

## Position statement with regards to EC proposals on the *new European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)*

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### Key points

- PURPLE welcomes the recontextualisation of the current ESF programme as part of the broader “*future of social Europe post 2020*” debate and as a key enabler of *the European Pillar of Social Rights* which should indeed guide the actions of the new ESF Plus programme as the proposal for a new regulation suggests
- The proposed **merger of five programmes** to attain a new degree of simplification and synergy across programmes is also to be welcomed as is the proposal for **greater flexibility as regards thematic concentration**
- ESF+ will need to adopt the same **place-based approach** which PURPLE is advocating for other programmes funded through the MFF to support Cohesion Policy, if it is to achieve its maximum potential. This should be understood to reflect the need for local and bottom-up approaches to solving issues regarding employment, social cohesion, social fairness and competitiveness
- The role of **sub-national public authorities** in tackling persistent problems and issues in all four of the areas above, should be recognised and clearly reflected in programme design and management arrangements
- PURPLE welcomes the explicit reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a means by which a more joined-up approach to complementary policies and objectives might be achieved through programme design and delivery frameworks
- PURPLE welcomes the proposal to retain a modest element of programme funding under direct management so that it might be used to support **the testing of innovative approaches across national borders**
- The call within the current European Territorial Co-operation (ETC) proposals to **incorporate “ESF Type activities” within future ETC operations** is welcomed as it reflects the need for international co-operation to occur in whichever way is most likely to bring about the identified purposes of such co-operation. It also serves as a means by which such interventions can be given **European Added Value** and be developed, adapted / transferred across national borders, at the same time further strengthening local ESF provision
- PURPLE notes the explicit reference within the legislative proposal for a Common Provisions Regulation to “city to city cooperation”. Such cooperation has clear value and is perfectly legitimate. Similar **cooperation between places in either peri-urban or rural settings** are however equally valid and deserve equal inclusion in the programmes themselves