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PROCEEDINGS



# Global challenges, European responses

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DG Regional Policy

# Theme D - Workshops

Achieving results, looking ahead: EU Cohesion Policy's evaluation and future prospects



## The European Social Fund support for administrative capacity building

**07D09**

**7 October 2009,  
14:30 - 16:15**

**Organiser:**

European Commission, DG  
Employment, Social Affairs and Equal  
Opportunities

**Chair:**

**Tony Venables**, European Citizen  
Action Service

**Speakers:**

**Pawel Chorąży**, Ministry for Regional  
Development, Poland.

**Alexander Heichlinger**, EPSA 2009  
project, EIPA-ECR Barcelona, Spain

**Viktor Horváth**, Public  
administration reform programs  
managing authority, National  
Development Agency, Hungary

**Mathieu Lefebvre**, European  
Commission, DG Employment, Social  
Affairs and Equal Opportunities

**More information:**

European Commission:  
[www.ec.europa.eu/employment\\_](http://www.ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/index_en.htm)  
[social/esf/index\\_en.htm](http://www.ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/index_en.htm)

[www.ec.europa.eu/employment\\_](http://www.ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/fields/transnational_en.htm)  
[social/esf/fields/transnational\\_](http://www.ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/fields/transnational_en.htm)  
[en.htm](http://www.ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/fields/transnational_en.htm)

EPSA:  
[www.epsa2009.eu](http://www.epsa2009.eu)  
Hungarian National Development  
Agency:  
[www.nfu.hu/?lang=en](http://www.nfu.hu/?lang=en)

**Outline**

**Tony Venables** opened the workshop introducing the role of the European Social Fund as an important tool to support administrative capacity building in many Member states of the EU. He stressed out two possible points which could be among others discussed in this workshop. 1) The term "administrative capacity building" looks, at first glance, very "inward looking". It appears mainly as reforms decided, implemented and followed up by administrations in order to improve their internal process or their deliveries of services. But the external dimensions of these reforms – the citizens' involvement and the partnership with NGOs – are also a key issue we should address. 2) The crisis has an impact on the political agenda and on the financial resources allocated in the various member states. Thus, it would be interesting to assess to which extent the crisis had modified the context in regards to ESF support for administrative capacity building.

**Debate**

**Mathieu Lefebvre** presented the state of play. Administrative capacity building is one of the main ESF priorities under the convergence objective (€2.5 billion). Its implementation is not overly fast but remains in lines with other programmes. ESF supports administrations as well as NGOs in order to facilitate a better involvement of civil society in the design and implementation of public policies. In the context of the crisis, administrative capacity remains a condition for successful public policies and thus socio-economic development. The presentation of **Pawel Chorąży** covered the learning network on administrative capacity building recently founded by Poland, Bulgaria, Greece, Lithuania and Romania. It aims to facilitate mutual learning between member states and to stimulate the effective use of ESF resources for public administration reforms. These activities will be carried out for two years through an online space, working groups with face-to-face learning activities and ad hoc contributions to the monitoring committees for ESF operational programmes. **Alexander Heichlinger** presented the "European Public Sector Award 2009". The Award Ceremony will be held in November in Maastricht with the presentation of the best 20 project applications and the delivery of 4 awards in 4 thematic areas: (i) performance improvement in public service delivery, (ii) citizen involvement, (iii) new forms of partnership working, (iv) leadership and management for change. EPSA aims to provide the conditions for a permanent learning platform on leading-edge public administration solutions. **Viktor Horváth** focused on the first experiences learnt in implementing the Hungarian "State Reform" OP (€172 million). 32% of the allocations have been contracted. This OP enjoyed an early start, but the implementation has slowed, due to a learning phase for the actors and sometimes their poor project management capability. Nevertheless, there are already some positive steps in the change of culture (new initiatives reinforced by the use of calls, use of public procurement...).

**Conclusions**

**Mr Venables** concluded the workshop by summing up the discussions:

- For the new period 2007-2013, ESF brings a significant support to enhance the capacities of public administrations and public services at national, regional and local level. But implementation should be accelerated and reinforced during the crisis.
- The learning network on administrative capacity building and the organisation of EPSA 2009 offer knowledge and know-how to better implement this priority in the ESF operational programmes.
- ESF support can – in addition to supporting Social Partners - also be used by NGOs in order to promote a better involvement of citizens or civil society in the design and implementation of public policies.

*"Especially at the time of an economic downturn, strengthening institutional and administrative capacity in order to create a stable business environment will underpin structural adjustments and foster growth and jobs. Reducing regulatory and administrative burdens on businesses helps to increase productivity and strengthen competitiveness."*