the evaluations are due for updates.

Box 1. Definition of findings

Findings are statements based on the cross-comparison of evidence from one or several data sources. Findings must be derived solely from data collection and analysis. They can result from data analysis at the level of each collection tool or from the cross analysis of pieces of evidence obtained from different sources. Findings can be gathered at three levels:

- Outputs, e.g. ESF financed projects delivered a given number of training courses to a given number of individuals,
- Results, e.g. the majority of individuals attending ESF financed training projects succeeded in passing a professional qualification,
- Impacts, e.g. individuals attending ESF training projects are usually more successful in finding a job than the average national population.

However, in some reports it might not be possible to identify findings, but only conclusions. Conclusions summarise and interpret a set of findings to judge the intervention on the basis of the answers to the evaluation questions. Our emphasis lies on the identification of findings. However, if it is not possible to isolate them in the report, you can also include conclusions.

Recommendations on the other hand are formulated as suggestions to improve, reform or design the evaluated intervention – and should not be included!

Box 2. ESF policy fields

- Increasing adaptability of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs/ improving management of economic change.
- Enhancing access to employment and sustainable inclusion of job seekers and inactive people, preventing unemployment, encouraging active ageing, and increasing participation in the labour market.
- Reinforcing the social inclusion of disadvantaged people/sustainable integration in employment and combating discrimination in the labour market.
- Promoting partnerships, pacts and initiatives through stakeholders networking for reforms in the field of employment and labour market inclusiveness.
- Expanding and improving human capital.
- Strengthening institutional capacity and efficiency of public administrations & services, of social partners and NGOs.

3.1 Overall comments on the findings

Due to the late launch of the programme, the evaluations are mainly reporting on findings concerning the administrative and institutional aspects of getting the programme up and running.

The main finding in the evaluation of the ESF strategy (EV1) was that the programme was strategically and in the long term very relevant and coherent with the Lisbon strategy, but in the short term more financing was needed on adaptability and activity in the face of the economic crisis. In the evaluation it was observed that in the face of rapid changes in the economic and
labour market situation more emphasis on short term action planning in running the programme would be warranted.

In the evaluation of the strategy the role of the so called national development programmes, which are various thematic evaluations within the priorities, was also looked at. There are over 30 national thematic development programmes in connection to the priorities like; promoting equality, developing intermediate labour markets, developing guidance and life-long learning, quality of working life, entrepreneurship, etc. In the evaluation it was found that the steering of these thematic development programmes by ministries has not been strong enough.

In the strategic evaluation of ESF programme (Ev2), which will be repeated, the main finding was that the implementation of the ESF programme progressed satisfactorily, whereby progress was best in Priority III and worst in Priority IV.

The evaluation of the ESF overall implementation (Ev3), which will be repeated, concluded also that implementation progressed mainly satisfactorily, best in Priority III, worst in Priority IV. Additionality to national programmes and measures was good, but there was considerable lag and bureaucracy in starting the programme. In the second report it was noted, that progress in Priorities I and II have been good, in fact close to target of the whole programme period.

The evaluation of Priority I ‘develop work organisations, the employed labour force and companies as well as encourage entrepreneurship’ (Ev4), which is on-going and will be repeated, concluded that measures on starting enterprises (SME) and development and diffusion of good practices have progressed well. Well-being at work and skills have progressed (somewhat), but there has been too much bureaucracy in implementation, and the role of national development programmes (thematic programmes connected to priorities) is unclear.

The evaluation of Priority II ‘promoting access to employment and sustainable inclusion in the labour market, to prevent social exclusion and to decrease structural unemployment’ (Ev5), which is on-going and will be repeated, concluded that the relevance of the priority has increased because of the economic downturn, but that there has been a lag and too much bureaucracy in the launching phase. It is also too early to assess impact on target groups.

The evaluation of Priority III ‘develop competence, innovation and service systems that promote the operations of the labour market’ (Ev6), which is on-going and to be repeated, concluded that the priority has maintained its relevance, and has not been affected much by economic downturn. Steering from ministries was deemed unsatisfactory, and EURA (monitoring database) had not functioned properly at the time of the evaluation.

The evaluation of Priority IV ‘promote the cooperation of transnational and inter-regional ESF activities’ is divided into promoting immigration for work and seeking and spreading good practices. Evaluation of Priority IV (Ev7), which is on-going and repeated, concluded that the role of immigrant projects in regions has developed in a satisfactory way, but the priority has been very slow in launching. The priority has been much affected by economic downturn.

The evaluation of a national guidance development programme under Priority II (Ev8), that is on-going and repeated, concluded that coordination, cooperation and co-development have progressed satisfactorily in regions.

The evaluation of development tools in Life Long Learning under Priority III (Ev9), on-going and repeated, concluded that development is still quite fragmented in functional branches of guidance activity, and there is not enough of a role for customers in method development.
3.2 Overview of the findings by policy field

Before we proceed to examine content of the findings, the tables below will give an overview of how they are distributed across policy fields, target groups, types of interventions and evaluation criteria.

It should be stressed that there are 12 findings in total.

Table 2. Findings by policy fields - multiple assignments possible (all findings: n=23)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total of assignments</th>
<th>ALL Policy Fields</th>
<th>a_Increased adaptability</th>
<th>b_Enhancing access to employment</th>
<th>c_Reinforcing social inclusion</th>
<th>d_Promoting partnerships</th>
<th>f_Strengthening capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of Finland, a direct correspondence could be identified between each finding and the policy field, type of intervention and target group.

Table 3. Number of findings per type of intervention and policy field (TOP rated and non-TOP rated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention Type</th>
<th>ALL /TOP rated</th>
<th>Total of assignments</th>
<th>ALL Policy Fields</th>
<th>a_Increased adaptability</th>
<th>b_Enhancing access to employment</th>
<th>c_Reinforcing social inclusion</th>
<th>d_Promoting partnerships</th>
<th>f_Strengthening capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment incentives</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional capacity and public administration</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Labour market services</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social inclusion specific support</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start-up incentives</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Number of findings per target group and policy field (TOP rated and non-TOP rated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>ALL /TOP rated</th>
<th>Total of assignments</th>
<th>a_Increased adaptability</th>
<th>b_Enhancing access to employment</th>
<th>c_Reinforcing social inclusion</th>
<th>d_Promoting partnerships</th>
<th>f_Strengthening capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enterprises Small &amp; Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs)</td>
<td>All 6 TOP 2</td>
<td>6 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals Employed people</td>
<td>All 1 TOP</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed people</td>
<td>All 4 TOP 1</td>
<td>4 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people (25-)</td>
<td>All 1 TOP 1</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems and structures</td>
<td>All 1 TOP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil society, NGOs &amp; other social economy organisations</td>
<td>All 4 TOP 1</td>
<td>1 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training institutions</td>
<td>All 6 TOP 1</td>
<td>6 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration</td>
<td>All 6 TOP 1</td>
<td>6 4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Number of findings by policy field and evaluation criterion (TOP rated and not-TOP rated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Criterion</th>
<th>ALL /TOP rated</th>
<th>Total of assignments</th>
<th>a_Increased adaptability</th>
<th>b_Enhancing access to employment</th>
<th>c_Reinforcing social inclusion</th>
<th>d_Promoting partnerships</th>
<th>f_Strengthening capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>All 11 TOP 3</td>
<td>11 2 3 4 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>All 6 TOP 2</td>
<td>6 4 1 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>All 6 TOP 1</td>
<td>6 2 1 1 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>All 23 TOP 6</td>
<td>23 4 7 5 1 1 1 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because the evaluations are mostly commenting on how well the programme has been progressing against its goals, and because there are as yet only a few on the impact on target groups, the intervention types above are characterised as increasing the adaptability and capacity of public administration, and the public administration is also the target group of the findings.
3.3 Presentation of the findings per policy field

3.3.1 General remarks

In the mapping, 12 findings have been identified. In most reports available, only one finding could be identified, the only exception being Ev2 where four findings could be retrieved.

As to the content of the findings, some redundancy can be observed. Moreover, since most of the evaluations are on-going and bound to be updated, the main part of the findings, concerning results in target groups, is still to be uncovered.

Box 3. Criteria for the selection of ‘TOP’ findings

- Robustness of the finding (related to evidence provided to support it, the quality and methods of data collection). You should take into consideration:
  - the potential biases of data collection tools, i.e. how did the data collection ensure the robustness of the evidence? For instance, if a survey was run, verify whether the sample of respondents is sufficiently representative on the topic concerned to use the answer obtained;
  - the triangulation of information from several sources: a finding is reputedly valid if it builds on three independent sources.
  - the neutrality of data collection, i.e. whether the tools are able to take into consideration evidence confirming and invalidating the initial assumptions;
  - the traceability of information from initial data collection to the finding. A finding is valid only when one can tell in what context and under what conditions the evidence was obtained.
- Conclusiveness of the finding (not too vague, sufficiently precise to actually use it)
- Coverage (not too specific, the wider the coverage the more it can be generalised)
- Reliability of the source (unimpeachable, as the Commission said)

Figure 1. TOP-rated findings according to the policy field

3.3.2 Findings referring to all policy fields

The findings concerning all policy fields refer to the evaluation of the ESF strategy, which states that the strategy is relevant, but against the global economic crisis, more emphasis on short term adaptability is warranted. The comment on the national development programmes, which are thematic programmes under different priorities, concerns the unclear role and also the steering by ministries of these programmes. This lack of clarity does not mean that the thematic development programmes would be unjustified and irrelevant, only that their steering and role has not been clear enough.
Table 6a. Findings referring to all policy fields according to types of interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eval Criterion</th>
<th>Intervention Type</th>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>TOP?</th>
<th>Specification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Institutional capacity and public administration</td>
<td>F_19</td>
<td></td>
<td>The principle of additionality was fulfilled to a satisfactory degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F_20</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lag and bureaucracy in starting the programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>Institutional capacity and public administration</td>
<td>F_2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Implementation progressed mainly well, best in Priority III, worst in Priority IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F_3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Implementation progressed satisfactorily, best in Priority III, worst in Priority IV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6b. Findings referring to all policy fields according to target groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eval Criterion</th>
<th>Main Addressee</th>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>TOP?</th>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>Sub-Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Systems and structures</td>
<td>F_19</td>
<td></td>
<td>The principle of additionality was fulfilled to a satisfactory degree</td>
<td>Public administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F_20</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lag and bureaucracy in starting the programme.</td>
<td>Public administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>Systems and structures</td>
<td>F_2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Implementation progressed mainly well, best in Priority III, worst in Priority IV</td>
<td>Public administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F_3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Implementation progressed satisfactorily, best in Priority III, worst in Priority IV</td>
<td>Public administration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.3 Findings in the policy field ‘Increased adaptability’

According to the evaluation of the ESF strategy (Ev1), and referring also to the evaluation of Priority I (developing work organisations, labour force and entrepreneurship), the projects in the priority have improved - especially smaller enterprises’ growth and competitiveness, creation of new enterprises, increased activity for entrepreneurship and improved functionality, quality and productivity of work organisations. As quantitative results, 4,851 new enterprises (86.6 % of the overall objective) and 6,748 new jobs (112.5 %) have been created. The specific indicator for Priority I of sick leave days has increased at the organisational level as well as at the personal level. The indicator of new companies’ survival rate after three years from the start cannot be evaluated until later in 2011.

Table 7a. Findings by policy field ‘Increased adaptability’ according to types of interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eval Criterion</th>
<th>Intervention Type</th>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>TOP?</th>
<th>Specification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Institutional capacity and public administration</td>
<td>F_16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Well-being at work in ESF target organisations has not improved as planned in Priority 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labour market services</td>
<td>F_10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved SME growth and competitiveness, new enterprises, increased activity for entrepreneurship and improved functionality, quality and productivity of work organisations. 4 851 new enterprises and 6 748 new jobs (112.5 %) have been created.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Start-up incentives</td>
<td>F_15</td>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>Good results ahead of plans in establishing new enterprises, growth of SMEs and promoting competitiveness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.4 Findings in the policy field ‘Enhancing access to employment’

In the Priority II (promoting access to employment and sustainable inclusion) the emphasis has been on the prevention of social exclusion as well as in advancing employment and improving the workers’ position in the labour markets. Results have been achieved e.g. in preventing young
people's exclusion and increasing their employment. The results in immigrants’ and elderly middle-aged people’s employment have been more moderate. According to the monitoring data to date 1,619 new jobs (50.6%) and 203 new enterprises (33.8%) have been created.

According to the evaluation of the ESF strategy (Ev1), Priority II has been able to focus on the challenges encountered due to the economic recession. However, the data about the transition of the unemployed into training or work three months after the projects’ measures has not been available in the monitoring data. Therefore it is difficult at present to say to what extent the projects’ unemployed target groups have really been employed. This will be updated later.

Table 8a. Findings by policy field ‘Enhancing access to employment’ according to types of interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eval Criterion</th>
<th>Intervention Type</th>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>TOP?</th>
<th>Specification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>F_13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skill development in ESF projects improved according to OPAL feedback (feedback from training participants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employment incentives</td>
<td>F_17</td>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>Promoting employment, combating segregation and long-term unemployment, and youth employment have progressed positively in Priority 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional capacity and public administration</td>
<td>F_14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender equality has been stressed more in ESF projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labour market services</td>
<td>F_11</td>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>Preventing young people’s exclusion and increasing their employment. 1,619 new jobs and 203 new enterprises (33.8%) have been created.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>Institutional capacity and public administration</td>
<td>F_5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relevance of PII has increased because of the economic downturn, bureaucracy in launching, but it is too early to assess the impact.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8b. Findings by policy field ‘Enhancing access to employment’ according to target groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eval Criterion</th>
<th>Main Addressee</th>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>TOP?</th>
<th>Specification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>F_11</td>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>Preventing young people’s exclusion and increasing their employment. 1,619 new jobs and 203 new enterprises (33.8%) have been created.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F_13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skill development in ESF projects improved according to OPAL feedback (feedback from training participants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F_14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gender equality has been stressed more in ESF projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F_17</td>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>Promoting employment, combatting desegregation and long-term unemployment and youth employment have progressed positively in Priority 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>F_5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relevance of PII has increased because of the economic downturn, bureaucracy in launching, it is too early to assess impact.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.5 Findings in the policy field ‘Reinforcing the social inclusion’

One finding could be identified in the policy field ‘Reinforcing social inclusion’ and it was derived from the Evaluation of Priority IV (Ev7). The economic downturn had an adverse effect on Priority IV in terms of results concerning contact with and activation of immigrants. There was however progress in cooperation between authorities and other actors concerning awareness of the immigrant question and launching projects.

Table 9a. Findings by policy field ‘Reinforcing the social inclusion’ according to types of interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eval Criterion</th>
<th>Intervention Type</th>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>TOP?</th>
<th>Specification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>Social inclusion specific support</td>
<td>F_7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Role of immigrant projects in regions well developed, but very slow in launching. Much affected by economic downturn.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9b. Findings by policy field ‘Reinforcing the social inclusion’ according to target groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eval Criterion</th>
<th>Main Addressee</th>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>TOP?</th>
<th>Specification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>Systems and structures</td>
<td>F_7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Role of immigrant projects in regions well developed, but very slow in launching. Much affected by economic downturn. Civil society, NGOs &amp; other social economy organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.6 Findings in the policy field ‘Promoting partnerships’

Table 10a. Findings by policy field ‘Promoting partnerships’ according to types of interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eval Criterion</th>
<th>Intervention Type</th>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>TOP?</th>
<th>Specification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>F_18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improving connection between education and employment in Priority 3 projects has been positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10b. Findings by policy field ‘Promoting partnerships’ according to target groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eval Criterion</th>
<th>Main Addressee</th>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>TOP?</th>
<th>Specification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Systems and structures</td>
<td>F_18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improving connection between education and employment in Priority 3 projects has been positive Education and Training institutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.7 Findings in the policy field ‘Strengthening institutional capacity’

In Priority III (developing competence, innovation and service systems in the labour market) a large number of projects have concentrated on training and developing employment services. The projects have increased and strengthened cooperation as well as contributed to creating new operation and service models in educational organisations, especially concerning career guidance. There have also been projects focusing on the development of forecasting and innovation systems as well as increasing the related organisations’ cooperation and know-how. As a quantitative result, 597 new jobs (27.1 %) and 377 new enterprises (62.8 %) have been created in priority III at the time of the evaluation. The work for creating new guidance, steering and knowledge systems were still unfinished at the time of the evaluation, so the results can be expected later.
Table 11a. Findings by policy field ‘Strengthening institutional capacity’ according to types of interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eval Criterion</th>
<th>Intervention Type</th>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>TOP?</th>
<th>Specification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Institutional capacity and public administration</td>
<td>F_12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Priority 2 has been able to focus on the challenges encountered due to the economical recession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>F_8</td>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>Coordination, cooperation and co-development in guidance progressed well in regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F_9</td>
<td></td>
<td>New methods of life-long learning and self-evaluation of educational and guidance institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>F_6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relevance, not much affected by economic downturn, steering from ministries unsatisfactory, EURA (monitoring database) does not deliver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional capacity and public administration</td>
<td>F_1</td>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>Programme strategically and long term very relevant and coherent with Lisbon strategy, but short term needs more adaptability and activity in the face of the economic change. Role of national development programmes questioned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11b. Findings by policy field ‘Strengthening institutional capacity’ according to target groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eval Criterion</th>
<th>Main Addressee</th>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>TOP?</th>
<th>Specification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Systems and structures</td>
<td>F_12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Priority 2 has been able to focus on the challenges encountered due to the economical recession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Systems and structures</td>
<td>F_8</td>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>Coordination, cooperation and co-development in guidance progressed well in regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Systems and structures</td>
<td>F_9</td>
<td></td>
<td>New methods of life-long learning and self-evaluation of educational and guidance institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>Systems and structures</td>
<td>F_1</td>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>Programme strategically and long term very relevant and coherent with Lisbon strategy, but short term needs more adaptability and activity in the face of the economic change. Role of national development programmes questioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Systems and structures</td>
<td>F_6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relevance, not much affected by economic downturn, steering from ministries unsatisfactory, EURA (monitoring database) does not deliver</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ESF programme has proved to be relevant for the Finnish situation and also against the global economic crisis. The overall evaluation design of the monitoring committee and the conducted evaluations have been quite robust and of good quality, using multiple methods, both quantitative and qualitative, and covering the entire programme.

After delays in launching, the programme is now well under way, and the evaluations, for the most part, regard the preliminary results as positive.

The ability of the programme to adapt to the economic downturn seems to be adequate. In Priorities I (developing work organisations and entrepreneurship) and II (access to employment) there has been frontloading and the launching phase has been quite satisfactory, and despite the economic downturn, there seems to be indication that programme targets can be reached. Priority 3 (developing competence in service systems) has not been affected by the economic downturn and has progressed well according to evaluations. Priority IV, especially employing immigrants, has been adversely affected by the economic crisis, however.

The evaluations mapped in this document are strategic and operational on a national level. There will be some evaluations also at regional level in the future, but they have not been commissioned yet. Also, evaluating the so called developmental (thematic) programmes, of which there are 30 running under different priorities, are very decentralised and plans about how to evaluate them are only just in the making. So far one has been commissioned, and one tendered.

During the current programme period 2007–2013, efforts have been made to make the evaluation work for the ESF programme for Finland more closely aimed at practically supporting the implementation of the programme through a so-called continuous/on-going evaluation design. The purpose of continuous evaluation is to provide relevant and practical feedback at regular intervals regarding, for example, the relevance of the programme goals, the efficiency of implementation and execution, the functionality of programmatic guidance processes and the preliminary results and impacts of the activities.

The launching of the Finnish ESF and consequently also its evaluation was late due to major Ministry reshuffles. This means that findings on the target groups are preliminary and scarce as yet, and concern mainly comments about how well the launching phase has performed against programme targets. More data on target groups will be produced during 2011.

The evaluations use as one key source the monitoring data of the administrative EURA and OPAL databases. The launch of the EURA database was late, which caused problems, but they have now for most part been overcome.

In preparation for the programme, key indicators on programme and priority level were identified and developed, in order to get more consistency and to support the on-going evaluation design with regular updates. For the most part this has functioned well, but the development of some indicators has not been successful.

The programme and priority level indicators described are mainly produced with focused surveys. The information sources for the indicators include information from the EURA database, information obtained through project and focus group surveys, results from the labour training student feedback (OPAL) and financial statements from enterprises.

In the evaluations, mostly of theory based design, a comprehensive set of administrative data, secondary data, questionnaires, stakeholder interviews, self-evaluation, evaluation workshops, company financial statements, and others, have been used.

The overall design and execution of evaluations has been quite robust and rich in Finland. But there is room for improvement in some respects. There are quite a considerable number of evaluations and evaluators due to the on-going evaluation design, resulting in redundancy, repetition and even some confusion. Also the regional decentralisation running of the
programme and the large number of so-called developmental programmes under priorities will in the future call for even more evaluations, resulting in pressure to coordinate and to synthesise results for decision making. The evaluation design closely related to the MC, and to national evaluations has had an overall plan, but there has not been a proactive plan to deal with the highly decentralised running and future evaluation of the programme. Probably some kind of meta-evaluation, using also meta-evaluation workshops, is called for. Also, splitting the evaluation effort into many evaluations, with several phases of tendering, means that the evaluators have rather limited resources against complex tasks, and a rather high risk of discontinuation of the evaluation assignment. This can to some extent undermine the effective use and accumulation of data and findings.