

Programming Period 2014-2020

Monitoring and Evaluation of European
Cohesion Policy

European Social Fund

Guidance document

**Annex D - Practical guidance on data collection
and validation**

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*(Based on the June 2015 version of the Guidance document on Monitoring and
Evaluation of European Cohesion Policy, European Social Fund)*

This guidance has been compiled by the ESF Support Centre, which was an external service provided in 2014 and 2015 by Alphametrics Ltd (UK) and Applica Sprl (Belgium) under contract to the European Commission.

Any questions on reporting issues should be addressed to the responsible geographical desks. In case of issues related to definitions or interpretation of this guidance, the Evaluation and Impact Assessment Unit (EMPL-G4-ESF-EPM@ec.europa.eu) should be put in copy.

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1 Introduction

The Common Provision Regulation (CPR) and the European Social Fund (ESF) Regulation for the 2014-2020 programming period (respectively Regulation nos. 1303/2013 and 1304/2013) lay down the requirements for monitoring of ESF operations and subsequent reporting by Member States. This guidance document constitutes one element of the support offered by the European Commission to Member States and relevant actors aimed at ensuring consistent and effective implementation of the regulatory requirements. Specifically, it aims to give practical guidance on the interpretation of definitions and reporting requirements regarding output and result indicators, with practical examples where possible. This “practical guidance” has been prepared by the ESF Support Centre (see below) and should be considered as a complement to the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation, which is focused on explaining the requirements of the Regulations.

This practical guidance sets out the minimum requirements that each monitoring system must adhere to in order to be able to perform the tasks required by the Regulations. It is not intended to prescribe in any way the design of monitoring systems, which is at the discretion of Member States.

Note: the guidance provided in this document does not cover financial data.

The advice provided is intended to be of use for organisations involved at all stages of the monitoring process, from those involved in primary data collection and processing (beneficiaries and organisations responsible for the implementation of individual projects), through to intermediate bodies supporting the flow of data, and the managing authorities (MAs) responsible for production of final data and transmission to the Commission via the SFC2014 (see [annex](#) for more information on the stages of monitoring).

The practical guidance proceeds as follows:

- A short overview of the key requirements for ESF monitoring for 2014-2020, the common indicators, and the reporting schedule;
- Practical guidance detailing how to handle key issues identified in the overview including: basic rules for dealing with participants and participant records; how to ensure a representative sample; how to aggregate data; and how to validate data (both at the level of the participant record and at the level of the aggregate data);
- The schedule for collecting micro-data (what needs to be collected and when) and a series of examples demonstrating how to apply the definitions for each variable in practice (e.g. gender, age, educational attainment, etc.);
- Finally, the annex provides a list of validation checks, a diagram showing the organisation of ESF monitoring, a glossary of the key terms used as well as official definitions for indicator variables with references.

2 ESF monitoring 2014-2020: key requirements

Monitoring of ESF 2014-2020 is to be undertaken through a series of **common indicators**, which are set out in Annex I of the ESF Regulation (1304/2013). Annex II of the same Regulation defines a further set of indicators for operations linked to the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). The **YEI indicators** have to be provided in addition to the common indicators. Finally, Member States may define their own **programme-specific indicators** in order to monitor the effects of programmes in relation to their particular objectives but these are not compulsory.

The Regulations have a number of implications in respect of data collection, data storage, the reporting of indicators, the transmission of data, and data quality. These are outlined below.

2.1 Data collection

2.1.1 Personal information

The Regulations require Member States to **collect and store** detailed data about each participant (i.e. each individual that benefits directly from ESF support), although no specific requirements are set in terms of how, or at which level, this information should be maintained (see box on storage of micro-data).

The data to be collected cover a range of personal information (gender, age, labour status, level of education, etc.), including some variables that are considered as special categories of personal data in the sense of Article 8 of Directive 95/46 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data¹, which are henceforth referred to as “sensitive” data (i.e. those related to disability, migrant or minority status, and/or other disadvantages).

2.1.2 Data protection

The collection and processing of personal data is controlled by legislation at EU and national level. All data collected (including sensitive data) must meet the requirements of Directive 95/46. In line with Article 6 of this Directive, the ESF Regulation provides Member States with the legal basis to justify collection and processing of personal data for the purposes of monitoring and reporting on ESF funded operations. This means that all personal variables required to complete the common indicators should be collected for all participants.

The only case where data may, under certain conditions, be incomplete is in relation to indicators dealing with variables considered as sensitive according to Article 8 of the Directive. Documentary evidence showing that an attempt to collect the information was made must be maintained (see section 4.9.1).

2.1.3 Representative sampling

Data for longer-term result indicators, including those for the YEI, refer to the situation of participants six months after leaving the operation when they are most likely no longer in direct

¹ Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 1995 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data:
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31995L0046:en:HTML>

contact with the beneficiary. Data for these indicators, as well as the output indicators on homelessness and persons living rural areas, are not required for all participants but for a representative sample of participants within each investment priority (though Member States may also choose to cover all participants). See section 4.6 for further guidance.

2.2 Data storage

2.2.1 Computerised system

Article 125(2)(d) and (e) of the CPR requires the managing authority to establish a computerised system to record and store the data on each operation necessary for monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit, including data on individual participants in operations where applicable, and to ensure that the relevant data are collected and stored in this system. These points are reiterated in Annex XIII of the CPR as one of the conditions for the designation of a managing authority.

In Annex III of the Delegated Regulation (EU) No 480/2014², there is a list of 113 fields which represents the list of data that MAs are expected to maintain for each operation and which may be subject to audit. All data shall be recorded and stored in computerised form in the monitoring system for each operation.

According to Article 32 of the Delegated Regulation 480/2014, data have to be recorded and stored in computerised form as of 1 December 2014, except for the fields listed below for which the applicable date is 1 July 2015:

- ✓ Fields 23 to 40 (data on categories of intervention, data on indicators);
- ✓ Fields 71 to 78 (data on recoveries from the beneficiary);
- ✓ Fields 91 to 105 (data on accounts submitted to the Commission under Article 138 of CPR).

Fields 31 to 40 relate to data on indicators. Table 1 provides guidance in relation to ESF operations for each of these fields.

It is up to each MA to determine the ways in which the necessary data are collected, stored and processed. For example, the data do not have to be held in a single database but may be spread across different databases. What is important is that the MA has the capacity to bring the data together using computerised methods in order to produce the final values required, including the required aggregates and breakdowns, and can demonstrate (for audit purposes) how these final values are produced.

² [Commission Delegated Regulation](#) (EU) No 480/2014 of 3 March 2014 supplementing Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

→It is recommended to check for each operation if all the fields are recorded, and also to identify where they are stored in the monitoring system (and/or how the information can be derived from existing data elements).

Table 1- Data to be recorded and stored in computerised form in the monitoring system for each operation according to Annex III of the Delegated Regulation (EU) No 480/2014

Field	Recommendation
Field 31: Name and unique identifier for each of the common and programme specific output indicators relevant for the operation or where required by the Fund-specific rules, name and unique identifier for each common output indicator broken down by gender for participants.	<p>This refers to the name and the unique identifier of all the relevant common output indicators for ESF investments listed in Annex I of the ESF Regulation, as well as the name and unique identifier of the programme-specific output indicators listed in the OP relevant for the operation (i.e. those relevant indicators listed under the IP under which the operation is supported). In case the operation supports participants, all common output indicators for participants are relevant.</p> <p>For all common output indicators, the name and unique identifier are already set in the SFC2014 system. Under Table 5 of the OP on output indicators, common output indicator can be selected from a drop-down list. However, a name and unique identifier (ID) for each programme-specific output indicator should be assigned, which should ideally be the same as that detailed in Table 5 of the OP.</p>
Field 32. Measurement unit for each output indicator.	Measurement unit for the indicator as listed in Table 5 of the OP (e.g. number of participants, number of hours, etc.). Note that data on output indicators (common and programme-specific indicators) always have to be expressed in absolute numbers.
Field 33. Target value for the output indicator, broken down by gender where applicable	Target values for output indicators at operation level where relevant according to the intervention logic.
Field 34. Achievement level of each output indicator for each calendar year, where applicable broken down by gender	Values of each common and relevant programme-specific output indicator at operation level for the calendar year ³ . Data for all indicators on participants are to be broken down by gender. It is recommended that annual values in absolute numbers are stored, facilitating the calculation of cumulative values and aggregated data at IP level.
Field 35. Name and unique identifier for each of the common and programme-specific result indicators relevant for the operation, or where required by the Fund-specific rules, name and unique identifier for each common result indicator, broken down by gender where applicable	This refers to the name and the unique identifier of all the relevant common result indicators for ESF investments listed in Annex I (and Annex II, if relevant) of the ESF Regulation, as well as the name and unique identifier of the programme-specific result indicators listed in the OP relevant for the operation (i.e. those indicators listed under the IP under which the operation is supported). In case the operation supports participants, all common result indicators are relevant (with the exception of those for which the reference population is excluded from the operation). For common indicators that are not relevant or for which no result has been manifested yet, instead of leaving the record empty, zero values should be recorded, stored

³ Aggregated data of these values at IP level are to be reported in Tables 4A and 4B of the Annual Implementation Reports.

	and reported. For all common (and YEI) result indicators, the name and unique identifier are already set in the SFC2014 system. Under Table 4 of the OP on result indicators, common and YEI result indicators can be selected from a drop-down list. However, a name and a unique identifier (ID) for each programme-specific result indicator should be assigned, which should ideally be the same as that detailed in Table 4 of the OP.
Field 36. Measurement unit for each result indicator	Measurement unit for the indicator as listed in Table 4 of the OP (e.g. number of participants, ratio, %).
Field 37. Baseline value for each result indicator provided	Not applicable to the ESF.
Field 38. Target value for the result indicator provided, where applicable broken down by gender	Target values for result indicators at the operation level, where relevant, according to the intervention logic.
Field 39. Measurement unit for each result target and baseline value	Measurement unit for result target and corresponding baselines as listed in Table 4 of the OP (e.g. number of participants, ratio, %).
Field 40. Achievement level of each result indicator provided for each calendar year, where applicable broken down by gender	Values of each common and relevant programme-specific result indicator at operation level for the calendar year ⁴ Data for all indicators on participants are to be broken down by gender. It is recommended that annual values in absolute numbers are stored; facilitating the calculation of cumulative values (either absolute or percentages) and aggregated data at IP level.

Notes for fields 33, and 38: the requirements for these data fields at the operation level do not imply the obligation to set **targets at the operation level** for all indicators that are relevant to an operation. MAs can set targets where relevant according to the intervention logic, but it is expected that targets at operation level will be set for indicators for which a target has been set in the OP (i.e. at the level of the investment priority). Targets and baselines (where applicable) may be presented broken down by gender, but this is not a requirement and they can be expressed only as a total.

2.2.2 Basic requirements for storage of participant records

The storage of individual participants records must allow a Member State to perform the tasks it is legally required to perform, i.e. the data shall be recorded and stored in a way that allows the managing authorities to perform the tasks related to monitoring and evaluation in conformity with the requirements set out in Article 56 of the CPR and Articles 5 and 19 and Annexes I and II of the ESF Regulation. Therefore all participant records should include, as a minimum: an operation identifier (i.e. a name or unique identifier for each operation that allows to link a participant to a specific operation); some sort of unique personal identifier that allows an individual to be traced and re-contacted (in case they are selected for a representative sample); and dates of starting and leaving an operation. In addition, participant records should include values for all variables needed for indicators in a format that allows for effective assessment of completeness (see also section 4.1.4). Participation records may be stored in single database or in distributed data sources which can be linked via the personal identifier (see box below).

⁴ Aggregated data of these values at IP level are to be reported in Tables 2A, 2B and 2C of the Annual Implementation Reports.

Storage of micro-data: data format and assessment of completeness

Participation records are required to be complete for all personal, non-sensitive variables (see section 4.9.1). This means that validation procedures should be able to distinguish, for each variable, whether or not the necessary information has been recorded – i.e. it must be possible to distinguish between cases of non-response (when data are collected directly from participants) or not-available data (when data are extracted from registers) and real responses.

This has important implications for the format of the fields used to record data in participation records. For example, a typical “Boolean” type field in a database can only have the values “1” or “0” (or “0” and “-1” depending on the database in question), which are equivalent to “Yes/No” or “True/False”. A blank or empty value is not possible – the field will always default to “0” (unless specified to default to 1) when a new record is created. This means that it is not possible to distinguish an incomplete response from a real “0”. It is necessary, therefore, to use a field format that allows this distinction to be made. For example to use a field that allows the values “0” (the default meaning no response or not available), “1” (“Yes”) and “2” (“No”).

Storage of micro-data: location

Although the CPR requires Member States to collect and store detailed data about each participant (i.e. to maintain micro-data) there is no specific requirement for the data to be stored all together in one place or at any particular organisational level. Rather, managing authorities should be able to demonstrate that they can adequately fulfil all tasks that they are required to perform with regard to monitoring and evaluation, i.e. that they have access to a list of all participants supported by each operation which includes unique personal identifiers and information about the period of participation in the operation (start/end dates). Through this list the managing authority should be in a position to either access directly, or request from a third party, the micro-data needed to populate each of the common indicators and programme-specific indicators where relevant. See section 2.2.3 for further guidance and considerations in terms of location of micro-data.

2.2.3 Level of storage of micro-data

As mentioned above, the Regulations do not prescribe how monitoring systems should be organised, so the level at which micro-data are stored is up to the Member States to decide. Participation records with micro-data may be stored by the MA or at lower levels or by third parties provided the MA can fulfil the monitoring requirements, i.e. reporting annual indicators data. They can also be stored altogether in a single database or in distributed sources which can be linked via a personal identifier. Positive and negative aspects of the different possibilities are outlined in this section, and summarised in Table 2.

Micro-data stored at central level

Compared to decentralised systems, the **storage of micro-data at central level** offers, in general, more advantages, fewer risks for data quality, and increased flexibility and usability of the ESF monitoring data:

- ✓ Data can be consistently validated at both individual and aggregated level.

- ✓ In addition to the standard extractions required for indicator purposes, alternative extractions and aggregations can easily be obtained and used for evaluation purposes or to respond to ad hoc requests (e.g. by the monitoring committee).
- ✓ Centralised storage of micro-data makes it easier to combine the data with other databases/registers holding different/additional types of information. For example, a central database maintained by the MA (or other central body) might have a database with all participant identifiers and associated data for questions asked directly from participants, whilst other elements of the monitoring data might be accessed by linking other databases/registers maintained by the statistical office or another ministry, etc. With a decentralised system, combining data from multiple sources is still possible, but significantly more difficult.

The storage of micro-data at central level, however, does not preclude that lower level organisations also store micro-data. Generally, there are two ways in which central storage of micro-data can be put into practice:

- Micro-data are stored by beneficiaries (or organisations in charge of data collection), and transferred to the MA (or central body) via files or e-forms for storage in the central database(s). Note that this option has two particular disadvantages:
 - x Unless fully automated, the transmission of data and combination of separate datasets is potentially resource demanding and increases the administrative burden. There are also technical risks – e.g. loading duplicate records, updates to individual participant records, etc.
 - x Data protection and security arrangements should be in line with the provisions of the national and European legislations on personal data protection. All organisations responsible for collecting, storing and processing personal data must conform to such regulations and ensure technical security of data.
- A centralised system where beneficiaries (or organisations in charge of data collection) input the data directly into a shared database. This option offers more advantages than the previous, but the following should be taken into account:
 - x The setting up of such system requires careful planning and implementation, requiring not only the design of the database structure and the MIS internal system, but also ensuring the software and hardware readiness of organisations responsible for direct data collection, as well providing guidelines and guidance for users and guaranteeing data security.

Decentralised data storage

The **decentralised storage of micro-data** where individual participation records are stored only at lower organisation levels and transferred to the MA only in aggregated form has a number of possible drawbacks compared to centralised storage of micro-data. These intensify when micro-data are stored by a large number of different organisations. Two aspects should be highlighted:

- x Aggregated data (as transferred to the MA) cannot be validated at individual record level, posing a risk for data quality. In order to guarantee data reliability, it should be ensured that all organisations storing micro-data run the same data quality checks for completeness and inconsistency at the level of individual record. In addition, note that once data are aggregated, internal errors cannot be tracked back to beneficiaries to correct the individual data records.
- x The drawing of representative samples requires a single full set of micro-data including all participation records complete with all variables required to ensure representativeness (employment status, age group, education level and household situation), the required breakdowns (IP, gender and category of region if applicable), and entry and exit dates of participants. These will have to be obtained from the organisations storing micro-data, as many times as samples are drawn (see section 4.6.2).

Note that for the reporting of YEI supported interventions, representative samples are required each year for annual reporting of the YEI longer-term result indicators. For these operations, micro-data will have to be obtained from organisations at least once a year.

Table 2 - Comparative table on location of micro-data

	Micro-data stored at central level		Decentralised storage of micro-data	
	Storage of micro-data at MA and lower levels	Centralised system		
Storage of micro-data	- Central (MA) - Lower level organisations (e.g. beneficiaries)	- Central (MA)	-	Lower level organisations (e.g. beneficiaries)
Data quality risk	✓ Low	✓ Low	x	High
Risk for data protection and security	x High	✓ Low	x	High
Drawing of representative sample	✓ Full set of micro-data available to MA	✓ Full set of micro-data available to MA	x	Need to obtain the full set of micro-data from lower level organisations
Administrative burden	x High	✓ Low	x	High
Linkage of databases	✓ Technically possible and feasible	✓ Technically possible and feasible	x	Possible, but more difficult
Flexibility, availability, usability of ESF monitoring data	✓ High	✓ High	x	Low

Setting up/Implementation of the system	x	High number of organisations to set up a system, risk of each organisation adopting a different system	x	Need for planning in advance High demand of resources for initial stages of implementation	x	High number of organisations to set up a system, risk of each organisation adopting a different system
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2.3 Reporting of indicators

2.3.1 Annual data

Indicator values for the 2014–2020 programming period are to be reported on the basis of annual data with no cumulative figures to be provided (these will be calculated automatically by SFC2014 from the annual figures). Changes in the requirements for reporting of indicators compared to the previous programming period are summarised in a box in section 3.1. For further information on reporting requirements see section 3.2.

Output and result indicators: year of reporting

- For **output** indicators, data in the annual implementation reports (AIRs) should be reported in the year participants and entities enter operations. For example, participants entering in 2016 should be reported in the column corresponding to year 2016 in the AIRs.
- Similarly, for **immediate result** indicators, data should be reported in the year participants leave the operation. For example, data on participants leaving the operation in 2018 should be included in the aggregates to be reported in the column corresponding to year 2018 in the AIRs.
- For **longer-term result** indicators, the year of reporting will depend on whether the MA chooses to report cumulative values (Option 1) or annual values (Option2)⁵:
 - > **Option 1 - cumulative values:** data for participants leaving operations up to mid-2018 should be reported in the “cumulative value” column in the AIR to be submitted 2019 and in the final report.
 - > **Option 2 annual values:** if annual values are reported, results should be reported in the year they are recorded. For example, data for participants leaving an operation in end-2016, and for whom longer-term results are recorded at the beginning of 2017 (i.e. six months after leaving), should be reported as 2017 annual data in the AIR).

See also the reporting schedule provided in section 3.1.3 of the main text of the European Commission Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation of *European Cohesion Policy, European Social Fund ESF* (from now on, referred to as EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation).

⁵ See footnote of Table 2A of the Model for the annual and final implementation reports for the Investment for growth and jobs goal, Annex V of the Implementing regulation 2015/207

2.3.2 Fully and partially implemented operations

According to the ESF Regulation (Article 5(3)), "data transmitted for output and result indicators shall relate to values for partially or fully implemented operations". Thus, the reported data do not necessarily have to come only from fully implemented operations but can also relate to operations which are still on-going. The monitoring system should be able to identify those participation records which derive from partially or fully implemented operations.

A **fully implemented operation** is one in which all activities directly involving participants have been completed. For example:

A training operation is considered to be fully implemented after the last training day, when certificates have been handed out to trainees or after their final exam. At this stage there may still be expenditure which has not been incurred or paid (salaries for example) and the final payment to the beneficiary may follow considerably later⁶.

A **partially implemented operation** is one in which at least one activity directly involving participants is still ongoing. For example:

A one year training operation where participants have attended the first 3 months of training.

For each indicator, data collected from partially and fully implemented operations shall be reported in the same dataset, i.e. data related to fully implemented operations do not need to be reported separately from data related to partially implemented operations (see Example 1 and Example 2).

Example 1: Reporting partially implemented operations

An operation runs for 2 years. In the first year, 100 persons participate and a further 500 in the second year.

It is not necessary to wait until end of year 2 (when the operation is fully implemented) to report the total of 600. The managing authority can report the annual values as follows:

→AIR Year 1: 100 participants entered the operation.

→AIR Year 2: 500 participants entered the operation.

The cumulative value of 600 participants will be automatically calculated by SFC in year 2.

Example 2: Reporting only fully implemented operations

An operation runs for 2 years. In the first year, 100 persons participate in this operation and a further 500 in the second year. The managing authority has decided that only data for fully implemented operations will be reported.

→AIR Year 1: no participant will be reported for that operation.

→AIR Year 2: two annual values should be reported: 100 participants for year 1, and 500 for year 2.

The cumulative value of 600 participants will be automatically calculated by SFC in year 2.

⁶ For completed operations that involve physical investment the Regulation uses the term physically completed.

2.3.3 Level of reporting

For routine reporting (in the AIRs), common and programme-specific indicators have to be reported by investment priority and by category of region. YEI reporting does not require a breakdown by category of region.

2.3.4 Comprehensive reporting

Values for all common indicators have to be reported for all investment priorities (IP) chosen. Zero values may be reported in the case that no relevant value was recorded under that indicator in the IP concerned. For example, there may be zero participants aged under 25 for operations funded under the investment priority on healthy and active ageing.

Programme-specific indicators are to be collected for all operations within the IP for which they have been set. There is no requirement to collect and report data on programme-specific indicators for all IPs in the OP.

Technical assistance priorities are not required to report on common indicators.

2.3.5 Reporting result indicators data with set target

When a target has been set for either immediate or longer-term common result indicators, two figures should be reported in the AIR: one relating to the reference population to which the target has been set (i.e. common output indicator used as a basis) and one for all participants under the IP.

2.3.6 Obligatory breakdown by gender

All **common** indicators related to participants must be broken down by gender (i.e. include separate values for men and for women). For programme-specific indicators, where applicable, data shall also be broken down by gender. This means that whenever a programme-specific indicator refers to gender (e.g. “number of women unemployed with a migrant background”), it is a requirement to report data broken by gender. If this is not the case (i.e. no reference is made to gender in the name of the programme-specific indicator), then data can be reported only for the total.

2.3.7 Grand total of participants

The “grand total of participants” covers all supported participants, including those for which the basic data (i.e. the common output indicators covering personal non-sensitive data) could not be collected or are incomplete. This total should be reported in the last row of Table 4A of the AIR (see section 3.1.1 of the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation).

2.4 Data transmission

2.4.1 Electronic transmission

Data for the common indicators, YEI indicators and programme-specific indicators have to be transmitted electronically to the European Commission (via the SFC2014) as structured data as part of implementation reports.

2.5 Data quality

2.5.1 Poor quality data risks suspension of payment

The Regulations for the 2014-2020 period place high store on the quality of data. Managing authorities in each country have responsibility for delivering data according to the specifications of the Regulations and this data is expected to be of good quality, reliable and, where relevant and appropriate, to facilitate aggregation at EU level. Indeed, Article 142 of the CPR allows the Commission to suspend all or part of the interim payments at the level of the priorities or OPs in the case *“there is a serious deficiency in the quality and reliability of the monitoring system or of the data on common and specific indicators”*.

2.5.2 What is quality?

Eurostat (the statistical office of the European Commission) defines *quality* of data used for statistics in relation to six criteria: relevance, accuracy, timeliness and punctuality, accessibility and clarity, comparability, and coherence⁷. Three elements are particularly relevant to ESF monitoring systems:

- **Accuracy**, which refers to the correct recording of the actual situation and implies that monitoring systems should have the capacity to support retroactive correction of data in case of recording errors;
- **Comparability**, which refers to comparison through time and between countries and is therefore dependent on adherence to common definitions in the collection and treatment of data;
- **Coherence**, which refers to the adequacy of data to be reliably combined in different ways.

2.5.3 Implications of the need for quality

The need to ensure quality of data has a number of implications in terms of procedures to be followed in the collection and processing of data:

- **Completeness of data.** The Regulations require values for all indicators to be provided for all chosen investment priorities. This implies that the underlying **participation records must be complete for all variables of personal data**. In particular, participation records that are incomplete for any variables captured by the output indicators must be excluded from any process of aggregation used to produce these indicators. The only exceptions may be variables covering “sensitive” personal information⁸. See section 4.9.1 for further clarification.
- **Comprehensive validation.** All data should be subject to basic validation procedures to ensure that data are complete and internally consistent. See section 4.9 for details on the kinds of tests that might be applied.

⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/64157/4373735/02-ESS-quality-definition.pdf/f0fdc8d8-6a9b-48e8-a636-9a34d073410f>

⁸ This does not refer to the two output indicators "from rural areas" and "homeless or housing exclusion" which are based on a representative sample.

3 Indicators and reporting

3.1 Overview of indicators

In order to assess progress with implementation and the achievement of objectives, ESF monitoring for the 2014-2020 programming period uses a number of different types of indicators:

- Financial indicators relating to expenditure allocated (not covered in this guidance)
- Common output indicators – relating to operations supported
 - Entities
 - Participants
- Common result indicators (participants only) – to monitor progress of expected effect, relating to the priority concerned
 - Immediate result (upon leaving)
 - Longer-term result (6 months after leaving)
- YEI result indicators (participants only)
 - Immediate result (upon leaving)
 - Longer-term result (6 months after leaving)
- Programme-specific output and result indicators (not covered in this guidance)

The common indicators under each category are listed and defined in the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation. All of the common output indicators related to entities and the common result indicators are **new requirements** compared to the previous period. The [box](#) below summarises changes in the specification of output indicators related to participants when compared to Annex XXIII of the Commission implementing Regulation of the previous programming period⁹.

Changes from previous programming period (output indicators) – Annex XXIII

Total participants no longer required

- The total number of participants in each year does not need to be reported as a separate value but will be automatically calculated on the basis of the output indicators by labour market status (sum of unemployed, including long-term unemployed + inactive + employed, including self-employed). Note that this is the only combination of output indicators that can be used to derive total participants¹⁰. In all other cases the different breakdowns (e.g. by age or by level of educational attainment) do not cover all parameter values (e.g. there is no indicator covering participants aged 25-54).

Annual data cover entrants only

- For the 2007-2013 programming period, the required annual data covered the number of participants entering each operation, the number leaving in the year and the number carried

⁹ Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 of 8 December 2006:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1398169431214&uri=CELEX:02006R1828-20111201>

¹⁰ Total participants here refers to the total number of participants as recorded for monitoring purposes, which may not be the same as the total number of persons supported. The latter number is not part of the routine monitoring data but should be reported separately each year in the framework of the AIR - see section 4.9.1.

over from the previous year. In the new period the output indicators refer only to new starts on an operation (i.e. entrants).

Age

- "Below 25" is not limited to the age-group 15-24 years¹¹
- "Above 54" is not limited to the age-group 55-64 years¹²

Labour market (LM) situation

- Self-employed participants are included within the category of employed and are not reported separately
- Participants who are inactive and **not** in education or training are included in the overall category of inactive and then as a sub-group

Educational attainment

- Upper secondary (ISCED 3) and post-secondary education (ISCED 4) are combined in one category (ISCED 3 or ISCED 4)
- Tertiary education now goes up to ISCED 8 level (instead of ISCED 6 under the previous ISCED classification)

Disadvantage

- Migrants and minorities (including Roma) are combined in a single indicator
- In addition, the common indicators include a number of output indicators which are new in comparison to Annex XXIII.

3.2 Reporting schedule

From 2016 until (and including) 2023 and in the final report in 2025, Member States are required to submit annual reports on the implementation of each programme in the previous financial year (Annual Implementation Report, AIR) in accordance with the reporting requirements outlined above. Failure to submit a report of sufficient quality by the prescribed deadlines may result in the suspension of payments.

"Light" annual implementation reports will be submitted in 2015 (for YEI), 2016, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, whilst more comprehensive reports are required in 2017, 2019 and in the final implementation report in 2025.

For operations supported by the YEI, specific YEI indicators are required in addition to the common ESF indicators. For these operations, YEI indicators set out in Annex II and the common output and immediate result indicators defined in Annex I of the ESF Regulation have to be reported annually starting in 2015.

¹¹ Participants aged 25 should not be counted under the indicator "Below 25".

¹² Participants aged 54 should not be counted under the indicator "Above 54".

3.3 Indicators as a routine monitoring tool

Monitoring of programmes is intended to provide information that can be used to assess implementation and performance. The data collected also form the basis for evaluation of longer-term results and impacts. It is important, however, to recognise that monitoring is not undertaken simply to satisfy formal reporting requirements. Rather, the data collected should be used on an ongoing basis in order to support the day-to-day management of the programmes and ensure effective use of the ESF funds. For example, monitoring data represent a vital tool for identifying situations where programmes are not fulfilling expectations and where action may be needed to undertake corrective measures.

It is recommended that the managing authority provides updated monitoring data sets (e.g. including updated values for all indicators) to each meeting of the monitoring committee. This will allow the monitoring committee to examine in detail all issues that affect the performance of the programme.

4 Practical guidance on key issues

4.1 Participants and participation records: some basic rules

4.1.1 Who should be counted as a participant?

According to Annex I of the ESF regulation, **participants** are “persons benefiting directly from an ESF intervention who can be identified and asked for their characteristics, and for whom specific expenditure is earmarked”.

Participants need to be defined on the basis of the objectives and the target group(s) of the operation; individuals benefiting indirectly are not to be counted as participants (see Example 3 and Example 4). All persons fulfilling the above definition should be counted equally, irrespective of whether they complete the planned activities or leave early (see Example 11).

Example 3: Persons benefiting indirectly are not participants

Under the investment priority "Reducing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good-quality early childhood, primary and secondary education" a school gets support for curriculum development.

The support is provided to the school and not directly to each pupil who therefore benefits only indirectly (from the improved curriculum).

→The pupils should not be considered as participants and are therefore not counted under the common indicators.

Example 4: Counting participants based on the objectives of the operation

An operation aims to support inactive people with disabilities and help them to move into employment (individualised support is provided). To implement this, PES staff members receive some training to deal with the barriers faced by this group. A target is set on the number of assisted inactive people with disabilities, for whom expenditure is earmarked, and changes in their situation are expected.

- ✓ Inactive people with disabilities should be counted as participants.
- x PES staff members should not be counted as participants as they are not the target group and no results are expected for them.

An operation provides training to career guidance counsellors with the aim to improve, expand (or create) career guidance services in the PES. The objective of the operation is to improve the PES capacity and the service is then open to all registered unemployed.

- ✓ PES career counsellors should be counted as participants.
- x Registered unemployed should not be counted as participants; they are not targeted and are benefitting indirectly from the ESF support.

4.1.2 Counting participants in capacity building operations

As outlined above, the three criteria to count a participant laid down in the ESF regulation (benefiting directly, can be identified and asked for personal data, and with earmarked expenditure) should be considered together with the specific objectives and the expected results of the operation.

The [Guidance Document on Indicators of Public Administration Capacity Building](#) (Annex E of the EC Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation) describes capacity building as “the investment in the ability of public authorities to perform their functions”. Capacity building activities can support individuals (employees of the public/private sector) or on entities. The support to individuals entails the upgrading of skills and competences (Example 5), whilst actions supporting entities can involve interventions of three types: introducing or improving processes (Example 6), organisational or structural changes (Example 7) or investment of resources (Example 8). Note that interventions that only support entities should generally not have individual participants.

Typically, capacity building actions aim to benefit (public or private) providers of services, and participants to be considered should be staff of service providers. The final users/recipients of such services should not be counted as participants (see Example 4 and Example 5). This does not preclude, however, that the performance of these interventions is monitored by measuring the number of final users/recipients using programme-specific indicators.

Note: when capacity building operations aim at supporting public entities, they should be considered under the common output indicator “number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level”. See section 5.8.3 for more guidance on this indicator.

More detailed guidance on programme-specific indicators dealing with capacity building in public administration is available in the [Guidance Document on Indicators of Public Administration Capacity Building](#) (Annex E of the EC Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation).

Example 5: Capacity building operations focusing on individuals

An ESF operation aims to improve the professional skills of staff working with persons at risk of social exclusion in order to increase their efficiency in service delivery.

- ✓ Social workers should be counted as participants; the operation is targeted at them.
- x Individuals at risk of social exclusion (final recipients of social services) should not be considered as participants; they benefit indirectly from the operation.

→ Common output indicator "number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level" is relevant and should be recorded accordingly.

→ Progress can also be monitored by setting up programme-specific indicators (e.g. number of users of improved services, e.g. number of cases dealt by social workers, etc.).

Example 6: Capacity building operations focusing on entities (I): introducing/improving processes

An ESF operation supports the development and implementation of a certification of quality standard for schools and training centres, with the objective of improving the education system.

x Neither teachers nor students from these schools and training centres should be counted as participants. They both benefit indirectly from the ESF support.

→Common indicators on participants are not relevant: data will be reported as zero.

→Common output indicator "number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level" is relevant and should be recorded accordingly.

→Progress can also be monitored by setting up programme-specific indicators. For example, "number of supported vocational training centres" (output indicator), "number of supported vocational training centres where new quality management system has been fully implemented (immediate result indicator).

Example 7: Capacity building operation focusing on entities (II): organisational or structural changes

An ESF operation funds the reorganisation of the public employment services' (PES) structures in order to optimise the provision of services.

x PES staff members should not be counted as participants as they are not the target group and no results are expected for them.

x Jobseekers using the PES services (i.e. the final recipients) should not be considered as participants. They benefit indirectly from the ESF support.

→Common indicators on participants are not relevant (data will be reported as zero).

→Common output indicator "number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level" is relevant.

→Progress can also be monitored by setting up programme-specific indicators (e.g. number of users of reorganised PES offices).

Example 8: Capacity building operation focusing on entities (III): investment of resources

An ESF operation funds the salary of social workers in order to provide outreach services to disadvantaged groups via new community centres.

x Social workers should not be considered as participants, as they are not the target group and do not benefit directly from the ESF operation (the objective is not to provide employment).

x Final recipients of the social services should not be considered participants either; they are benefitting indirectly from the operation and they do not receive personalised services nor individualised follow-up.

→Common indicators on participants are not relevant (data will be reported as zero).

→Common output indicator "number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level" is relevant.

→Progress can also be monitored by setting up programme-specific indicators (e.g. number of users of the new community centres).

4.1.3 Minimum threshold for counting individuals as participants

The completeness requirement combined with the earmarked expenditure requirement means that persons participating in open-door events or benefitting from un-personalised e-services should not be counted as participants. Therefore, data collection should be limited to targeted support that is designed to directly benefit selected identifiable individuals (i.e. offered to a defined target group and not for the general public).

Managing Authorities can decide not to consider participants in very short-term interventions and set up a limit/threshold of minimum intensity of support in order for participants to be counted (such as “at least 1 day”). It is advisable though to distinguish between different types of interventions and allow different thresholds per type of intervention (e.g. one threshold for training interventions and a different threshold for counselling interventions).

Note however, **that a consistent approach should be followed within the same operation and that thresholds** should be set per operation, not per intervention or per individual. Therefore, participants who leave early should not be counted differently than those who complete the operation (all individuals taking part should be either counted or not). It is advisable that the principles for counting or not counting participants are laid down.

Finally all individuals who are considered as participants should be counted in the grand total of participants even if their personal data are incomplete (e.g. because they refused to provide the information, or are not covered by the registers). However persons who are not considered participants should not be reported either in the indicator data or in the grand total of participants.

Example 9: Minimum thresholds per operation

a) A career counselling programme, which includes a series of interviews with a counsellor (up to 5 hours) and two sessions of preparation of CVs (4 hours):

→If the threshold is set at 32 hours, this operation does not reach that limit, thus individuals participating in this operation will not be counted as participants in the monitoring data (nor in the grand total of participants).

b) A training course for nurses to improve services to the elderly, consisting of 10h/week during 10 weeks (i.e. 100 hours in total):

→If the threshold is set at 75 hours, all nurses participating in the training shall be counted as participants, irrespective of whether they finish the course or not. For example, a nurse who started the course but leaves after the first week should be counted as a participant (i.e. data for common and programme-specific indicators should be collected and reported) even though s/he has not completed the 75 hours limit.

c) A training programme offered to job seekers is made of several courses (within the same operation); some exceeding the set threshold and some not:

→All individuals taking part in any of the individual courses proposed by the programme should be counted as participants, irrespective of the number of courses they take part in, or whether they complete these or not.

4.1.4 Participation records

A **participation record** is a computerised record of a **participant's** characteristics within the scope of a single **operation**. As a minimum, a participation record should include:

- some sort of unique personal identifier;
- operation identifier (this will provide information on operation start/end dates, financing, IP, category of region, etc.);
- the date on which a participant first started activities within the operation (start date);
- the date on which a participant last participated in activities within the operation (leaving date);
- the capacity to record the personal information needed to compile all common indicators (see section 4.9.1);
- the capacity to trace and re-contact the participant (see section 4.6).

4.1.5 Participants counted once per operation

A **participant** should be counted only once in any given operation. An individual may be counted as a participant in more than one operation but never more than once per operation (for output indicators).

An individual that benefits from support provided by more than one project within an operation is always considered as the same participant with one associated participation record. The start date is the date on which s/he starts on the first project in a series and the leaving date is the date that s/he leaves the last project in the series.

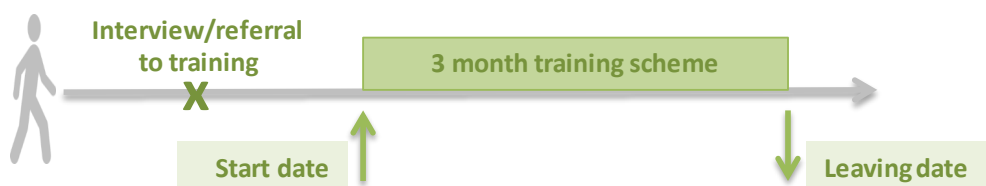
If a participant leaves an operation but returns at a later date there is still only one participation record. In this case, the existing participation record should be updated. The start date and information related to output indicators should always refer to the first participation and should therefore not be changed. On a second participation, the leaving date and data related to result indicators should be updated to reflect the situation on final exit. Revisions of individual participation records will have to be propagated up to the relevant aggregate result indicators.

→See [annex](#) and section 4.2.1 for definitions of an **operation** and a **project**.

4.1.6 Examples of participation records

Example 10: Regular participation

A participant joins a single project within an operation, completes the planned activity and leaves.

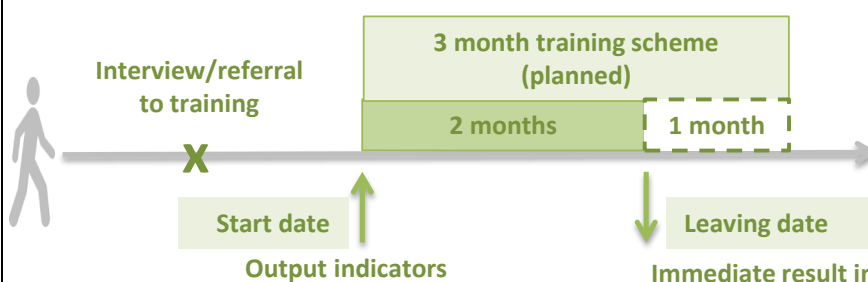


Output indicators refer to situation **on entry** to an operation (i.e. on the **start date**, which here is the first day of training). If information is collected at interview/referral point it must be verified on entry.

Immediate result indicators refer to situation at point **of exit** from the operation (i.e. on the **leaving date**), or within 4 weeks (after) of this point.

Example 11: Regular participation with early exit

A participant joins a single project within an operation but does not complete the planned activity and therefore leaves earlier than expected. The leaving date, and therefore the point to which immediate result indicators should apply, is always the date that the participant leaves the operation and not the planned exit date.



Output indicators

Immediate result indicators refer to situation **on exit** from the operation (i.e. the **leaving date or within 4 weeks of that date**) even if the exit is earlier than planned.

Note: for YEI supported operations, information about whether a participant completes the intervention or not is important for some of the YEI indicators (see section 5.10.1).

Example 12: Participation in multiple projects within an operation

An individual that benefits from more than one project within an operation (e.g. as elements of a personalised trajectory) is only counted once for output indicators. There is a single participation record with one start date and one leaving date representing, respectively, the date of entry to the first project in the series and the date of exit from the last project in the series (i.e. the date of entering and of exiting the operation as a whole).

Take the example of a person who is a recovering substance abuser. S/he might be referred first to psychological counselling provided by an NGO. After some counselling sessions s/he is considered fit for work but in need of some basic IT training in order to ensure that the participant is adequately equipped for the type of work that s/he is interested in.

[continued ...]

[... continued]

This training is provided, as a separate project within the operation, by a specialist IT training centre. Once the training is completed, the beneficiary arranges a 3-month work placement that is subsidised by the same operation.

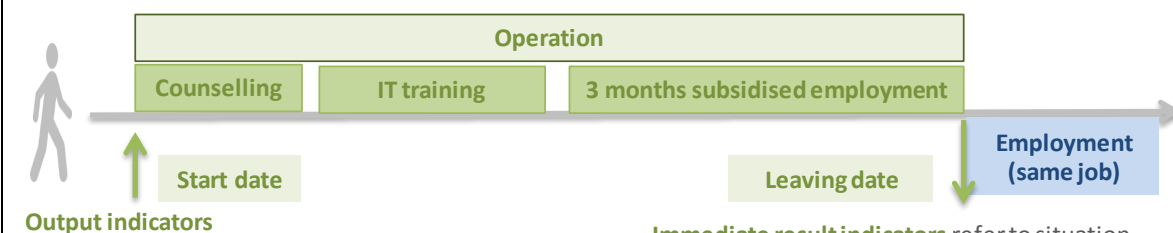
At the end of this work experience the participant registers with the PES as unemployed and is actively seeking work. For the immediate result indicators, the participant (who was inactive before joining the operation) would be recorded as newly engaged in job seeking on leaving. S/he might also be recorded as having gained a qualification on leaving, depending on the outcome of the IT training and whether or not this offered any certification.



Output indicators refer to situation **on entry to operation** (i.e. on the **start date** which is the first day of any activity within the operation). If information is collected at interview/referral point it must be verified.

Immediate result indicators refer to the situation **on exit from the operation** (i.e. on the **leaving date**, or the last day of any activity within the operation, which in this case is the end of the 3-month subsidised work placement).

The leaving date is always the last date on which the participant was participating in an activity financed (or partly financed) by the operation. In the above example, this is obvious because the status of the participant changes at the leaving date (from employed to unemployed). If, in the same scenario to that point, the employer decides to keep the participant on after the end of the subsidy period then the participant continues to be engaged in the same job and his/her status does not change (i.e. continuously employed). In this case the leaving date is still the end of the subsidy period but the immediate result indicator will be different, recording the participant as “in employment upon leaving” rather than as “engaged in job searching on leaving”.



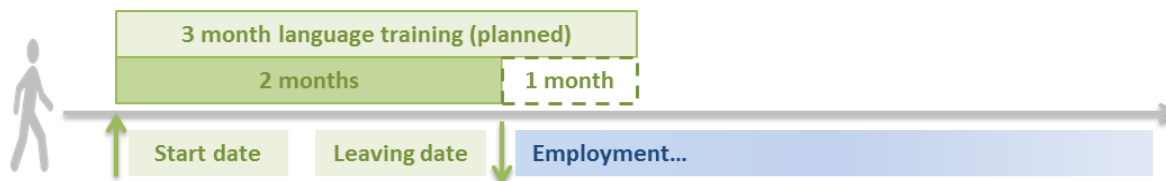
Output indicators

Immediate result indicators refer to situation **on exit from the operation** (i.e. on the **leaving date**, or the last day of any activity within the operation, which in this case is the end of the 3-month subsidised work placement).

Example 13: Exit and return to the same operation

A participant can only be counted once within an operation irrespective of the number of times that s/he joins or leaves the same operation.

Take the example of a newly arrived migrant with a number of years of experience in working in his/her home country, but who is unable to speak the language of the country to which s/he has moved. The participant is referred to an intensive language training course that is planned to last 3 months. After 2 months s/he finds a job through a personal contact and drops out of the training. At this point a leaving date is recorded and the immediate result is that the participant is in employment on leaving.



Output indicators refer to the situation on **entry to the operation** (i.e. on the **start date**, which in this case is the first day of training).

Immediate result indicators refer to situation on **exit from the operation** (i.e. on the **leaving date**, which in this case is the date that the participant dropped out of the training course in order to take up a job).

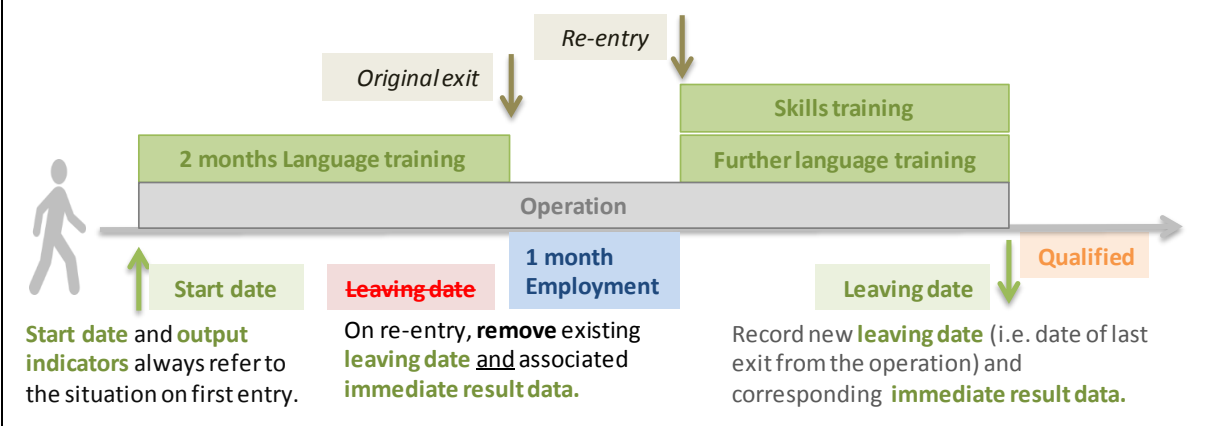
In practice, the job did not work out well. There were difficulties in communication and the employer found that the participant's skills were not up to the standard required. The participant was taken back into the operation and placed on two part-time courses, one to improve language skills and one to help refine existing work skills and bring them up to the standard required by employers in the new country. This is a re-entry into the same operation.

A participant can only be counted once within an operation, therefore the existing participation record has to be updated. The start date and data for output indicators are not changed - these should always refer to the date of first entry to the operation and the personal situation at that time. At the point of re-entry, however, the existing leaving date and all data related to result indicators should be cleared since they are no longer applicable. A participation record for an individual still involved in an operation should not have a leaving date or associated result data. When the participant leaves the operation for a second time then a new leaving date and associated result data should be recorded.

Changes made to individual participation records will have to be propagated upwards to the relevant aggregate result indicators. Note that this could imply changes in more than one year. In the case that the second exit is in a different calendar year from the first exit then the relevant result indicator(s) in the first year – in this example “in employment on leaving” - will have to be reduced by one and the participant will count instead as a result in the second year – in this case as “gaining a qualification upon leaving”.

[continued ...]

[... continued]



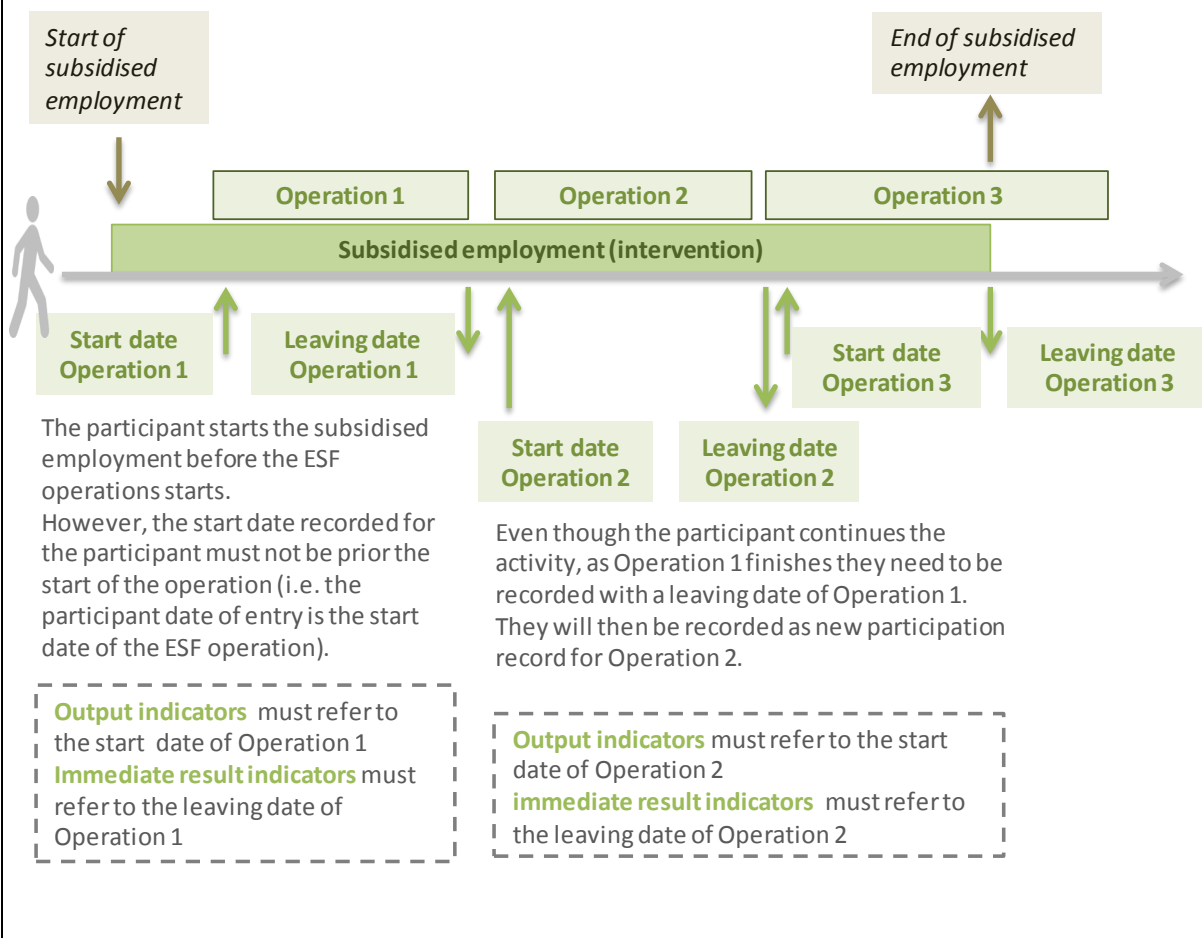
Example 14: Participation in multiple operations when the activity is continuous

As a rule, participants can be counted only once per operation but should be counted in each different operation in which they participate. This applies even when the activity they are participating in is continuous.

In some cases ESF funding may be used to provide fixed-term (financial) support to an ongoing intervention, which is then renewed periodically (e.g. beneficiaries re-apply each year), each time as a new operation. In this case, it is possible for a single participation to bridge multiple operations – i.e. the person joins the intervention during one operation (or year) and leaves during the next (or even a later) operation (or year). In this case, even though the participant is continuing in the same activity/intervention, s/he must be counted as a participant in each operation because this is the unit of observation for monitoring purposes and it is imperative to be able to link the participant data with claims for expenditure. It means that the participant will be counted in both output and result indicators for each successive operation.

[continued ...]

[... continued]

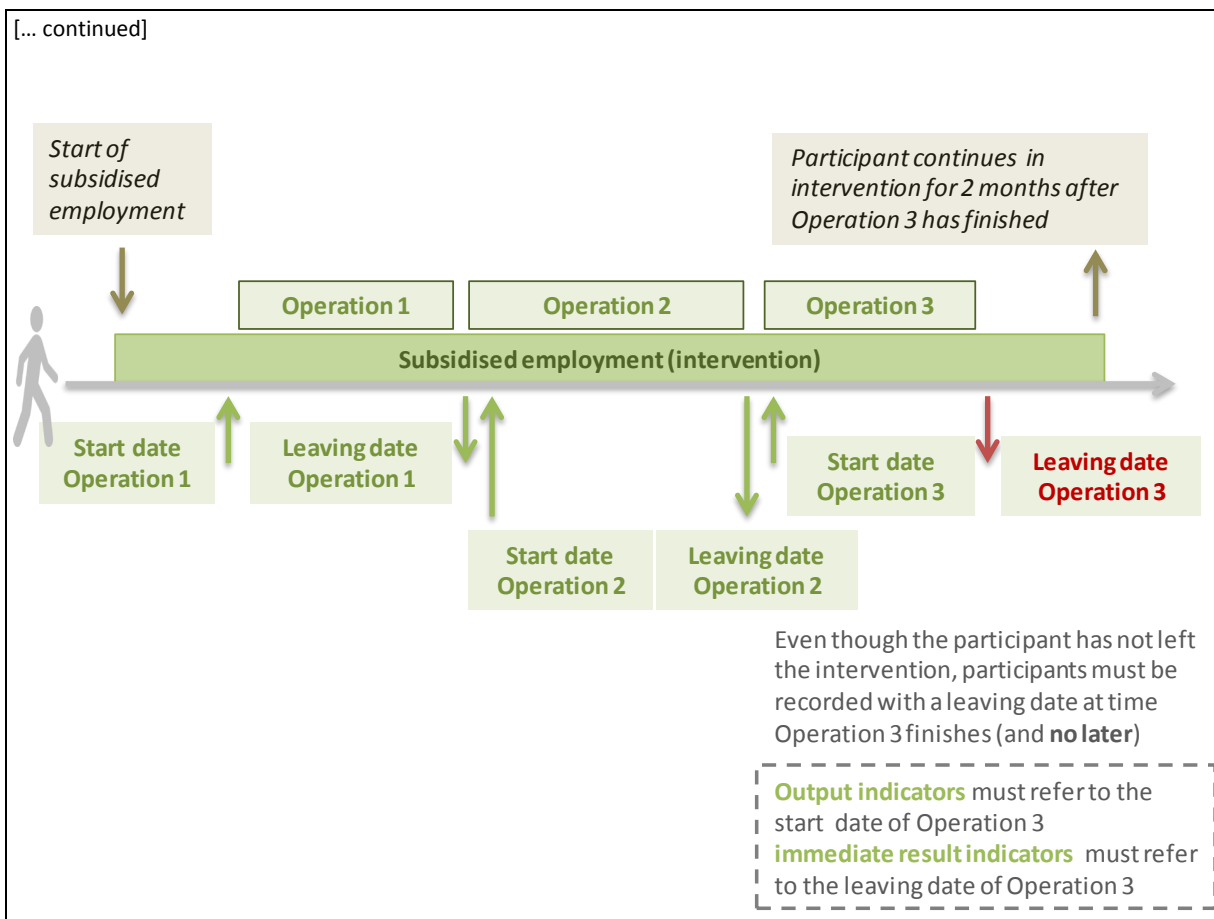


Example 15: Participation continues after the end of an operation

Where an ESF operation provides fixed-term (financial) support to an ongoing intervention then it is possible for a person that joined the intervention during the supported period to continue participating in the intervention after the end of the operation.

In this case, following the logic of the previous example, although the participant has not left the intervention it has to be considered that s/he has left the operation on the date that it ends. Therefore the leaving date in the participation record would be recorded as the end of the operation and the immediate result indicator should refer to his/her situation at that time. Similarly, the longer-term result indicator should refer to the situation of the participant 6 months after the recorded leaving date, irrespective of whether or not they have left the intervention at this stage.

[... continued]



4.2 Entities and projects

The four common output indicators dealing with support for “entities” (for a list of the indicators on entities see section 5.8.6) use two different units of observation. In three cases the observation unit is the **project**, while in the fourth it is the **enterprise (micro, small and medium-sized)**.

4.2.1 What is a project?

A **project** is the lowest unit of organisation of ESF funded activities. It covers an activity or group of activities implemented by an economic operator within the context of an **operation**. In some cases an operation constitutes a single project and the two terms effectively have the same meaning but in other cases an operation may encompass several projects implemented by one or more economic operators. (See [Glossary of terms](#) and [Organisation of ESF monitoring](#) in annex.)

A **project record** is a computerised record of a **project** within the scope of a single **operation**. As a minimum, a project record should include:

- project identifier;
- project start date (may or may not be the same as the operation start date);
- project end date (may or may not be the same as the operation end date);
- operation identifier (this will provide information on operation start/end dates, financing, IP, category of region);
- information on the type of economic operator responsible for implementation of the project (according to the classification in the relevant indicators);

- information on whether micro, small and medium-sized enterprises are supported by the project;
- categorised information on whether the project targets sustainable participation and the progress of women in employment.

Note: In the same way as for participant records, a given project can be recorded only once in any given operation and per indicator. **Projects may be counted in more than one indicator but never more than once per operation and per indicator.**

→ See section 5.7 on [Data relating to entities](#).

4.2.2 What is an entity?

In the context of the ESF, **entities** are understood not as physical individual persons but as organisations. That is, a group of people formally organised to pursue a collective objective.

Entities can either **implement** - fully or partially - or **be supported** by projects. In the latter case, in the same way as for participants (see section 4.1.1), entities should only be counted when they benefit directly from ESF support that incurs expenditure. Entities include companies, public service providers, universities and research institutes, non-governmental organisations, social partner organisations, etc. As a general rule, SMEs acting as beneficiaries should not be considered as entities benefitting from support.

Example 16: Direct and indirect support of SMEs

Direct support targets the SME itself. Such support might aim to help the SME implement organisational change or promote innovation.

→ In this case, the entity is counted in the relevant indicator on entities (number of supported SMEs)

*On the other hand, if one or more employees of an SME participate in an ESF funded IT training programme then the SME might **benefit indirectly** because of the increased human capital of its staff.*

→ Since the support was provided directly to the employee(s) participants should be counted in the relevant indicators, but not the entity.

Only one common indicator deals with the number of entities supported. In line with the aim to support the development and competitiveness of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), this indicator counts the number of [SMEs supported](#). However, Member States are encouraged to set up additional programme-specific indicators on other type of entities targeted by their Operational Programmes (OPs) in order to better monitor the achievement of their objectives.

Note: Entities might benefit directly from ESF via several projects in the same operation, or even in different operations. For reporting purposes entities should be treated in the same way as participants, i.e. an entity should be counted only once per operation, but may be counted in multiple operations.

An **entity record** is a computerised record of an **entity** within the scope of a single **operation**. As a minimum, an entity record should include:

- entity identifier
- entry date (the date on which the entity first benefitted from support delivered by the operation)
- exit date (the date on which the aforementioned support ended);
- operation identifier (this will provide information on operation start/end dates, financing, IP, category of region).

4.3 Unit of observation: operations

4.3.1 What is an operation?

According to Article 2 of the Common Provision Regulation (1303/2013), an operation is defined as *“a project, contract, action or group of projects **selected by the managing authorities** of the programmes concerned, or under their responsibility, that contributes to the objectives of a priority or priorities; in the context of financial instruments, an operation is constituted by the financial contributions from a programme to financial instruments and the subsequent financial support provided by those financial instruments”*^{13,14}.

It is thus open for managing authorities to define what constitutes an operation. In fact, an operation may be:

- a) single project/activity
- b) group of projects/activities
- c) part of a continuous activity.

In all cases, each participant should have a single participation record per operation and thus, should be counted only once per operation irrespective of the number of times that s/he leaves and then re-enters the same operation. The entry and exit dates of participants (and entities if applicable) are determined at the level of operation.

Note that it is also possible that a project continues after the end of the ESF operation. In this case, following the logic of Example 15, although the participant has not left the project it has to be considered that s/he has left the operation on the date that it ends.

Operations, beneficiaries and other organisations

Operations are initiated and/or implemented by beneficiaries. An operation can have several providers, project partners, etc.

Organisations acting as beneficiaries can implement or initiate more than one operation.

¹³ For more info on financial instruments see: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/thefunds/fin_inst/pdf/fi_esif_2014_2020.pdf

¹⁴ Article 5 of Regulation 480/2014 states that *“Grants for technical support may be combined with financial instruments in a single operation pursuant to Article 37(7) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 only for the purpose of technical preparation of the prospective investment for the benefit of the final recipient to be supported by that operation”*.

4.3.2 How to define an operation?

Operations should be defined in a way that they contribute to the objectives of the operational programme and, in particular, to the specific objectives of the investment priority (IP) under which the operation is implemented. Indicator monitoring data should be in line with the specific objectives of the IP and should be able to capture the achievement of results. The target groups and the type of intervention/action should be taken into consideration for defining operations. On the one hand, if too many projects are combined in a single operation, it might be difficult to capture the changes in the participant's situation as a result of support. On the other hand, if there is a separate operation for every project/activity, the complexity of implementation and the administrative burden (including reporting requirements – see section 4.3.3) both increase, and some "results" may not be particularly meaningful.

Examples of cases where multiple projects/activities may efficiently be combined as a single operation include:

- *“Pathway” type of interventions:* where an intervention has one common objective and there are a series of steps that participants typically benefit from, even if not all participants benefit from every activity. Typical examples could be jobseekers counselling sessions that are followed by training (possibly consisting of several modules), and an insertion pathway consisting of different activities/steps (e.g. for ex-convicts or prisoners). In this case treatment as a single operation is preferred. This will avoid inflation of participant numbers and ensure that results remain relevant to the overall objectives.
- *Interventions with the same objective but consisting of slightly different modules or projects:* several projects provide similar support to more than one target groups, or are implemented in different areas. If there are shared objectives and a single organisation acting as the beneficiary then it would be appropriate to treat this as a group of projects within a single operation.

4.3.3 Reporting requirements for operations

Annex III of Delegated Regulation 480/2013 includes a list of 113 data fields to be recorded and stored in a computerised form in the monitoring system for each operation; items 5-22 refer to data on operations¹⁵.

An operation can be supported by more than one operational programme, priority or Fund, or under more than one category of region. In such cases, though, all data “shall be recorded in a manner that allows the data to be retrieved broken down by operational programme, priority, Fund or category of region” (Art.24 (3) 480/2014).

4.4 Data collection – direct contact with participants

It is down to Member States and managing authorities to determine the most effective way of collecting the information about each participant required for monitoring purposes. Whatever methods are used, it is crucial to pay attention to the issue of [data quality](#). This is particularly

¹⁵ COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) No 480/2014 of 3 March 2014: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32014R0480&from=EN>

relevant when the information is collected through direct contact with participants, when there are risks that the different bodies involved in data collection (e.g. beneficiaries or project operators) do not apply the same standards or definitions, or that these are not communicated effectively to participants who may then interpret the questions they are asked in different ways. There are a number of practical steps that managing authorities can be taken to reduce such risks.

4.4.1 Common definitions – national language and context

Irrespective of which organisations ultimately collect information from participants, it is the managing authorities that have responsibility to ensure the application of common definitions. The EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation provides definitions for all common indicators/variables, including reference to the source of internationally accepted definitions where relevant. However, the guidance also allows for the application of national definitions in cases where no generally agreed international definition is available (e.g. in relation to what constitutes a disadvantage). In both cases, this annex of practical guidance gives further clarifications and examples.

However, it is recommended that managing authorities ensure that appropriate national level guidance is provided to supplement and clarify the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation in such a way that definitions for all common indicators and any additional programme-specific indicators are clear and readily understood and applicable in the national context. For example, to link ISCED definitions of educational level to the different levels of schooling and qualification applicable in the country concerned. Further, it is strongly recommended that such guidance is provided in the national language to avoid linguistic misinterpretation. The national guidance document should be made publicly available and managing authorities should have procedures in place to ensure that all beneficiaries adhere to the definitions and guidelines therein.

4.4.2 Standard procedures

In addition to common definitions and guidelines, common standards and procedures to be followed by all organisations involved in data collection will help to ensure data quality. It is recommended that managing authorities prepare a set of standards and procedures and take steps to ensure that these are implemented by all beneficiaries and other bodies involved in direct collection of data.

A standard questionnaire covering all variables for which information is to be collected directly from participants and accompanied by clear guidelines on its implementation would be a fundamental first step towards ensuring data quality. The guidelines should outline how the questionnaire is intended to be completed (e.g. via interview or directly on paper by the participant), what to do in case a participant declines to provide some information, procedures for certifying the results (e.g. paper record with signature of participant). Either the questionnaire (if to be presented directly to participants) or the guidelines should include clear explanations on how to interpret and answer each question and prepared in a way that can be understood by participants. This is particularly important in relation to characteristics such as the labour market status of participants where the guideline should ensure that, for example, people who are registered unemployed but at the same time a full-time student are recorded as inactive and not as unemployed. See section 5.3 for further guidance.

Procedures should also cover points such as the timing of the data collection. The various output, immediate result and longer-term result indicators are defined to refer to the situation of participants respectively at the point of starting on the operation, on leaving the operation, and six months after leaving the operation. The quality of data depends on this timing being respected. For example, in the case that participants are interviewed (and personal data collected) some time before actually starting on a training programme then the beneficiary should ensure that the information collected is verified by the participant on starting the programme and that any changes are reflected in updates to the relevant participation record. A signed paper record confirming all personal details would be useful evidence for quality checking. The monitoring system could register if such a record exists.

4.5 Data collection – use of registers

In the 2007-2013 programming period, managing authorities in a number of Member States used information from existing national registers (e.g. population register, social insurance register, unemployment register, etc.) in order to complete at least some of the data required for ESF monitoring purposes. Further countries have indicated that they intend to start using register data for the 2014-2020 period.

Where the data available in registers comply with the definitions and specifications laid down in the ESF Regulation and are available within the required reporting timeframe then this approach is to be recommended since it avoids the inefficiency of collecting again information that already exists. However, it is necessary to carefully evaluate the compliance of the register data with the requirements for ESF monitoring and, in particular, ensure that the data recorded for ESF monitoring comply with the definitions of the common indicators as set out in the guidance. In practice, it is likely that even where registers are used extensively, some variables will still have to be collected directly from participants either because the data are not available in registers (e.g. some of the sensitive variables related to different disadvantages) or because the definitions are not fully consistent.

4.5.1 Using register data: linking by personal ID

Registers typically use a unique personal identifier to record information about each participant. Within a country, registers covering different sets of information may use different identifiers but in general a single common identifier is used, often the social insurance number. For registers to be used for ESF monitoring, the beneficiaries will have to collect the relevant identifier(s) from each participant in order that these can be linked to the relevant records in the register(s). Often data protection rules mean that registers can be accessed only by the authorities responsible for their management and cannot be accessed directly by beneficiaries or managing authorities. Typically, therefore, beneficiaries will collect the personal identifiers of each participant in an operation and transmit these to the managing authority, which will then transmit these to the national statistical office or other body responsible in order to get the information needed for monitoring purposes.

4.5.2 Ensuring the correct observation point: start and leaving dates for participation records

As noted in section 2.2 on the key requirements in relation to [data storage](#), the Regulations for the 2014-2020 programming period mean that it is crucial for all participation records to include a start and leaving date. This applies equally to records that will be completed using registers and to records

completed with data collected directly from participants. The output indicators must refer to the situation of participants on the date that they start on an operation, the immediate result indicators to the situation on the date of leaving an operation, or within 4 weeks after that date, and the longer-term result indicators to the situation 6 months after the leaving date. When participant identifiers (IDs) are sent for checking against registers to determine the situation of participants then these must be associated with relevant date(s) in order to get the situation of each person on the specific dates relevant to their participation in the ESF operation.

In most cases it is **not** acceptable to use the start and end dates of an operation as a proxy for the actual start and leaving dates of each individual participation record. The only situation where this would be acceptable is in the case of an operation where all participants started activities on the first day of the operation and concluded them on the last day.

X Bad practice Request for register data includes list of personal IDs and start/end date of operation	✓ Good practice Request for register data includes 3 pieces of information for each participant
✓ List of personal IDs	✓ Personal ID
✗ Start date of operation	✓ Entry date
✗ End date of operation	✓ Exit date

4.5.3 Consistency of definitions and coverage

The use of common indicators and common definitions is central to the monitoring requirements for the 2014-2020 period and essential to ensure quality of data. The same definitions apply irrespective of the source of the information (i.e. direct collection from participants or indirect collection from existing register data). Member States planning to use register data for all or some variables will have to seek assurance that the register(s) proposed use definitions that are consistent with those applicable to the common indicators.

For example, a national register of social insurance contributions might be used to assess if a participant is employed on the date of either joining or leaving an operation. In this case, it should be checked that the register covers all situations described in the definition of the relevant common indicator(s) and, if not, what procedures can be implemented to ensure complete coverage. Issues that might arise include the lack of coverage of persons who are either working but uninsured (e.g. family workers) or who are self-employed and may be covered by different insurance rules and therefore not included in the main register.

Another example where careful checking is required is the case where a person is recorded as being registered unemployed but is actually a full-time student (depending on national regulations this may be possible, for example, during the summer vacation). YEI interventions, in particular, are targeted at people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) and not at full-time students, even if they are registered as unemployed. It is important, therefore, that for ESF monitoring all persons in this situation are recorded as inactive (in full-time education) and not as unemployed. Validation checks should be used to ensure that no full-time students are included in the statistics as unemployed.

4.5.4 Correct interpretation of register data

It may be necessary to apply rules on the use of register data in order to ensure correct interpretation for indicator purposes. In principle, the common indicators are designed to measure who is reached by ESF interventions and the result of these. In some cases this requires careful interpretation of the personal situation of participants in order to record meaningful information.

For example, in some countries a person that is registered unemployed can still have a part-time job, usually up to a certain threshold of hours or wage. According to the definitions of the relevant indicators this person could be both unemployed and employed for the purposes of the common output indicators. However, only one status is allowed and this should be the one that is linked to their participation in the ESF operation. In the case that the operation relates to training that will allow the participant to extend the hours worked in their existing part-time job. The reason they would undertake the training is because they want to work more and fill the hours that they are not working and thus improve their labour market situation. In relation to registers, it means that the social insurance register cannot be used as a universal indicator of employment status. Rather it should only be applied if a participant has not already been recorded as unemployed. In the case of using both unemployment registers and social insurance registers, Member States should decide which takes priority in order to provide the correct information according to the definitions of the common indicators.

The issue extends to result indicators too. Take the same scenario as above and assume that the situation of the participant does not change after leaving the operation. In other words s/he is still registered as unemployed and working in the same (small) part-time job whilst actively seeking further work. Here, the participant should have been recorded as unemployed on joining and should be recorded as still unemployed without any improvement in their labour market situation after leaving the operation. If the social insurance register is used indiscriminately to assess employment status after leaving, then the person would incorrectly be recorded as employed and therefore appear to be in an improved situation.

It may be necessary, therefore, to cross reference information from multiple registers and to apply rules about the order in which the information from each register is applied.

4.6 Representative sampling

Data for common output indicators on homelessness and housing exclusion, and rural areas, as well as for both common and YEI longer-term result indicators are not required for all participants but for a representative sample of participants at the level of each investment priority.

Note that the stipulation for indicators to be based on a representative sample does not preclude the collection of data for all participants should Member States choose to do so (can be considered as a 100% sample) and indeed there are situations in which full coverage may be preferable:

- For the indicator on homelessness it may be inherently difficult to trace participants for the purposes of a survey once they have left the operation. It could therefore be much easier and more cost-effective to collect the necessary information from all participants as they join the operation (i.e. together with the information needed for all regular output indicators).

- In the case that an investment priority benefits only a small number of participants then it may be difficult to draw a sample that is both representative and large enough to give reliable results when crossing the different socio-economic variables.

Indicators based on representative samples, except those for the YEI longer-term result indicators, do not have to be included in each AIR, only in the reports to be submitted in 2017 (for homeless and rural areas), and in 2019 and 2025 (for longer-term result indicators set out in Annex I of the ESF Regulation) (see section 3.2).

4.6.1 Steps to ensure sample is representative

In order to ensure that the sample is statistically representative it must meet the following criteria:

- **Be reflective of the relevant population of participants.** For a sample to be representative it must be drawn from the **full population** of participants relevant to the indicator(s) of interest and reflect the characteristics of that population across **multiple variables** (those related to employment status, age, level of education and household situation).
- The sample for the two output indicators "homeless or affected by housing exclusion" and "rural areas" must be representative against the output indicators related to employment status, age, level of education and household situation.
- The point about the relevance of a sample to an indicator is important. For example, the indicator related to improved labour market situation applies only to participants who were employed before joining an operation. The characteristics of this sub-group of participants (i.e. in terms of age, level of education, and household situation) may be quite different from the characteristics of the overall population of participants within the investment priority. The sample(s) used should always be representative of the population covered by the indicator. Tables in Annex B of the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation indicate the population relevant to each indicator to be covered by representative sampling.
- It is also considered good practice for representativeness to include the regional dimension. As a guide, samples could be made representative of the participants living in regions one level below that at which the programme is organised. For example, an operational programme organised at NUTS level 2 could be representative of the participants living in each of the NUTS level 3 regions (where applicable – i.e. where a NUTS level 2 region comprises more than one NUTS 3 region).
- In all cases, the sample size should be large enough to ensure reliable results taking into account the level of non-response, which may be high in the case of particularly vulnerable groups. As specified in the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation, to be considered fully reliable figures to be provided by Member States in the AIRs are to be reported with a margin of error not exceeding 2 percentage points using a 95% confidence level for a proportion (i.e. a confidence interval of length 4 percentage points). Figures reported with an estimated maximum margin of error exceeding 2 percentage points and not exceeding 5 percentage points are deemed less reliable, implying that with a view to ensuring the overall reliability of the monitoring and information system, improvements could be considered. Estimations with a margin of error exceeding 5 percentage points are

considered not sufficiently reliable if the subgroup represents more than 10% of the population.

- It is not possible to draw a fully representative sample from data that are aggregated at any level. In the case that Member States consider using administrative registers (rather than a survey) to collect data on homelessness or rural areas as well as the ESF and YEI longer-term result indicators it is necessary to ensure, and to be able to demonstrate, that the information available from the register(s) is adequate to satisfy the requirements of the relevant indicator(s). This means that **the administrative register to be used should cover all participants** (or that procedures are in place to contact those that are not covered) and that the information contained therein **conforms to the definitions** applied to the relevant indicator(s).
- **Free of selection bias.** Representative samples must be free from any selection bias and it must therefore be **possible to contact any randomly selected individual** that has benefitted from support in order to determine their situation (six months after leaving for longer-term indicators or at the point of entry for output indicators). The task of developing a representative sample implies access to (or creation of, if the above mentioned administrative register is not complete) a **single dataset** that includes all individual participation records. The dataset may be anonymised but there must be a mechanism at some level for identifying the individuals selected for follow-up. For example, after selection of an appropriate sample the managing authority might provide beneficiaries or third parties charged with a follow-up survey with a list of anonymous IDs that link to personal records of actual names and contact details held only at the local level. The level at which personal data are stored may be determined at the level of the Member State and implemented in accordance with relevant data protection legislation

Further guidance on sample design and survey methodology can be found on the Eurostat website: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/KS-RA-08-003>.

It is recommended that the task of drawing the sample and drafting the survey questions is undertaken by an **independent** and **specialist body** with the necessary statistical expertise.

4.6.2 Scheduling and coverage of sampling for longer-term result indicators

Irrespective of the sampling design and the sample selection methods (which are up to Member States to determine), the common and YEI longer-term result indicators have to be collected according to defined schedules and cover participants during particular periods.

Common longer-term result indicators

There are two waves of reporting for the common longer-term result indicators set out in Annex I of the ESF Regulation. These should be based on distinct samples with non-overlapping participants.

- The first wave (to be reported in the AIR 2018, which is due by 30 June 2019) should cover participants who left operations before mid-2018, for whom sampling might not be possible until end-2018.

- The second wave (for indicators to be included in the final report in 2025) should cover participants who left operations between mid-2018 and 31st December 2023. In view of improving data quality it is recommended to split this group in two samples.

→A schematic representation of the reporting schedule for common longer-term result indicators is provided in section 3.1.3 of the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation.

YEI longer-term result indicators

Longer-term result indicators for YEI supported interventions are to be reported annually starting in April 2015 and thereafter with the AIRs. Therefore, it will be necessary to draw a representative sample based on participants that leave operations in the 12 months to the mid-point of each year. For example, for the AIR 2015 (due by 31 May 2016) the YEI longer-term result indicators should be based on a representative sample of participants who left YEI supported operations between mid-2014 and mid-2015.

For the first report in 2015, which should cover participants leaving up to mid-2014, only participants who entered operations after the eligible start date (1 Sept 2013) should be counted.

→A schematic representation of the reporting schedule for YEI longer-term result indicators is provided in section 3.1.4 of the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation.

Frequency of data collection

As mentioned in the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation, *the sample should avoid distortion in relation to the territorial dimension and time, i.e. the over- or under-representation of groups of participants with specific (...) time of entry*. It is therefore recommended that data are collected at a higher frequency with several non-overlapping samples (for instance a sample every year).

If data are collected directly from the participants, more frequent data collection would also help to increase the response rate and the reliability of the replies as individuals are contacted shortly after their exit date.

4.6.3 Collection and storage of data on longer-term result indicators

Data for longer-term result indicators should be recorded and stored as individual data records (micro-data). However, it is not required that these records are linked/stored in the original dataset with the micro-data for all participants; they can be stored, for example, in a separate database or a separate module of the MIS.

Longer-term result indicators are to be collected for the **correct reference population**. For example, for the indicator “with an improved labour market situation” only participants who were employed when entering the operation should be contacted (see Annex B of the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation). To ensure this, information on the output indicators on labour market status, disadvantage, and age will be necessary for each record. Note this information will not be required if separate samples are drawn for each longer-term result indicator, and thus only participants from the correct reference population are selected (e.g. for the indicator “participants in employment”, only selecting participants who were unemployed or inactive when joining the

operation). In addition, it should be ensured that the data collected can be reported **broken down by gender, IP and category of region**, and that refer to the **correct point in time for each participant** (6 months after leaving the operation).

Therefore, for the selected sampled participants the following information should be available:

- *Common output indicators on labour market status and age* – to allow for the selection of the correct reference population for each indicator.
- *Gender and category of region* – to allow for the required breakdown in the AIR
- *Exit dates* – to allow for the correct timing of data collection.

It is important to note that if a quantified **target** has been set for a common longer-term result indicator, the records should be linked to the chosen output indicator used as a basis. For example, if a target for the indicator “participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving” is set, with long-term unemployed as reference population (common output indicator used as a basis), it should be ensured that the correct reference population is selected for the collection and reporting for the indicator, either by having this information (i.e. long-term unemployment) when recording the results of the survey, or by drawing another sample made only of participants who were longer-term unemployed when joining.

4.7 Aggregation procedures

Indicator values are calculated by aggregating values from individual participation records.

For all output indicators dealing with non-sensitive variables, only records that are complete for all relevant variables should be taken into account at the aggregation stage (see section 4.9.1). Participation records that are incomplete for variables needed for output indicators related to personal data (excluding sensitive variables) must not be included in any aggregates for calculating indicators data. Incomplete records should only be included under the “grand total of participants” (see sections 2.3.7 and 4.9.1).

The aggregation required varies depending on the source of funding (Table 3). For indicators covering operations supported by the ESF the individual level data have to be aggregated by investment priority and also by category of region. For YEI supported operations reporting by category of region is not required. Data must, however, be submitted separately for each priority axis, or any part thereof, supporting the YEI. All indicators related to participants must be broken down by gender (i.e. individual participant records for men and for women have to be aggregated separately). In addition, due to the requirement to submit annual data in the AIRs, the MIS should also enable to aggregate data by year (see section 2.3.1).

Table 3 - Breakdowns required by source of funding

	Investment priority	Category of region	Gender
Regular ESF reporting			
Common indicators	✓	✓	✓
YEI reporting			
Common indicators	✓	Not required	✓
YEI indicators	✓	Not required	✓

The monitoring system should have automatic procedures for calculating indicator values. All data should be stored in a way which supports this process but the system should also be flexible enough to support requests for alternative aggregations required for evaluation purposes or, for example, to answer queries from the monitoring committee (see section 2.2).

4.8 Retrospective update and correction of data

In the 2007-2013 programming period, Member States already had the possibility to retroactively correct monitoring data if they were incorrect. Under the current programming period, a distinction is made between update and correction of data (see sections 4.8.1 and 4.8.2 below). Further clarifications are included in an explanatory note submitted by the Commission to the ESF Technical Working Group meeting of 24- 25 March¹⁶.

Automated system for identifying retrospective changes

Due to the reporting of annual data (see below) it is necessary that the monitoring systems have a mechanism to automatically identify data that have been retroactively updated or corrected. The procedure should check and inform what has been modified since the latest submission (which indicators and for which years).

As an additional validation procedure, it is recommended that for all indicators, cumulative values are calculated by the MIS and compared with the cumulative values calculated by the SFC to check all data have been transmitted correctly.

Submission of retrospectively modified data in SFC

In the AIR, Member States are only required to submit annual values (except for the indicators based on representative sampling); cumulative values will be automatically calculated by SFC.

Annual values for previous reporting years will be copied in SFC from the AIR of the previous reporting year (e.g. when submitting data in the AIR2017, values for year 2016 will be automatically copied from the submitted data in AIR2016).

Therefore, MS will only need to report annual values for the reporting year, unless there have been retrospective changes.

In case of retrospective changes, the new data will have to be modified in the AIR of the reporting year (not for the previous AIR). For example, when submitting data in AIR2017, the monitoring system identifies that data for the immediate result indicator “participants in employment upon leaving” for 2016 needs to be modified. This figure should be corrected in the column for year 2016 in AIR2017 (and not in AIR 2016).

Specific guidance on how to complete the annual implementation reports in SFC is available on the SFC Support Portal¹⁷.

¹⁶ https://circabc.europa.eu/sd/a/cd1989c9-d017-40e5-a761-9292092500ec/9.a%20FOLLOW%20UP%20TWG_YEI%20REPORTING.pdf

¹⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/sfc/en/helppage/IRSFCE>

4.8.1 Update of data

Updates of data that were correct at the time of reporting are always possible and will not be regarded as a deficiency in the quality and reliability of the monitoring system or of the data on common and specific indicators within the meaning of Article 142(1)(d) CPR).

An update of data may be necessary, for example, when a participant returns to an operation for which s/he has already been counted at exit. Since each participant can only be counted once within an operation, the existing participation record has to be updated. The start date and the data for output indicators should not be changed, but the previous leaving date and all data related to result indicators should be cleared and updated when the participant leaves the operation after his/her return (see Example 13). Another example is when participants who were initially not included in the reporting figures are added following verification of data or fulfilment of incomplete data.

The reporting of data for fully implemented operations will be also considered as an update of data and not as a correction of data (see Example 1 and Example 2).

4.8.2 Correction of data

Correcting errors in the reported data is not the same as updating data which were correct at the time of the reporting. The following example would be considered as a correction of erroneously reported data: the AIR submitted in year n shows an output of 1,000 participants aged below 25 but this figure is subsequently revised downwards to 750 in the AIR submitted in $n+1$.

This distinction to updating is important because there are cases where correction of errors may be considered to represent a serious deficiency in the quality and reliability of the data or the monitoring system. For instance, if the data are corrected after the submission of a payment claim for the corresponding expenditure.

4.9 Validation of data

The validation of data should take place at two levels. In the first instance, it is necessary to validate data at the [level of the individual participant record](#) to ensure completeness and internal consistency prior to aggregation. In addition, it is necessary to [validate data at aggregate level](#), the form in which data is submitted to the European Commission.

4.9.1 Validation at the level of individual participant record

Managing authorities must be able to guarantee that data submitted by beneficiaries and/or intermediary bodies has undergone basic validation tests at the level of the participation record in order to ensure the integrity of the data. Completeness and consistency of data are the two key elements of validation.

Completeness of data

The coherence of indicators of each type (output, immediate result, and longer-term result) is dependent on data being complete for all variables. Every participation record should include data for each of the common output indicators covering personal, non-sensitive data (i.e. gender, employment status, age, level of education, and household situation). In order to assess the completion of individual participation records it should be possible to determine whether or not a question has been properly answered and therefore to distinguish between incomplete responses or

not available data and all valid answers. This has important implications for the format in which data are stored (see section 2.2.2).

In case of any missing data a participation record should be considered incomplete and must not be included in indicators (i.e. the participant cannot be counted).

- Every single participation record shall at least provide data for the common output indicators which cover personal data (i.e. gender, employment status, age, level of education, and household situation). See Table 4 for a list of the tests that can be applied to check the completeness of common output indicators data for individual participation records.

This minimum requirement is intended to avoid the reporting of participants benefitting from extremely short-term or low intensity support, for which it would be very difficult to assess whether the results achieved can be attributed to the ESF support.

Note, however, that **incomplete data does not exclude participants from support**. There is an important distinction to be made between monitoring (collecting and storing of participant data) and eligibility for support. Whereas the Regulations set out a legal requirement for complete data for monitoring purposes, this is not a criterion for eligibility. A participant who fulfils the eligibility criteria for an operation but is not prepared to reveal a complete set of data should not be recorded and reported as a participant in monitoring data, but can still be supported so long as their fulfilment of the eligibility criteria (e.g. a certain employment status) can be adequately documented.

- Immediate result indicators should, at the end of the operation, cover the same population of participants as the output indicators, with the exception of those related to homelessness and rural areas for which results are due to be reported separately only in 2017 on the basis of a representative sample. Whilst an operation is still active result indicators will cover only those participants that have exited the operation. The participation record for a participant still involved in activities within an operation should have no end-date and no data for result variables.
- Longer-term result indicators will normally cover a smaller population of participants, since each is based on a representative sample of relevant participants. For instance, the indicator for participants in employment 6 months after leaving an operation is to be based on a sample of participants who were unemployed or inactive on joining (see Annex B of the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation for details of the required sample coverage for each indicator). The size of the sample and the number of completed responses should be reported together with indicator values in the annual implementation reports.

Practical advice for...

...completion of records in case of missing values

In case of participation records with incomplete data there should be clearly defined procedures to complete the record and fill missing values (e.g. immediate result indicators on the employment situation of participants might be filled retroactively from register data).

These procedures should be rigorously defined to ensure reliability. If this cannot be ensured then records should not be completed.

...treatment of missing values in case record cannot be completed

In all cases, if participation records remain incomplete for any reason there should be processes in place to flag incomplete records (by indicator type) in order to prevent the transmission of these data for aggregation and for providing evidence (for each record) that every practical effort has been made to collect the information.

Table 4 - Validation tests at the level of the participation record – completeness checks

Completeness checks – OUTPUT INDICATORS	
–	GENDER: All individuals must be recorded either as “female” or “male”.
–	EMPLOYMENT STATUS: All individuals must be recorded in one of the employment status “employed”, “unemployed” or “inactive”.
–	Note: For all unemployed participants, information on whether they are long-term unemployed or not should be stored. Similarly, for all inactive participants, data on whether they are in education or training or not should be stored.
–	AGE: All individuals should provide information with regards to their age. If they belong to one of the age groups captured by the indicators “below 25 years of age” and “above 54 years of age” they should be recorded accordingly. Note: it is recommended that the MIS distinguishes participants who are not recorded under the common indicators relating to age (i.e. those that are 25-54) from participation records with incomplete data. Note: All participants above 54 who are unemployed or inactive not in education or training should be recorded accordingly in the common output indicator “above 54 years of age who are unemployed, including long-term unemployed, or inactive not in education or training”
–	LEVEL OF EDUCATION: All individuals must be recorded in one of the three categories for level of education (ISCED 1-2, ISCED 3-4, or ISCED 5-8), unless they have not achieved ISCED level 1 and are above customary exit age, in such cases they should be counted as “other disadvantaged” and not counted in any of the three categories for level of education. Note: it is recommended that the MIS distinguishes participants who are not recorded under the common indicators relating to education (i.e. those who have not achieved ISCED level 1 and are above customary exit age) from participation records with incomplete data.
–	HOUSEHOLD SITUATION: All individuals should provide information with regards to their household situation. If they belong to one of the three situations described (‘Living in jobless household’, ‘Living in jobless household with dependent children’ and ‘Living in single adult household with dependent children’) they should be recorded under the appropriate indicator(s). Note: it is recommended that the MIS distinguishes participants who are not recorded under the common indicators relating to household situation from participation records with incomplete data.

Internal consistency

Several indicators on participants related to the same variable are mutually exclusive. For example, participants can be recorded in only one of the common output indicators related to labour market status (employed, unemployed, or inactive).

In addition, some indicators are correlated to other indicators, and are relevant only when a particular situation linked to another variable applies. For example, a participant can only be recorded in the common output indicators related to jobless household if his/her labour market status is either unemployed or inactive.

Checking internal consistency of participation records means ensuring that the links between the different correlated variables are compatible and accordant.

There are a number of logical tests that can be applied to datasets in order to ensure internal consistency of data (at the individual level), which are listed below. To some extent, the number of tests required will depend on the way in which data are stored. The risk of inconsistency is reduced if the actual micro-data store only one value for a variable that can then be interpreted for calculation of indicators. For example, recording the participant's actual age on the date of starting on an operation (or the date of birth which can then be compared to the start date) is preferable to recording separately fields for "is under 25" and "is over 54".

Table 5 - Validation tests at the level of the participation record - internal consistency (common indicators)

Internal consistency checks – Common output indicators
– No individual can be both "male" and "female"
– No individual can be both "below 25 years" and "above 54 years";
– An individual can only be in one of the situations "unemployed", "inactive", or "employed";
– An individual who is "long-term unemployed" must also be "unemployed"; similarly an individual who is "inactive, not in education or training" must also be recorded as "inactive";
– An individual can only be in one of the three categories for level of education (ISCED 1-2, ISCED 3-4, or ISCED 5-8), persons that have not achieved at least ISCED level 1 should be counted as "other disadvantaged" and not counted in any of the three categories for level of education;
– Individuals "living in jobless households" cannot have the status "employed"
– An individual recorded as "above 54 of age who is unemployed, including long term unemployed, or inactive not in education and training" should be recorded as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "above 54" and "unemployed" or ○ "above 54" and "inactive" and "inactive not in education or training". The individual cannot be recorded in indicators "under 25 years of age" nor "employed".
– An individual living in "jobless households with dependent children" should also be recorded under "participants who live in jobless household".
Internal consistency checks – Common immediate and longer-term result indicators
– An individual recorded under "inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving" cannot be recorded in "participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving" and vice versa
– An individual recorded under "disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/training, gaining a qualification, in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving" should also be recorded in at least one of the other immediate result indicators.

– An individual recorded under “participants in employment six months after leaving” cannot be reported under “participants with an improved labour market situation, six months after leaving” and vice versa.
– An individual recorded under “above 54 years of age in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving” should be recorded under “participants in employment six months after leaving”, and cannot be reported under “participants with an improved labour market situation, six months after leaving” and vice versa.
– An individual recorded under “disadvantaged participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving ” should be also reported under “participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving” and cannot be reported under “participants with an improved labour market situation, six months after leaving” and vice versa.
Internal consistency checks – Correspondence between output indicators and immediate result indicators
– An individual recorded under “inactive participants engaged in job searching, upon leaving” must be recorded under the output indicator “inactive” and cannot be recorded under “employed, including self-employed” or “unemployed”.
– An individual recorded under “participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving” cannot be recorded under the output indicator “employed, including self-employed”.
– An individual recorded under “disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/training, gaining a qualification, in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving” must be reported under at least one of the output indicators on disadvantage.
Internal consistency checks – Correspondence between output indicators and longer-term result indicators
– An individual recorded under “participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving” cannot be recorded in the output indicator “employed, including self-employed”.
– An individual recorded under “participants with an improved labour market situation, six months after leaving” must be recorded under the output indicator “employed, including self-employed”.
– An individual recorded under “participants above 54 years of age in employment including self-employment, six months after leaving” cannot be recorded under the output indicators “below 25 years of age” and “employed, including self-employed”.
– An individual recorded under “disadvantaged participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving” cannot be recorded under the output indicator “employed, including self-employed” and must be reported under at least one of the output indicators on disadvantage.

Table 6 - Validation tests at the level of the participation record - internal consistency (YEI indicators)

Internal consistency checks – YEI immediate result indicators
– An individual recorded under any of the indicators on “unemployed” cannot be recorded in any YEI immediate result indicators on “inactive” and vice-versa.
– An individual recorded under any of the indicators on “long-term unemployed” should also be recorded under the equivalent indicator on “unemployed” (e.g. individuals recorded under “long-term unemployed who complete YEI supported intervention” should also be recorded under “unemployed who complete YEI supported intervention”).
Internal consistency checks – Correspondence between output indicators and YEI immediate and longer-term result indicators
– An individual recorded under any of the YEI result indicators cannot be recorded in the common output indicator “employed, including self-employed”.
– An individual recorded under any of the YEI result indicators on “unemployed” should be recorded in the common output indicator “unemployed”.
– An individual recorded under any of the YEI result indicators on “long-term unemployed” should be

recorded in the common output indicators “unemployed” and “long-term unemployed”.
– An individual recorded under any of the YEI result indicators on “inactive participants not in education or training” should be recorded in the common output indicators “inactive” and “inactive, not in education or training”.
Internal consistency checks – Correspondence between common result and YEI result indicators
– An individual recorded under any of the YEI immediate result indicators on “in education/training, gain a qualification or are in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving”, should be recorded at least in one of the three common immediate result indicators “participants in education/training”, “participants gaining a qualification upon leaving” and “participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving”.
– An individual recorded under the YEI longer-term result indicators on “participants in employment six months after leaving”, should be recorded in the common longer-term result indicator “participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving”.
– An individual recorded under the YEI longer-term result indicators on “participants in self-employment six months after leaving”, should be recorded in the common longer-term result indicator “participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving”.

4.9.2 Validation tests for aggregated data (indicators)

Data submitted via the SFC should undergo basic validation tests at the aggregate level prior to submission to ensure the integrity of the data. Indicator values reported by investment priority or category of region should satisfy the conditions outlined below.

One of two basic values limits the magnitude of all indicators:

- 1) **Total participants** = Sum of **Unemployed** (incl. LTU) + **Inactive** + **Employed** (incl. self-emp)

For indicators based on a representative sample the value of the indicator is limited by the sample size.

Note: When undertaking a sampling exercise it may not be possible to get answers from all the selected participants, for example because they cannot be contacted. In case of non-responses (for any reason) the sample size for validation purposes should be taken to be the number of **completed responses**.

- 2) **Sample size** <= Total participants (<= means less than or equal to)

All indicators related to participants must be broken down by **gender**. For each such indicator, the sum of values for men and for women must be equal to the total.

Table 7 to Table 11 below list some of the tests that may be applied to each of the main types of indicator.

Table 7 - Validation tests at aggregate level: common output indicators values (participants)

Indicator value	Must be less than or equal to:
Long-term unemployed	Unemployed
Inactive, not in education or training	Inactive
Sum of:	Total participants (i.e. sum of
- Below 25 years of age	Unemployed + Inactive + Employed)
- Above 54 years of age	

Indicator value	Must be less than or equal to:
Above 54 years of age who are unemployed, including long-term unemployed, or inactive not in education or training	Above 54 years of age
Sum of: - with primary (ISCED 1) or lower secondary education (ISCED 2) - with upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary education (ISCED 4) - with tertiary education (ISCED 5 to 8)	Total participants (i.e. sum of Unemployed + Inactive + Employed)
Participants who live in jobless households	Unemployed + Inactive
Participants who live in jobless households with dependent children	Participants who live in jobless households
Participants who live in a single adult household with dependent children	Total participants (i.e. sum of Unemployed + Inactive + Employed)
Migrants, participants with a foreign background, minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)	Total participants (i.e. sum of Unemployed + Inactive + Employed)
Participants with disabilities	Total participants (i.e. sum of Unemployed + Inactive + Employed)
Other disadvantaged	Total participants (i.e. sum of Unemployed + Inactive + Employed)
Homeless or affected by housing exclusion	Sample size / Total of participants ¹⁸
From rural areas	Sample size / Total of participants ¹¹

Table 8 - Validation tests at aggregate level: sum of values for common output indicators (participants)

Sums of indicator values	Must be equal to:
Sum of participants - Below 25 - Above 54 - Participants not included in the above age indicators	Total of participants (i.e. sum of Unemployed + Inactive + Employed)
Sum of participants - ISCED level 1-2 - ISCED 3-4 - ISCED 5-8 - Participants not included in the above educational attainment indicators	Total of participants (i.e. sum of Unemployed + Inactive + Employed)

Table 9 - Validation tests at aggregate level: Common output indicators (entities)

Indicator value	Must be less than or equal to:
Number of projects fully or partially implemented by social partners or non-governmental organisations	Total number of projects
Number of projects dedicated at sustainable participation and progress of women in employment	Total number of projects
Number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level	Total number of projects

Table 10 - Validation tests at aggregate level: Common immediate result indicators

Indicator value	Must be less than or equal to:
Inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving	Inactive
Participants in education/training upon leaving	Unemployed + Inactive not in education or training + Employed

¹⁸ Must be less than or equal to total of participants if the data are collected from all participants.

Indicator value	Must be less than or equal to:
Participants gaining a qualification upon leaving	Total participants (i.e. sum of Unemployed + Inactive + Employed)
Participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving	Unemployed + Inactive
Disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/training, gaining a qualification, in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving.	Total disadvantaged participants (i.e. number of participants who are in one or more of the following situations: disabled, migrant/minority, other disadvantaged, in a jobless household, single adult household with dependent children)

Table 11 - Validation tests at aggregate level: Common longer-term result indicators

Indicator value	Must be less than or equal to:
Participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving	Sample size (sample covering only participants who were unemployed or inactive on entering the operation)
Participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving	Sample size (sample covering only persons who were employed on entering the operation)
Participants above 54 years of age in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving	Sample size (sample covering only persons aged over 54 and who were unemployed or inactive on entering the operation)
Disadvantaged participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving	Sample size (sample covering only persons were disadvantaged on entering the operation – i.e. in one or more of the following situations: disabled, migrant/minority, other disadvantaged, in a jobless household, single adult household with dependent children)

5 Practical guidance on data collection and recording of indicators

5.1 Schedule for collecting micro-data on participants

In order to compile the output, immediate result and longer-term result indicators, data describing the characteristics and situation of participants have to be collected at three points in time. These are summarised below and in Figure 1, which gives an overview of the different variables to be collected at each point. Subsequent sections in this chapter then give guidance on the collection of each variable.

5.1.1 Data collection points

Start date: output indicators describe the characteristics and situation of participants on the day that they join an operation. The relevant information has to be collected for all participants.

Leaving date: immediate result indicators record the situation of participants after leaving an operation - i.e. what they are doing the next day or within 4 weeks of that date – and how this has changed compared to that before joining the operation (i.e. on the start date). Changes in the situation of participants that occur more than 4 weeks after the leaving date should not be taken into account. The relevant information has to be collected for all participants.

Six months after leaving: longer-term result indicators record the situation of participants six months after leaving an operation - i.e. what they are doing at the point in time calculated from the leaving date plus six months – and how this has changed compared to that before joining the operation (i.e. on the start date). Only the current situation (at leaving date plus six months) is relevant. Changes in the intervening period which were not sustained should not be recorded. The relevant information has to be collected for a representative sample of participants (see section 4.6).

Note: The data for longer-term result indicators (i.e. those collected six months after leaving) are usually collected differently than those for output and immediate result indicators (i.e. on the start and leaving dates). Typically, the later data are not collected through the routine monitoring procedures, but through other tools, for instance surveys commissioned by the managing authorities based on a representative sample of participants (see section 4.6) or through administrative databases (e.g. social security register – see section 4.5).

Example 17: Longer-term result indicators – six months after leaving

A participant enters employment two months after leaving and keeps this job for nine months.

→At the observation point six months after leaving the participant is employed and should be counted in the longer-term result indicator “in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving”.

Another participant also entered employment two months after leaving, but keeps the job only for three months and then returns to being unemployed. →At the observation point six months after leaving the participant is unemployed and would not be counted in the longer-term result indicator “in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving”. The intervening period of employment is not taken into account in either the immediate result indicators (because the job started more than 4 weeks after the leaving date) or in the longer-term result indicators.

Figure 1: Summary schedule for collection of micro-data
Journey of a participant through an operation



What information needs to be collected at each point?

	Start date	Leaving date	6 months after leaving
Basic information:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Date of entry into operation ➤ Personal identifier ➤ Operation identifier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Date of exit from operation ➤ Completion of intervention (YEI only) 	
Personal data, including “sensitive” variables (all participants)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Gender ➤ Age ➤ Labour market situation ➤ Education & training (attainment) ➤ Disadvantage ➤ (Contact details) <p>These data may be collected in advance, but must be verified at start of operation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Labour market situation ➤ Education & training (status/qualification) <p>These data may be collected up to 4 weeks after exit from the operation.</p>	
Personal data (representative sample)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Homeless/Housing exclusion ➤ Place of residence (rural area) <p>These data do not have to be collected at the start of the operation but must refer to the situation on entry to the operation.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Labour market situation ➤ Education/training status/attainment (for YEI only)
Additional information (to be collected at relevant point):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Personal data for programme-specific indicators ➤ Information for evaluation purposes 		

5.2 Gender

The promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities is a fundamental priority of the ESF and consequently, data for all common indicators (as well as programme-specific indicators where relevant, see section 2.3.6) dealing with participants must be broken down by gender.

5.2.1 How to record gender of participants?

The gender of **all participants** should be recorded when they start on an operation.

Guidelines and recommendations

The term “**sex**” refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women while the term “**gender**” refers to the social representation of male and female attributes. Given that for some people the issue of gender is sensitive, for the purposes of ESF monitoring it is recommended that:

- in cases where information is collected directly from participants the **gender identity** of participants should be recorded (i.e. the sex/gender that the participant wishes to be identified with)¹⁹;
- in cases where information is taken from registers the existing records can be used without further enquiry.

5.2.2 Indicators relating to gender

All common indicators (and programme-specific indicators where relevant, see section 2.3.6) **on participants** and **all YEI indicators** must be broken down by gender.

5.3 Labour market situation

The ESF is Europe’s main instrument for supporting jobs, helping people get better jobs and ensuring fairer job opportunities for all EU citizens. The labour market situation of participants and how this changes after participation in an ESF supported operation is therefore crucial information for monitoring purposes and has to be collected at each observation point (start, end and 6 months after participation).

5.3.1 How to determine the employment status of participants

Table 12 below summarises how to determine the employment status of participants. A participant can only have one status (employed, unemployed or inactive) and the order of the different statuses in Table 12 can be taken as prioritisation of the assessment required – first check if a person is employed, if not then see if they are unemployed, if not then (by default) they must be inactive.

¹⁹ For useful guidance on this issue see *Trans Data Position Paper, UK Office for National Statistics, 2009*: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/measuring-equality/equality/equality-data-review/trans-data-position-paper.pdf>

Table 12 - How to determine labour market situation of participants

Employed	<p>➤ Persons in employment</p> <p><i>Includes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Employees (including those in subsidised positions²⁰) ✓ Self-employed ✓ Family workers ✓ Persons on maternity or paternity leave²¹ <p><i>Excludes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Persons who are registered as unemployed but have a small part-time job (as allowed under national definition of registered unemployed) -> treat as unemployed × Persons on full-time parental leave²¹ -> if registered as unemployed then treat as unemployed, otherwise treat as inactive × Conscripts who performed some work for pay or profit during the reference week -> treat as inactive
Unemployed	<p>➤ Out of work, available for work and actively seeking work (ILO definition)</p> <p>➤ Registered as unemployed with the PES</p> <p><i>Excludes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Full-time students-> treat as inactive²² × People >74 years of age -> treat as inactive²³
Long-term unemployed	<p>➤ <25 years of age with a continuous unemployment spell of > 6 months</p> <p>➤ 25 years of age or more with a continuous unemployment spell >12 months</p>
Inactive	<p>➤ Not employed and not unemployed</p> <p><i>Includes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Full-time students who are not in employment (even if registered unemployed) <p><i>Excludes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Self-employed, including helping family members (treat as employed)
Inactive not in education or training	<p>➤ Not employed and not unemployed and not in education or training</p>

²⁰ Subsidised employment refers to jobs supported through employment incentives as defined in the EU LMP database (category 4, §68-71): <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3859598/5935673/KS-GQ-13-002-EN.PDF>

²¹ Note the different treatment of persons on maternity/paternity leave (considered as employed) and those on parental leave (considered as inactive). This is based on the following definitions from the EU LFS: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3859598/5873749/KS-BF-03-002-EN.PDF>. "**Maternity leave** is first given to the mother (but may include the leave of the father in the case of a transfer of the entitlements) and corresponds to the compulsory period of the leave stipulated by national legislation to ensure that mothers before and after childbirth have sufficient rest, or for a period to be specified according to national circumstances. People in maternity leave should always be considered in employment.". "**Parental leave** can be taken either by the mother or the father and is the interruption of work in case of childbirth or to bring up a child of young age. It corresponds to the period when parents receive "parental leave benefit". People in full-time parental leave should be treated as a case of long-term absence from work.

²² Students in full-time education with (part-time) job should be counted as employed.

²³ According to the EU Labour Force Survey, the definition of unemployed excludes people younger than 15 and older than 74. See: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/methodology/main-concepts>.

Minimum hours of employment

There is no minimum number of hours of employment for participants to be counted as “employed”. The common output indicator “employed, including self-employed” and the result indicators relating to “participants in employment” do not include any requirement in terms of the minimum number of hours.

The definition of employment used for the common indicators is taken from the [EU Labour Force Survey](#) which refers to “any work for pay or profit during the reference week, even for as little as one hour”. As a consequence, all participants with jobs that are in line with the definition provided in Annex C1 of the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation should be recorded as employed.

Guidelines and recommendations

Verification of unemployment registers

The PES register is the most relevant source of information to check (if access is possible) whether a person should be considered as unemployed or not and the duration of the unemployment spell (i.e. to see if they are long-term unemployed). When asked directly, some participants might think they are in the unemployment register when they are not, others may not know if they are registered. In addition, participants sometimes may not remember well how long they have been unemployed.

Practical advice: collecting details on the employment situation

For participants who are **in employment** it would be useful to collect upon entry more detailed information about their situation in view of improving data quality for immediate and, in particular, for longer-term result indicators. The following details could be recorded:

- In self-employment?
- Working part-time?
- In precarious employment (i.e. temporary employment or work contract of limited duration)?
- In a situation of underemployment (i.e. working part-time involuntarily)?

Practical examples

Example 18: Participant engaged in studies

A participant who is studying (full-time or part-time).

→ Where studies are **full-time**, participant should be recorded as **inactive**, even if they are registered as unemployed

→ Where studies are **part-time**, it will be necessary to check if this person is registered unemployed

→ If they are **registered unemployed** they should be recorded as **unemployed**

→ If they are not registered unemployed, they should be recorded as **inactive**

Example 19: Seasonal worker

A participant who works only during the summer (seasonal worker) but is out of work at the point of entry into the ESF funded operation (out of season).

→ If they have an **assurance to come back to work** with the same employer at the beginning of the next season, **and the employer continues to pay at least 50% of their wage or salary during the off-season**, they should be recorded as **employed**

→ If they do not meet both these criteria:

→ If they declare being available for work and are actively seeking work, whether or not they are registered as unemployed, they should be recorded as **unemployed**

→ If not, they should be recorded as **inactive**

Example 20: Individual supporting family business

A person who is out of work (no employment contract) but helps to run the family business.

→ If they **receive any remuneration** (including benefits in kind) they should be reported as **employed**

→ If they do not receive any remuneration but live in the same household, they should also be considered as **employed**

→ If they do not receive any remuneration and do not live in the same household (or in a slightly broader interpretation, in a house located on the same plot of land and with common household interests):

→ If they are available for work and actively seeking for work, or alternatively they are registered as unemployed, they should be recorded as **unemployed**

→ If not, they should be recorded as **inactive**

Example 21: Care responsibilities

A participant who is looking after children or incapacitated adult, either own children, other children, relatives or close friends on a full-time basis.

→ If this is done professionally (i.e. receiving remuneration) s/he should be recorded as **employed**. This includes:

- + being paid by the local authority (or any other public administration)
- + being paid by private households

→ If s/he is not professionally employed in this capacity, s/he should be recorded as **inactive** and, if applicable, as **inactive not in education or training**. Note that social benefits paid in relation to care of dependents are not considered to be professional remuneration.

Example 22: Labour market status of participants over the retirement age

Participants entering an operation are registered as jobseekers even though they are over the national legal retirement age.

→ If they are below 75 years old, as long as they satisfy the conditions to qualify as unemployed (i.e. are out of work, are available for work and are actively looking for a job), they should be considered as unemployed (whether they have reached the legal retirement age or not).

→ Participants who are 75 or older and who are not employed should be considered as inactive.

5.3.2 How to determine a change in labour market situation of participants

Result indicators, both immediate and longer-term, aim to identify a **change in the situation** of participants compared to that on entry to the operation. In other words, to show the number of people for whom the operation might have had some result. It should be clear, however, that result indicators are simply observations of the situation and should not necessarily be interpreted as evidence of a successful (or not) operation. If the operation involves regular training offering a qualification then the indicator on participants gaining a qualification can be interpreted as reasonably clear indicator of success (or not) but in general the impact of an operation can only be assessed through careful evaluation.

What changes in labour market situation need to be recorded

The changes of labour market situations to be recorded and reported are listed in Table 13 below together with the corresponding employment status of participants to whom they are applicable.

Note: for YEI supported indicators, participants who receive an offer of employment (which constitutes a change in the labour market situation) are to be reported. Guidance on how to collect information on this aspect is provided in the section on [YEI supported operations](#).

Table 13 - Changes of labour market situation and status before/after participation

New situation of participants (as measured in result indicator)	Employment status of participants	
	On joining an operation	On leaving operation/ 6 months after exit
Engaged in job searching	Inactive	Unemployed
In employment*	Inactive Unemployed	Employed
Self-employed	Inactive Unemployed	Employed
Improved labour market situation	Employed	Employed

* Result indicators covering participants in employment include persons who are self-employed except in the case of YEI longer-term result indicators where employed and self-employed are separated.

Guidelines and recommendations

Indicators on change of labour market situation are mutually exclusive (except disadvantaged) Participants can be recorded for only **one** of the common immediate result indicators relating to change in labour market situation, with the exception of disadvantaged participants who can also be recorded under the indicator "disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching,

education/training, gaining a qualification, in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving". However, they can be recorded simultaneously under one (or more) indicator(s) on education/training status/achievement and an indicator of change of labour market situation (see Example 23 below).

What represents an improved labour market situation

The longer-term result indicator on participants with an improved labour applies only to participants who were already employed on joining an operation. It is considered that participants have an improved labour market situation when they have either taken up new employment or moved to a position within the same employment. In both cases the change must fulfil one or more of the characteristics below:

- ✓ requires higher competences, skills or qualifications
- ✓ entails more responsibilities
- ✓ promotion
- ✓ move from precarious to stable employment (e.g. fixed term to permanent contract)
- ✓ move from underemployment (i.e. involuntary part-time work) to full employment.

Note: the change should always reflect a difference between the situation of the participant on joining the operation and their situation six months after leaving. Any change that is not sustained until the six month point does not count.

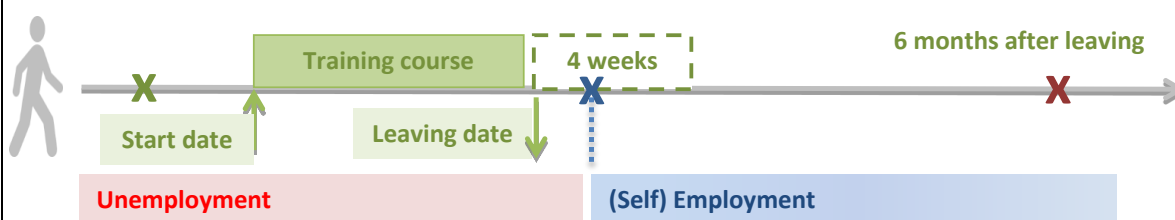
Practical examples

Example 23: Unemployed/inactive participant becoming employed following an intervention

An unemployed individual takes part in a training course (with certification) which is part of a YEI intervention. Within two weeks of successfully completing the course and gaining the relevant certificate, they set up their own business (i.e. become self-employed).

→ Immediate and longer-term result indicators for this participant will be “participant in employment, including self-employment”. In addition, for YEI supported interventions, the longer-term indicator would be “participant in self-employment”.

Additionally, since the participant has gained a qualification, they should also be recorded as “gaining qualification” (see section 5.5.2).



Output indicator:
“unemployed”

Immediate result indicator:
“participant in employment,
including self-employed”

YEI immediate result indicator:
“unemployed participant (...) in
employment, including self-
employment”

Longer-term result indicator:
“participant in employment,
including self-employed”

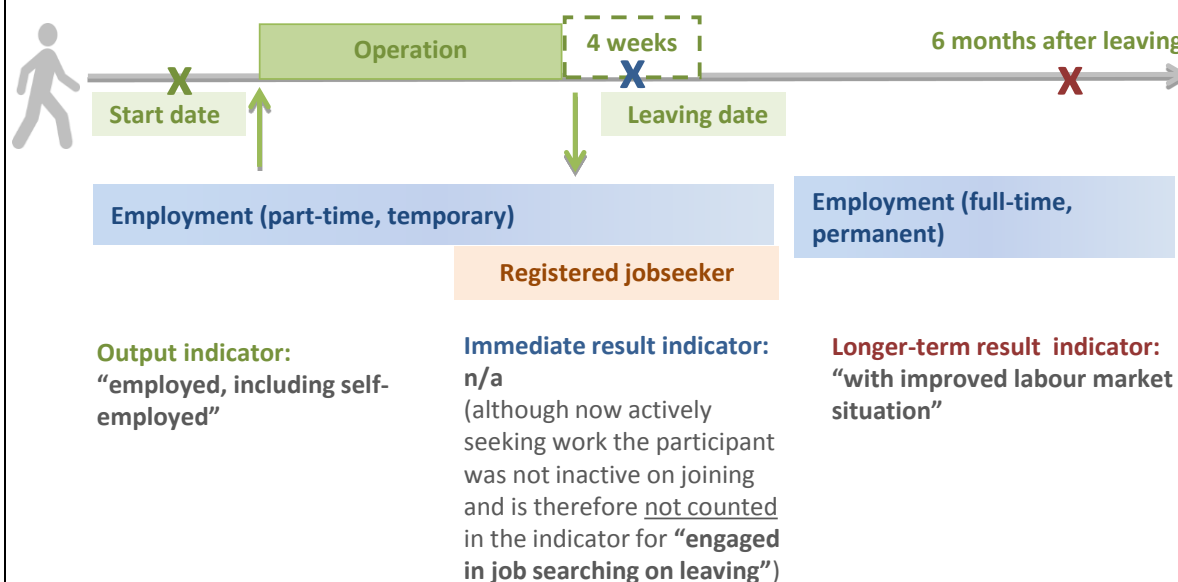
YEI longer-term result indicator:
“participant in self-employment”

Example 24: Employed participant with new job after leaving

A participant has a temporary part-time job contract (which could be considered as both underemployment and precarious employment) when joining an operation. During the operation the participant registers as a jobseeker (i.e. is newly engaged in job search). Two months after leaving the operation they find a full-time employment contract.

In this case the participant would not be recorded in any of the immediate result indicators. On leaving the operation (and for the next two months) s/he is still in the same job which means that his/her labour market situation has not changed. The participant is actively seeking work, which they were not doing on entry to the operation, but is not counted in the indicator about being newly engaged in job search because this applies only to participants who were inactive on joining.

Six months after leaving, the new job represents an improvement in the labour market situation (transition from under-/precarious employment to full employment), and should be recorded as such in the relevant indicator.



Example 25: Employed participant setting-up their own business

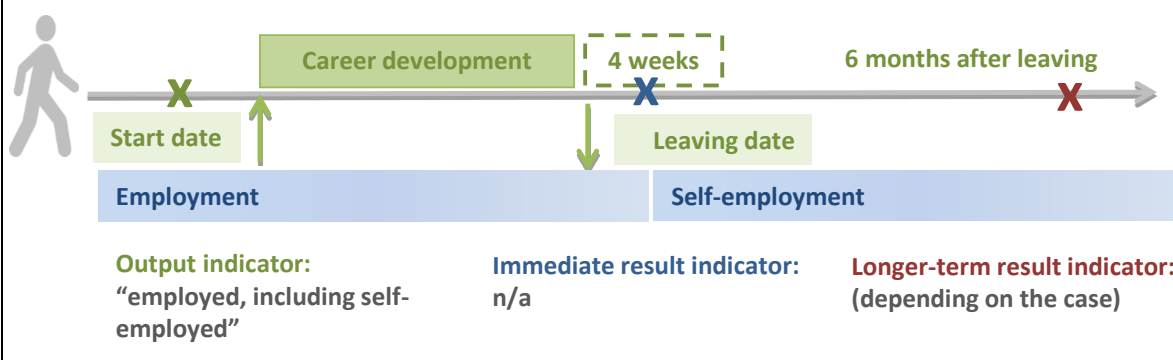
A participant is under a temporary part-time job contract (which could be considered as underemployment and precarious employment) when joining an operation to receive job search assistance, counselling and career development. Within four weeks of leaving the operation they decide to set up their own business.

→No immediate result indicators relating to change in labour market situation will apply for this participant (these indicators apply only to people who were unemployed or inactive on joining).

→For the longer-term result indicators, whether or not the new self-employment represents an improved labour market situation depends on a case by case assessment of the criteria for an improvement (see section 5.3.2).

[continued ...]

[continued ...]

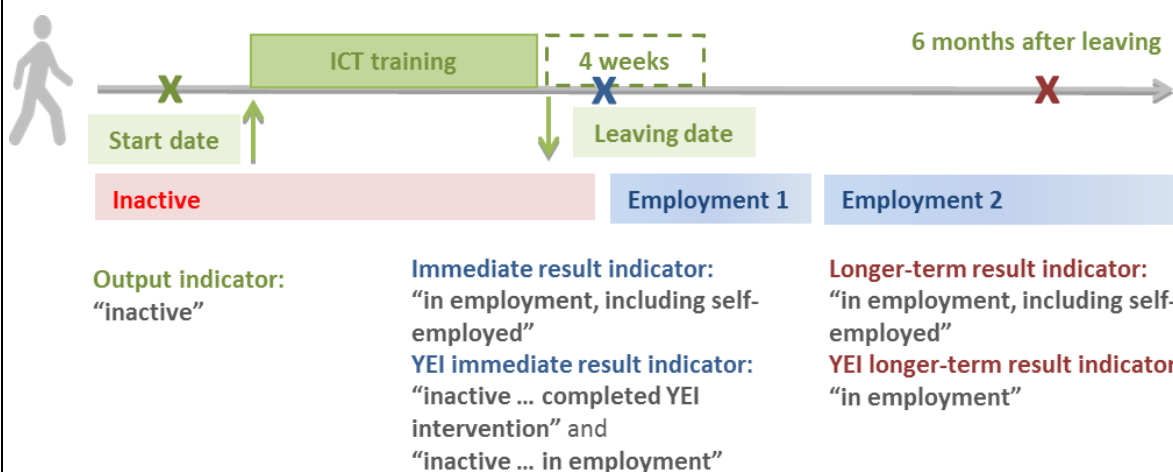


Example 26: Inactive participant becoming employed and getting promoted subsequently

A young inactive person aged 22 joins an ESF operation partly supported by the YEI to receive training. Two weeks after completing the operation they start a part-time job, which after a three month probation period becomes a full-time position.

The participant finds work two weeks after leaving so for common immediate result indicators, s/he should be recorded as “in employment, including self-employment”. The common longer-term result will also be “in employment, including self-employed”. Even though there has been a further change (and improvement) of their situation in the time since leaving, indicators only measure change compared to the starting situation and not intervening changes so the indicator on “improved labour market situation” is not relevant (applies only to persons employed before entering the operation).

In relation to YEI indicators, the participant would be counted in two immediate results: “inactive ... complete the YEI supported intervention”; and “inactive ... in employment, including self-employment on leaving”; and one longer-term result: “in employment six months after leaving”.



5.3.3 Indicators relating to labour market situation

Information on labour market situation needs to be collected for the following Indicators:

Common output indicators
– Unemployed, including long-term unemployed
– Long-term unemployed
– Inactive
– Inactive, not in education or training
– Employed, including self-employed
Common immediate result indicators
– Inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving
– Participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving
– Disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/training, gaining a qualification, in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving
Common longer-term result indicators
– Participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving
– Participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving
– Participants above 54 years of age in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving
– Disadvantaged participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving
YEI immediate result indicators
– Unemployed participants who complete the YEI supported intervention
– Unemployed participants who receive an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship
– Unemployed participants who are in education/training, gain a qualification or are in employment, including self-employment
– Long-term unemployed participants who complete the YEI supported intervention
– Long-term unemployed participants who receive an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship
– Long-term unemployed participants who are in education/training, gain a qualification or are in employment, including self-employment
– Inactive participants not in education or training who complete the YEI supported intervention
– Inactive participants not in education or training who receive an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship
– Inactive participants not in education or training who are in education/training, gain a qualification or are in employment, including self-employment
YEI longer-term result indicators
– Participants in employment
– Participants in self-employment

5.4 Age

5.4.1 How to record correct age of participants

The age of a participant should be measured in years and always be calculated in relation to the date of entering the operation (start date).

All indicators - output, immediate and longer-term results – should be produced using the same age in order to ensure coherence of final indicator values. For example, to ensure that a participant counted in an age-related output indicator is counted in the equivalent immediate and longer-term result indicators even if s/he falls into a different age category at later stages of the process.

This is particularly relevant to the YEI indicators where the immediate and longer-term result indicators should cover all participants who were under 25 or – if the YEI is intended to support young people up to 29 years of age in the respective programme – under 30 years at the start of the operation, even if they pass this threshold during the operation or in the subsequent six months. This issue will also be relevant in the case of programme-specific indicators focussing on particular age groups.

Guidelines and recommendations

Recording date of birth

For the purpose of collecting and reporting indicators related to age, it is recommended that the date of birth is recorded to allow for automated calculation of the age of participants when entering the operation.

Note that date of birth needs to include day and month so it is possible to calculate the exact age of participants at the date of entering the operation.

Total number of participants calculated with age categories for all participants

Aggregated data should have all participants recorded in one of three categories: below 25 years old; above 54 years old; and 25-54 years old. Although there is no indicator using the 25-54 category, it could be used as part of validation to check completeness of data (e.g. to compare sum of participants by age with sum of participants by labour market status).

Practical examples

Example 27: Initial contact with a participant prior to start of operation

The first point of contact with a participant may be established before the date the participant- starts taking part in the operation, for example via a pre-meeting or internet registration. A first record of personal data may be taken at this point.

→ It is recommended that the date of birth is recorded already at this stage so that the information on the age of a participant can be validated at the point of the start of operation. Where the age can be calculated, the age of the participant at the start of the operation should be verified by the operator. If the date of birth is not given, the individual themselves must verify their age at the point of entry into the operation.

Example 28: Change of age group during participation in an operation

An individual was 24 years old (i.e. falling with the “below 25 years old” age group) when s/he entered an operation. At the time of leaving, two years later, s/he is 26 (i.e. no longer falls within the “below 25 years old” age group).

→ All output, immediate result and longer-term result indicators for this individual should refer to the “below 25 years old” category (based on the age on joining the operation).

Example 29: Change of age group in the 6 months after leaving an operation

An individual was 54 when s/he left an operation to move into employment. Six months later, when data is recorded for longer-term result indicators, s/he is 55.

→The age of a participant always refers to the age when joining the operation. Therefore, even if s/he is now above 54, s/he has to be recorded as “participant in employment, including self-employment” but not under “participants above 54 years of age in employment, including self-employment”.

5.4.2 Indicators relating to age

Common output indicators
– Below 25 years of age
– Above 54 years of age
– Above 54 year of age who are unemployed, including long-term unemployed, or inactive not in education or training
Common immediate result indicators
– n/a
Common longer-term result indicators
– Participants above 54 years of age in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving
YEI indicators
– All YEI indicators refer to persons below 25 years of age, except when Member States choose to extend eligibility to YEI support up to 29 years of age. In this case, it is strongly recommended to establish a programme-specific output indicator covering the age group 25-29. The values reported for the result indicators and the targets set for the result indicators will in that case be in relation to the extended age group.

5.5 Education and training

Actions to develop skills and promote participation in education/training are central elements of many ESF funded programmes and the monitoring process requires information about the starting position of participants and how this may be influenced through ESF support. Indicators therefore cover the level of educational attainment before support, whether or not any qualifications were gained through ESF support, and subsequent participation in education and training.

5.5.1 How to record educational attainment

Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education attained by participants before they benefit from ESF support and should be determined on the date of entering the operation. This applies even when the ESF support aims to raise that level. Educational attainment should be recorded according to the ISCED classification²⁴ and refer to the highest ISCED level successfully completed.

²⁴ International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011):
http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/UNESCO_GC_36C-19_ISCED_EN.pdf

Guidelines and recommendations

Provision of guidance to beneficiaries and participants

Clear definitions and national equivalents for ISCED categories should be provided to all bodies involved in the recording of information. To simplify the process of collecting data and to ensure accuracy during this process, when participants are asked their educational attainment, options which relate directly to the nomenclature used in the national system of education and training should be provided.

Note: Guidance should be general as well as customised to the national situation. This is needed, for example, in case of foreign participants/migrants who received their education and training in the home country.

Treatment of participants with ISCED level 0

Participants who have not successfully completed ISCED level 1 should be treated in different ways depending on their age in relation to the customary exit age for ISCED level 1 (nationally defined but typically 10-12 years old):

- Those who are below the customary exit age should be considered as if ISCED level 1, and therefore recorded under the indicator for ISCED levels 1 and 2.
- Those who are above the customary exit age should be considered as ISCED level 0 and recorded as “Other disadvantaged” (see section 5.6.4) and not counted in any of the educational attainment indicators.

Note: because participants with ISCED level 0 are recorded under “Other disadvantaged”, a category that might also include participants with higher levels of education (e.g. for example, in the case of being an ex-offender with ISCED level 2), it is not possible to sum up the indicators by level of education to check that these equal total participants. To do this, either use a single field to record educational attainment, which includes an option for level 0, or record a breakdown of reasons for being considered as other disadvantaged.

Collection of specific ISCED level

Although the indicators group together some categories of ISCED - e.g. by combining primary (ISCED 1) and lower secondary education (ISCED 2) - it is recommended that the specific ISCED level of the participant is recorded. It can be useful to maintain more detailed information in order to support the development of programme-specific indicators and to input to evaluation studies.

Practical examples

Example 30: Participants with incomplete qualifications

A student enters an operation whilst studying for a formal qualification and may have passed some mid-term examinations that contribute to, but do not constitute, the final qualification. By the time that s/he leaves the operation, s/he has completed the course and obtained the final qualification.

→ The educational attainment level recorded should be the highest achieved prior to starting the current course. As the participant has not yet successfully completed the qualification at the point of entering the operation the level recorded would normally be one or more ISCED levels lower.

Example 31: Studies completed in the country of origin

A migrant participant completed their education in their country of origin but has not yet undertaken the necessary certification procedures in their new country of residence.

→ Qualifications gained by participants in their country of origin should be taken into consideration irrespective of certification/proof in the country of ESF operation.

5.5.2 How to record participants gaining a qualification

Whether a participant has gained a qualification as a result of participating in an ESF operation is determined on the date of exit from the operation (or within 4 weeks of this date); the information is required for common and YEI immediate result indicators.

Information on participants gaining a qualification as a result of an ESF operation is required for one common immediate result indicator applicable to all participants, a second common indicator as one of the possible outcomes for disadvantaged participants, and three YEI immediate result indicators as one of the possible outcomes for young people who were previously unemployed, long-term unemployed or inactive not in education or training (see section 5.5.5).

According to the European Qualifications Framework, “qualification” means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards (see Annex C1 of the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation). This means, for example, that a certificate of participation in a training course is not considered to be a qualification; there must be some evidence that the competence of the participant has been formally assessed according to recognised standards.

Only qualifications obtained as a direct result of taking part in an ESF supported operation should be reported. Results should be reported only once per participant per operation.

Guidelines and recommendations

Definition of ‘qualification’ at national level

It is considered good practice to define on national, programme and/or operation level what can be accepted as a qualification (and by which body) in the sense of the European Qualifications Framework.

Qualification results known after 4 weeks period

According to the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation (section 3.2.1 Common immediate result indicators), only results which have manifested themselves within the 4 week period should be recorded. Therefore, only participants whose exams have taken place within the 4 week period (i.e. the date on the certificate refers to the date of the exam taken upon leaving or within 4 weeks of the exit date) should be counted under the immediate result indicator “participants gaining a qualification upon leaving”.

In case the result of the assessment is known after the 4 week period, it is recommended to set the indicator “participants gaining a qualification upon leaving” at 0 and then update the participation

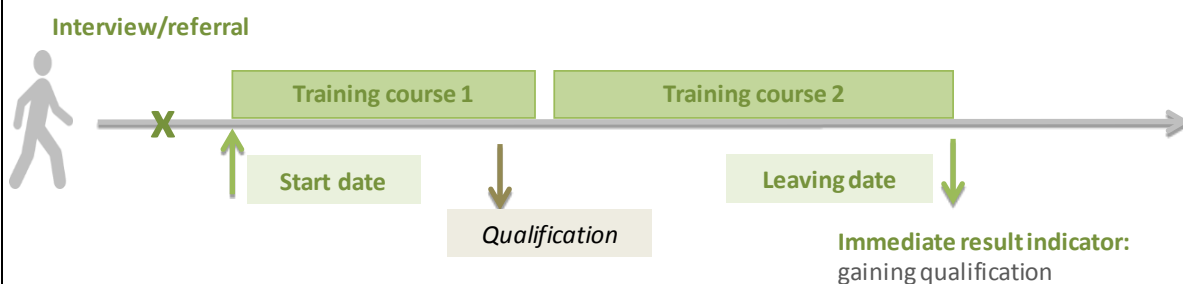
records once the results are known. Guidelines on recording of the data should be provided to beneficiaries.

Practical examples

Example 32: Qualification obtained before date of exit of operation

As part of a single ESF operation, a participant takes part in a training course (for which they obtain a qualification) and then in a second training course (for which no qualification is obtained).

→ The time at which the qualification has been obtained, provided it is as a result of taking part of ESF operation it is not relevant. Participant should be reported under “participants gaining qualification upon leaving”.



5.5.3 How to record a change of status in relation to education/training

Common (and YEI) immediate result indicators measure a change of status compared to the situation of participants before joining an operation. Therefore, participants who were in education/training upon entering should not be counted as participants in education/training on leaving. Whether a participant is in education/training on leaving is determined on the date of leaving the operation (or within 4 weeks of that date).

Information on participants in education or training applies to:

- one common output indicator on inactive, not in education and training,
- one common immediate result indicator covering all participants who were not in education/training before joining an operation,
- another common immediate result indicator as one of the possible outcomes for disadvantaged participants (not previously in education/training), and
- three YEI immediate result indicators as one of the possible outcomes for young people who were previously unemployed, long-term unemployed or inactive not in education or training (see section 5.5.5). For YEI supported operations only, participation in education or training is also covered as a longer-term result indicator (see section 5.5.5).

Guidelines and recommendations

What is to be considered as education/training

Education/training is a broad term and can refer to lifelong learning, formal education, off-the-job/on-the-job training, vocational training, etc. The source of funding of the training is not relevant.

The types of education/training activities for the common output indicators “inactive, not in education and training” and “above 54 years of age who are unemployed, including long-term unemployed, or inactive not in education or training” are not further specified in Annex C1 of the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation.

It is recommended that managing authorities establish clear guidelines to be applied consistently by organisations responsible for data collection. The interpretation of the indicators should be consistent across YEI and ESF actions.

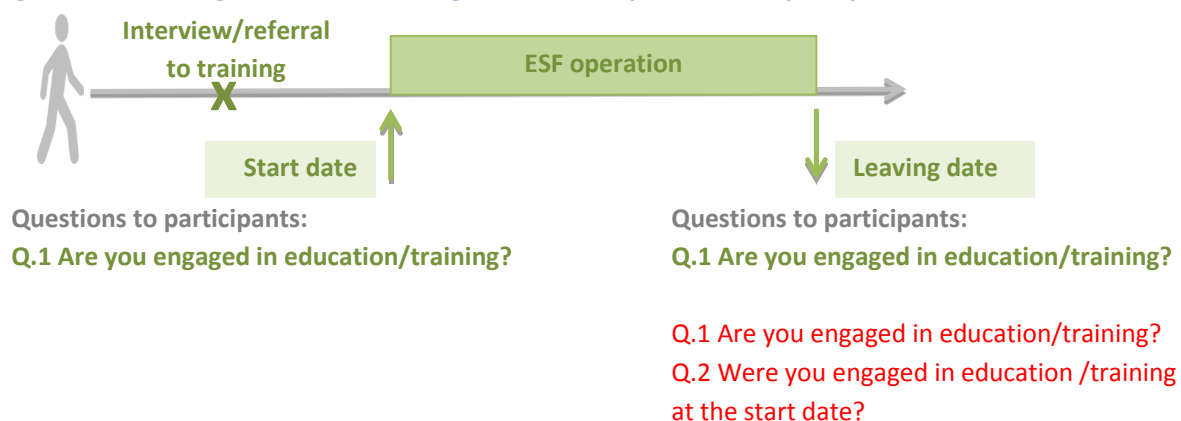
Education/training in another ESF funded operation

Participants who leave the operation and then engage in an education/training activity which is also ESF funded (but part of a different operation to which s/he was participating, see section 4.1.5) are included.

Recording education/training status at the point of entry in operation

Given that result indicators aim to capture a change in the situation of participants, it is recommended that the status of participants regarding education/training is recorded at the point of entry into an operation even though this is not a required output indicator for all participants (only for inactive). This avoids having to ask participants about their situation in the past. In Figure 2 below the preferred option would be to use question set in green rather than the question set in red.

Figure 2: Recording education/training status at the point of entry in operations

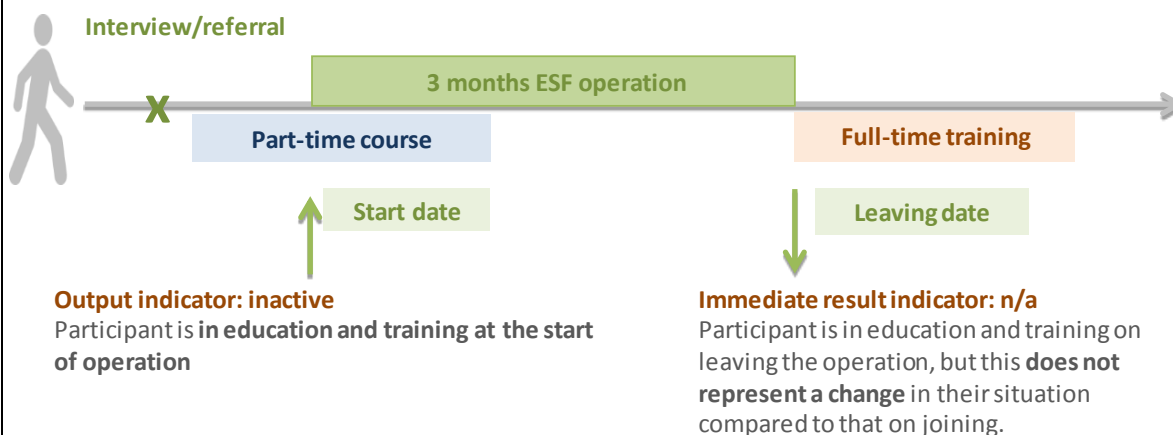


Practical examples

Example 33: Participant engaged in a different education/training programme on leaving

A participant was attending a part-time course at the point of entry of the operation. During the course of the operation, s/he has finished this course. Immediately after leaving the operation, s/he enrolled on a full-time course.

This individual should not be recorded as in education/training, as s/he was previously engaged in an activity at the point of entry in the operation and therefore there has been no change in their situation.



Example 34: Participant newly engaged in ESF funded education/training

A participant takes part in an ESF funded training operation. After completing this course, s/he joins another training course funded through a different ESF operation.

Provided the training s/he registers is part of a **different** ESF operation:

→ If s/he starts the training sessions within 4 weeks of leaving the first operation then s/he should be recorded as engaged in education/training

→ If the training starts more than 4 weeks after leaving the first operation, the participant should not be recorded as in education/training upon leaving.

5.5.4 Cumulating results in relation to education/training

Participants can be recorded for both common immediate result indicators relating to education and training simultaneously:

- "participant in education/training upon leaving" and
- "participant gaining a qualification upon leaving".

In this case, each result would typically relate to a different training course - i.e. the ESF supported course that resulted in a qualification and which the participant has just left (a result only occurs on leaving), and a new course that they joined after leaving (it is possible that this is also ESF supported but under a different operation).

In addition, participants may experience a change in their **labour market situation**, as well as their **education/training status/achievement**. Examples of possible combinations include:

- "inactive participant newly engaged in job searching upon leaving" and "participant gaining a qualification upon leaving";
- "participant in employment upon leaving" and "participant gaining a qualification upon leaving";
- "participant in employment upon leaving" and "participant in education/training upon leaving".

5.5.5 Indicators related to education and training

Common output indicators
– Inactive, not in education/training
– Above 54 years of age who are unemployed, including long-term unemployed, or inactive not in education or training
– With primary (ISCED 1) or lower secondary education (ISCED 2)
– With upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary education (ISCED 4)
– With tertiary education (ISCED 5 to 8)
Common immediate result indicators
– Participants in education/training upon leaving
– Participants gaining a qualification upon leaving
– Disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/training, gaining a qualification, in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving
Common longer-term result indicators
– n/a
YEI immediate result indicators
– Unemployed participants who receive an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving
– Unemployed participants who are in education/training, gain a qualification or are in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving
– Long-term unemployed participants who receive an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving
– Long-term unemployed participants who are in education/training, gain a qualification or are in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving
– Inactive participants not in education or training who receive an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving
– Inactive participants not in education or training who are in education/training, gain a qualification or are in employment, including self-employment
YEI longer-term result indicators
– Participants in continued education, training programmes, leading to a qualification, an apprenticeship or traineeship six months after leaving

5.6 Disadvantage

Ensuring fairer opportunities for all citizens is a key priority for the ESF. Recording the support provided to different groups that are disadvantaged and potentially in need of special help in the labour market is therefore an important element of the monitoring process. Information about the different disadvantages that may affect participants is collected at the start of an operation.

The ESF common indicators count persons with the following disadvantages:

- ✓ Living in jobless households (with or without dependent children)
- ✓ Single parent households
- ✓ Migrants, persons with foreign background, minorities (including Roma)
- ✓ Disabled
- ✓ Other disadvantaged
- ✓ Homeless or affected by housing exclusion.

Note: Characteristics captured by the common output indicators “from rural areas” might be considered a disadvantage but not necessarily. Guidance on this indicator is provided in the following section.

Persons may cumulate several vulnerabilities (i.e. may be counted under more than one of the indicators – e.g. a person may be both migrant and disabled or from a minority and living in a single-parent household).

All participants with the relevant characteristics should be counted for common and programme-specific indicators. Despite the fact that within each group some individuals might be more in need of help in the labour market than others, the subjective assessment of who does or does not need special assistance is not part of the required monitoring. Indeed, the assessment of need is implicitly covered by the eligibility criteria for each operation which should determine who is in need of the support on offer. Thus, all participants should be counted equally and recorded purely on the basis of their observed characteristics.

National definitions

With the exception of the indicators covering the household situation, the definitions of disadvantage given in Annex C of the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation and here may be supplemented by national definitions. This is either because there is no generally accepted EU-wide definition or because the imposition of a harmonised definition could cause considerable administrative burden. Member States should inform the Commission of the definitions used for these groups. Given the requirement to ensure good quality data, Member States are recommended to ensure - if possible - that the national definitions used do not diverge significantly from the recommended definitions.

Sections 5.6.1 to 5.6.5 below provide recommended definitions, guidance on data collection and storage as well as practical examples.

Sensitive information

The various disadvantages covered by the common indicators require the collection of personal and sensitive data alike. The disadvantage indicators capturing personal data referring to the household situation are considered to fall under the completeness requirement (see section 4.9.1). The disadvantage indicators capturing “sensitive” personal data – i.e. those marked with ** in Annex I of the ESF Regulation – fall under a different data protection regime.

In principle, sensitive information must be collected for all participants and the ESF Regulation foresees no scope for derogation in this respect (see section 2.1). Nevertheless, individuals retain the right to refuse consent for the data to be collected, if indeed the data is to be collected by consent. In terms of ensuring data quality, missing values due to refused consent will be accepted only in the

case of documentary evidence which proves that an attempt to collect the information was made, such as an electronic copy of a signed document stating refusal to provide information. It is advisable that in case of such a refusal the participation record is flagged accordingly for the purposes of validation.

Given the sensitivity of this category of personal data, it is advisable that classification is based on **self-definition** by the participant. However, it is also advisable that participants are provided with guidance detailing what each term means according to the national definition so that they may categorise themselves correctly.

5.6.1 Household situation

Three common indicators describe the household situation of participants (Table 14). The situation on the date of joining an operation should be recorded for all participants (if applicable).

Note: in the case that is planned to use existing administrative/survey data to complete information on the household situation and this is only annual data that cannot be linked directly to the date of entry to an operation then the situation in the year before entering may be used.

Table 14 - Indicators related to household situation

Jobless household	<p>➤ No household member is in employment, i.e. all members are either unemployed or inactive.</p> <p>Note: the indicator refers to <u>all household members</u> irrespective of age (e.g. a young unemployed participant living with retired grandparents would be counted as living in a jobless household).</p>
Jobless household with dependent children	<p>➤ No household member is in employment, i.e. all members are either unemployed or inactive; and</p> <p>➤ Household includes one or more dependent child/children, which means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ individuals aged 0-17 years; or✓ individuals aged 18-24 years <u>if inactive and living with at least one parent</u>²⁵. <p>Including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Children aged under 25 educated away from home, provided they are single, not working, and their main residence is the parents' address <p>Excluding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">x Unemployed <p>Note: “Jobless household with dependent children” is a sub-category of “jobless household”, meaning that anyone falling into this category must also be recorded in the above category.</p>
Single adult household with dependent children	<p>➤ Household includes only one adult (individual aged 18 or above), irrespective of their employment status.</p> <p>➤ Household includes one or more dependent child/children (see definition above)</p>

Note: these indicators are not mutually exclusive and participants may be recorded under more than one indicator.

What is a household?

A household, in the context of surveys on social conditions or income such as the EU-SILC (EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions)²⁶ or the Household Budget Survey (HBS)²⁷, is defined as a housekeeping unit or, operationally, as a social unit:

- ✓ having common arrangements;
- ✓ sharing household expenses or daily needs;
- ✓ in a shared common residence.

²⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Dependent_children

²⁶ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:EU-SILC>

²⁷ [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Household_budget_survey_\(HBS\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Household_budget_survey_(HBS))

A household includes either one person living alone or a group of people, not necessarily related, living at the same address with common housekeeping, i.e. sharing at least one meal per day or sharing a living or sitting room.

Exclusions:

- × Collective households or institutional households (e.g. hospitals, old people's homes, residential homes, prisons, military barracks, religious institutions, boarding houses, workers' hostels, etc.).

Who are to be considered as household members?

The following persons are regarded as household members²⁸:

- ✓ Persons usually resident, related to other members;
- ✓ Persons usually resident, not related to other members;
- ✓ Resident boarders, lodgers, tenants (for at least six months or without private address elsewhere);
- ✓ Visitors (for at least six months or without private address elsewhere);
- ✓ Live-in domestic servants, au-pairs (for at least six months or without private address elsewhere);
- ✓ Persons usually resident, but temporarily (for less than six months) absent from the dwelling (and without private address elsewhere);
- ✓ Children of the household being educated away from home;²⁹
- ✓ Persons absent for long periods, but having household ties;²⁹
- ✓ Persons temporarily absent (for less than six months) but having household ties.

Guidelines and recommendations

Recording of households without disadvantage

Many participants will be members of a household that is not disadvantaged (i.e. is not a jobless or single-parent household). As with other personal information, it is necessary for the purposes of validating the completeness of data to ensure that it is possible to distinguish between a known situation of "not disadvantaged" and a situation that is not known or not available (see section 2.2.2).

Students in shared accommodation

In general, groups of students sharing accommodation are not considered to constitute a household because even if they contribute to shared common expenses such as rent or utility bills, they usually manage their finances independently. Married students are an exception and should be treated as a household.

For unmarried students sharing accommodation the following guidelines apply:

If the accommodation is temporary (e.g. used only during term-time) and where the student has another "permanent" address to which s/he returns from time to time:

²⁸ List from the main concepts and definitions used by EU-SILC: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/income-and-living-conditions/methodology/main-concepts-definitions>

²⁹ Such persons must currently have no private address elsewhere, must be the partner or child of a household member and must continue to retain close ties with the household and must consider this address to be his/her main residence.

- Students should be considered part of the household residing at the permanent address;
- If the student is aged under 25 and is not working then they should also be considered as a dependent child in that household.

If the accommodation is “permanent” (i.e. intended for continuous use, not only in term-time):

- Single students of all ages should be considered as belonging to a single-person household.

Practical examples

Example 35: Unemployed lone parent

An unemployed participant living with a child enters an operation that aims to improve their employability.

→ If child is aged under 18* participants should be recorded under all three categories of disadvantaged household:

- Participants who live in jobless households
- Participants who live in jobless household with dependent children
- Participants who live in single adult household with dependent children

→ If the child is aged between 18 and 24* and s/he is inactive, participants should be recorded as:

- Participants who live in jobless households
- Participants who live in jobless household with dependent children

*At the time the participant enters the operation

Example 36: Members of temporary household

An unemployed individual has moved into a house temporarily but is essentially without fixed abode at the start of an operation. The temporary household is comprised by a relative who is unemployed.

→ Provided that s/he does not have any other permanent address, the participant should be considered as a member of the household.

→ As the only other household member is unemployed, the participant should be recorded as belonging to a “jobless household”.

Note: this participant might also fall under definition of the indicator for housing exclusion (see section 5.6.5)

5.6.2 Migrants, participants with foreign background and minorities (including Roma)

Participants in this category are considered to be disadvantaged and in need of special help in the labour market because of language or other cultural difficulties. The indicator brings together the following:

- ✓ Migrants (understood as non-national permanent residents in a country)
- ✓ People with a foreign background (according to national definitions)
- ✓ Minorities (according to national definitions), including Roma

Note: There is no need to distinguish between non-national permanent residents, people with a foreign background and nationals from a minority. Participants falling into any (or all) of these categories are grouped together for reporting purposes.

Recommended definitions

For people with a foreign background and minorities the definitions below provide a baseline against which national definitions (where these exist) can be assessed.

Migrants

Migrants are to be understood as non-national residents in a country. As per Regulation 862/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council, (im)migrants are people who establish their usual residence in the territory for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months(...)³⁰.

Further breakdown of data on migrants (may be relevant for programme-specific indicators)

According to Eurostat, a **“Recent migrant”** refers to a person who has been resident in the receiving country for less than eight years, and a **“Settled migrant”** refers to a person who has been resident in the receiving country for eight years or more³¹.

Minorities

There is no single definition of a minority group. In general, when linked with disadvantage, the term minority can be taken to refer to any group with personal characteristics that are subject to discrimination, which range from ethnicity or religious belief to sexual preference. The precise definitions adopted for ESF monitoring will, therefore, depend on national definitions.

In relation to ethnic minorities, which are likely to constitute the most widely recognised minority groups, the working definitions of previous ESF evaluations may be used³²:

- Ethnic minority – individuals with a different cultural tradition or background from the majority of the population;
- National minority – individuals from relatively well-established minority groups living in particular EU countries. National minorities have been established for a number of generations in some EU countries, such as Russians and Poles in the Baltic States, and the Hungarian minority in Romania.
- Indigenous minorities - ethnic groups that are long-standing residents of a particular EU country. They may have a migrant, indigenous or landless nomadic background. Examples of indigenous populations in Europe include the Sami in Finland, Sweden and Norway.

Foreign background

Similarly, in the absence of a national definition for "people with a foreign background" the term should be understood according to the following international recommendation (UNECE in

³⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32007R0862:EN:NOT>

³¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/5727749/KS-31-10-539-EN.PDF>

³² Evaluation of ESF Support for Enhancing Access to the Labour Market and the Social Inclusion of Migrants and Ethnic Minorities (Final Report, table 1.5)
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=701&langId=en&internal_pagesId=619&moreDocuments=yes&tableName=INTERNAL_PAGES

cooperation with Eurostat): persons with a foreign background are "... persons whose parents were born outside the country. The persons in this group may or may not have directly experienced an international migration"^{33 34}.

Guidelines and recommendations

Sensitive information

Information about migrant/minority status is one of the special categories of personal data in the sense of Article 8 of Directive 95/46 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data. Refer to the section on [data collection](#) for general guidance on the collection of such data.

Difficulties to collect personal information: Roma and other minorities

This indicator covers some of the most marginalised groups (e.g. Roma) and it is quite possible that some of the persons provided with support may be reluctant to provide not only the sensitive personal data but also the basic personal data subject to the completeness requirement. It should be clear that such persons can still be supported, provided that they fulfil the eligibility criteria, but cannot be counted as participants for monitoring purposes (see section 4.9.1).

For participants who do provide the personal data subject to the completeness requirement then every effort should also be made to complete the sensitive data. In the particular case of ethnic minorities such as the Roma, who may be reluctant to categorise themselves in this way, some degree of pragmatism in the recording of this indicator may be afforded. For example, in the case that an operation specifically targets Roma (or some other minority) then it would be reasonable to give providers the flexibility to report all participants as belonging to a minority group even if some individuals are not willing to self-declare this. This approach is only acceptable in the case that the eligibility criteria for the operation are such that, in principle, only minority groups are likely to participate and that default application of minority status to participation records would not compromise the quality of data (e.g. non-minorities would comprise less than 5% of participants). It would be the responsibility of managing authorities to ensure that such treatment is justified and clearly documented.

Practical examples

Example 37: Migrant acquiring citizenship

A foreign participant who enters an operation has been living in the country for 5 years, and now has acquired citizenship.

→S/he should be considered as **migrant** (and also with **foreign background**). S/he is to be recorded in the indicator "Migrants, participants with foreign background and minorities."

³³ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3888793/5850217/KS-RA-11-019-EN.PDF>

³⁴ Conference of European statisticians recommendations for the 2010 censuses of population and housing, UNECE, 2006 (see §398): http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/CES_2010_Census_Recommendations_English.pdf

Example 38: Children of emigrants returning to the country of origin

Both parents of the participant entering the ESF were born in the country but migrated to a foreign country, where the participant was born and raised (note: they are not from any minority).

→If the participant has the nationality of the country of birth, s/he should be considered as **migrant** and recorded in the indicator “Migrants, participants with foreign background and minorities”

→If the participant has the nationality of the country where the ESF intervention is taking place, s/he should **not be considered migrant**.

Example 39: Minority status of participants in operations specifically targeted at Roma

An operation established in a deprived rural area aims to promote labour market inclusion of young Roma (aged less than 20) who have dropped out from school and are unemployed. Many of the people helped are reluctant to declare themselves as Roma.

In this case, since the operation specifically targets young Roma, it would be reasonable to give providers the flexibility to report all participants as belonging to a **minority group** even if some individuals are not willing to self-declare this. This approach is acceptable because the eligibility criteria are such that it is very unlikely that non-Roma individuals would be assisted.

5.6.3 Participants with disabilities

As in the Eurostat LMP Methodology, disabled people are to be understood as persons who are registered disabled according to national definitions.

Guidelines and recommendations

Some disabled participants may not be covered by the relevant national register. For example, children may not be included if the registration of disability is based only on the employment/unemployment register, people who are temporarily disabled and undergoing rehabilitation may not be registered, etc. However, as the definition of the indicator in Annex C of the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation specifically refers to “registered disabled” it is recommended that persons considered to be disabled but who are not registered are counted as “Other disadvantaged” and not as “Participants with disabilities”. In this respect, it may be helpful to note the definition of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which considers disabled people to be those with “*long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others*”³⁵.

5.6.4 Other disadvantaged participants

The category of “other disadvantaged” covers participants considered to have some form of disadvantage - according to national definitions - that is not covered by any of the other common output indicators related to disadvantage. This includes not only the disadvantages explicitly referred to in the result indicators that cover all “disadvantaged participants” (i.e. jobless households, single parent households with dependent children, migrants and minorities, and disability) but also

³⁵ See Article 1 of the convention: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>.

disadvantages related to age, gender or employment status which are implicitly covered by the output indicators on personal characteristics. An “other disadvantage” can be cumulated with disadvantages covered by other indicators (e.g. a participant can be both disabled and other disadvantaged) but should not repeat a disadvantage covered by another indicator.

In general, therefore, if the disadvantage is mentioned in any way in another indicator then it should not be counted here. There is, however, an important exception to this rule in relation to the common output indicators dealing with people affected by homelessness or housing exclusion and people living in rural areas. As a minimum requirement, these are to be reported only once in 2017 (each on the basis of a representative sample) and are therefore not covered by indicators in other years.

It is recommended that persons who are homeless or affected by housing exclusion are counted under “other disadvantaged”, provided the data are collected for the full population of participants and for all years.

Living in a rural area is however not necessarily a disadvantage, and participants falling into this category should be counted as “Other disadvantaged” only when the area in which they reside is recognised nationally as disadvantaged and when information on the place of residence is collected for all participants and for all years. For this purpose, the national definition of disadvantaged rural areas might use units which are different from those in the DEGURBA classification required for the common indicator on rural areas.

If data on homelessness and rural areas are collected only for a representative sample of participants and reported in the AIR to be submitted in 2017, participants who are homeless participants or from rural areas should not be counted under the common indicator “other disadvantaged”.

Note: Participants without even first stage primary education (ISCED 1) and who are above the age at which that is normally completed should be considered as ISCED level 0 and should always be counted as “Other disadvantaged” (see section 5.5.1).

Guidelines and recommendations

Absence of national definitions

A generalised national definition of “other disadvantaged” may not exist but there may be separate definitions for different categories of people that would fit within this category, for example:

- + Ex-offenders
- + People living in poverty³⁶ or suffering from material deprivation³⁷
- + Substance abusers

³⁶ Living in poverty means with income below 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers. http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At-risk-of-poverty_threshold

³⁷ Material deprivation refers to the situation of people who cannot afford a number of necessities considered essential to live a decent life in Europe. Individuals are considered to be under material deprivation if living in households who lack at least three of the following nine items because they cannot afford them: 1. to face unexpected expenses; 2. one week annual holiday away from home; 3. to pay for arrears (mortgage or rent, utility bills or hire purchase instalments); 4. a meal with meat, chicken or fish every second day; 5. to keep home adequately warm; 6. to have a washing machine; 7. to have a colour TV; 8. to have a telephone; 9. to have a personal car (see: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/5722557/KS-31-10-555-EN.PDF>).

It is recommended to count as “other disadvantaged” also persons affected by homelessness or housing exclusion (and from rural areas if these are nationally defined as disadvantaged) provided the relevant data are collected for all participants and for all years (see sections 5.6.4 and 5.7)

Definitions and lists of disadvantages to be provided to beneficiaries

A comprehensive list of disadvantages to be covered under this indicator, together with appropriate guidance and definitions, should be provided to all organisations in charge of data collection in order to ensure consistency of data.

It is important that the definitions and guidance provided is workable in terms of routine monitoring. For example, the Eurostat definition of material deprivation (see footnote 37) is complex and would be onerous to apply in practice across all operations. On the other hand, if an operation specifically targets people suffering from material deprivation then by default all participants would reasonably be considered as “other disadvantaged”.

Practical examples

Example 40: Cumulated disadvantage: minority without basic education

A young Roma who has not attended any formal schooling is engaged in an ESF supported operation.

→ Since the participant declares being from an ethnic minority (Roma), s/he should be recorded in the indicator covering **Migrants, participant with a foreign background and minorities**.

→ With no basic schooling, their educational attainment is ISCED level 0, therefore s/he should be also be recorded as **Other disadvantaged**.

Example 41: Cumulated disadvantage: single parent ex-offender

On leaving prison, a young parent is reunited with his/her child (i.e. they resume living together) and at the same time starts on an ESF funded training operation.

→ The participant is an inactive single parent living with at least one child so is recorded in all of the following:

- **Participants who live in jobless households**
- **Participants who live in jobless households with dependent children**
- **Participants who live in a single adult household with dependent children**

If ex-offenders are also considered nationally as a disadvantaged group, the participant should also be recorded as **Other disadvantaged**.

5.6.5 Homelessness and housing exclusion

The common output indicator “homelessness or affected by housing exclusion” covers persons who are homeless (without a fixed abode) or affected by housing exclusion according to national definitions.

This indicator is to be reported, as a minimum requirements, only once in the AIR to be submitted in 2017 (AIR2016). Data on homelessness are not required for all participants, but can be recorded only for a **representative sample of all participants entering operations up to the end of 2016** at the level of investment priority (see section 4.6).

However, given the inherent difficulty to trace people without a permanent residence, managing authorities may consider collecting the necessary information from all participants at the same time as the information needed for the output indicators reported annually (i.e. on the date of joining an operation).

Adults living with their parents should not be registered under this indicator unless they are all homeless or living in insecure or inadequate housing.

Provided that data for all participants and all years are collected, it is recommended that participants affected by homelessness and housing exclusion are considered as “other disadvantaged” (see section 5.6.4).

Note: as for all common output indicators, the data recorded must reflect situation of the participant at the point of first entry to an operation.

Guidelines and recommendations

Recommended definition

If no standardised definition of homelessness or housing exclusion is used in national statistics or administrative records, it is recommended to use the ETHOS (European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion) definition developed by FEANTSA (the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless). This refers to four circumstances of rooflessness, houselessness, insecure accommodation and inadequate housing³⁸.

5.6.6 Immediate and longer-term result indicators on disadvantaged participants

There is one common immediate result indicator and one longer-term result indicator which cover all disadvantaged participants. Both indicators (“disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/training, gaining a qualification, in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving”, and “disadvantaged participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving”) should only include participants who have been recorded in at least one of the following common output indicators (note that people may cumulate several disadvantages):

- participants who live in jobless households;
- participants who live in a single adult household with dependent children;
- migrants, people with a foreign background, minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma);
- participants with disabilities; or
- other disadvantaged.

³⁸ Further clarification of the typology, including an FAQ guide, can be found on the website of FEANTSA:
<http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article120>

5.6.7 Indicators relating to a disadvantage

Common output indicators
– Participants who live in jobless households
– Participants who live in jobless household with dependent children
– Participants who live in single adult household with dependent children
– Migrants, participants with a foreign background, minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma)
– Participants with disabilities
– Other disadvantaged
– Homeless or affected by housing exclusion (2017 only)
Common immediate result indicators
– Disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/ training, gaining a qualification, in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving
Common longer-term result indicators
– Disadvantaged participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving

5.7 Place of residence

Information on the place of residence is to be collected for the common output indicator “from rural areas”.

This indicator is to be reported, as a minimum requirement, only once in the AIR to be submitted in 2017 (AIR2016). Information on place of residence is not required for all participants, but may be recorded only for a **sample of all participants entering operations up to the end of 2016** that is representative at the level of investment priority (see section 4.6).

5.7.1 Participants living in rural areas

The place of residence of an individual recorded must refer to the date of entry in an operation.

Rural areas are to be understood as **thinly populated areas** (or category 3) according to the “DEGREE of URBANISATION” (DEGURBA) classification; which in practice means that more than 50% of the population of the area lives in rural grid cells³⁹. For the purposes of ESF monitoring this classification should be applied at the level known as *Local Administrative Unit level 2* (or LAU2), which typically refers to the commune, municipality or equivalent.

As mentioned previously (see section 5.6.4), living in a rural area is not necessarily a disadvantage. Participants falling into this category should be counted as “Other disadvantaged” only when the area in which they reside is recognised nationally as disadvantaged and when information on the place of residence is collected for all participants and for all years. For this purpose, the national definition of disadvantaged rural areas might use territorial units which are different from those in the DEGURBA classification, which has to be used for the common indicator on rural areas (see section 5.6.4).

³⁹ Eurostat statistics explained site here: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Degree_of_urbanisation_classification_-_2011_revision. And methodological note here: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/ramon/documents/DEGURBA/DEGURBA_Methodology_DG_REGIO.zip

Guidelines and recommendations

Recording and storing information on the place of residence

Whether or not an area is considered rural should be based on the existing DEGURBA classification as published by Eurostat. This means that it is not necessary for countries to make this interpretation, but simply to record the place of residence using a relevant classification scheme (e.g. postal code or municipality code). The rural (or not) nature of this region is then determined by cross-referencing this national code with the DEGURBA dataset published by Eurostat. Areas with DEGURBA code 3 are rural; areas with codes 1 or 2 are not.

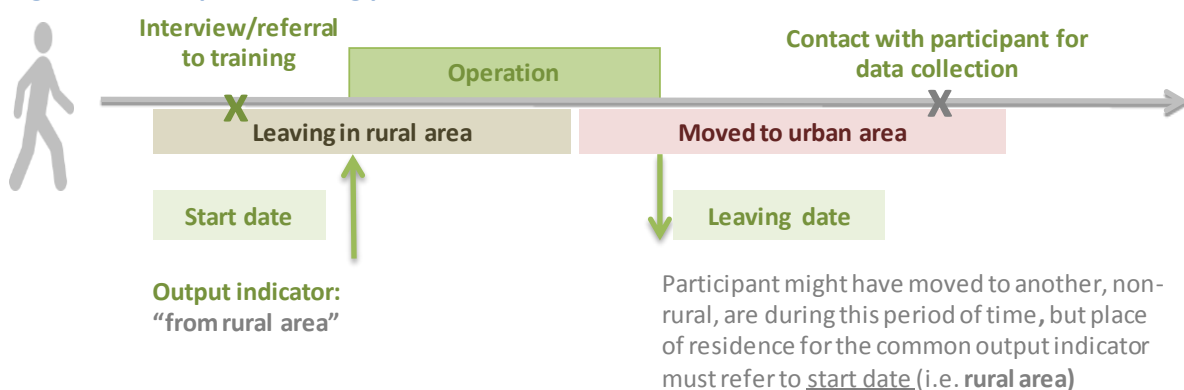
A table showing the type of administrative unit considered as LAU2 in each country is available here: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/KS-BD-03-002-3A-PART1>.

Tables showing the DEGURBA classification of each LAU2 area are available for all countries here: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/ramon/miscellaneous/index.cfm?TargetUrl=DSP_DEGURBA

Participants moving place of residence

Since the place of residence of an individual must refer to the date of entry in an operation, if a participant has moved house while or after participating in an ESF operation, the municipality where they need to be recorded has to be the one they were living at the time of entry into the operation (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Participants moving place of residence



Participants with more than one place of residence

In the case of participants with two places of residences (weekend house, split parents, etc.) the residence to be recorded/reported should be the one used in administrative registers.

Recording place of residence for homeless participants

Participants who are homeless or affected by housing exclusion are not excluded from living in rural areas (i.e. they could be rural homeless or urban homeless). As far as possible, the place of residence should refer to the local administrative unit in which they normally live.

5.7.2 Indicators relating to place of residence

Common output indicators

- From rural areas (2017 only)

5.8 Data relating to entities

5.8.1 Overview of information to be collected for indicators relating to entities

Information on entities supported and projects implemented must be collected in order to report the four common output indicators for entities (no corresponding result indicators need to be collected and reported unless programme-specific indicators related to entities are used). For details on how to collect and store the information required for these indicators, please refer to section on [Entities and projects](#).

What information needs to be collected for common indicators for entities?

At the start of a project, information on the type of entity implementing the project, the type of entity supported, as well as the objective of a project all need to be recorded.

Type of entity implementing the project:

- [Social partners](#)
- [Non-governmental organisations](#)

Type of entity supported/ specifically targeted:

- [Public administrations at national, regional or local level](#)
- [Public services at national, regional or local level](#)
- [Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises \(including cooperative enterprises, enterprises of the social economy\)](#)

Objective of project:

- Projects dedicated at supporting the [sustainable participation and progress of women in employment](#)

Note: the counting of projects or entities does not preclude the data collection for individuals as participants (see section 4.1).

5.8.2 Projects implemented by social partners or non-governmental organisations

At the beginning of a project, the type(s) of organisation(s) responsible for project implementation should be recorded, in particular where this includes either a social partner or a non-governmental organisation:

Social partner organisations refer to organisations convened to represent the interests of management and labour (employers' organisations and trade unions)⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ Eurofound: <http://www.old.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/industrialrelations/dictionary/definitions/europeansocialpartners.htm>

A **Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)** can be defined as any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organised on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs can perform a variety of service and humanitarian functions, bring citizen concerns to Governments, advocate and monitor policies and encourage political participation through the provision of information⁴¹.

Note: this is the only common output indicator for entities which captures [beneficiaries](#) because NGOs and social partner organisations may implement an operation through project(s).

Guidelines and recommendations

Unit of measure: project

For this indicator, data needs to capture not how many organisations are implementing projects, but **how many projects** are implemented (fully or partially) by social partners or NGOs.

Methodology for counting projects

A given project can be recorded only once per indicator, i.e. if a project is implemented by several NGOs or social partner organisations then the project should be counted only once, and not have one record for each NGO/social partner organisation. However, if a given NGO/social partner organisation is involved (at least partially) in the implementation of multiple projects, then as many projects as they are involved in should be counted (see Example 42 below).

When to collect data on projects

The information for the indicator on 'Number of projects fully or partially implemented by social partners or non-governmental organisations' has to be collected at the start of the project.

However, if during the course of the operation there are changes in terms of the entities implementing a particular project, and a new entity (NGO or social partner) gets involved in the implementation of the project, there are two options:

- a) At the beginning of the operation there was already at least one social partner/NGO involved (at least partially) in the implementation of the project: the fact that a new entity is added does not have any impact on the indicator (which counts the number of projects, not the number of entities).
- b) At the beginning of the operation no social partner/NGO was implementing the project (not even partially): it is recommended to update the reported number of projects for this indicator.

In contrast, if during the rolling out of a project an entity ceases to be involved in the implementation of the project, the indicator data should not be updated. For example, if at the beginning of the operation an NGO was implementing the project but after some time it is decided to exclude it from the implementation 'team', then, as the NGO has still been partially involved in the implementation process, this project still qualifies to be counted under the indicator "Number of projects fully or partially implemented by social partners or non-governmental organisations" and no changes in the indicator data should be made.

⁴¹ NGO Global Network: <http://www.ngo.org/ngoinfo/define.html>

Practical example

Example 42: How to count projects involving NGOs/social partner organisations

An operation consists of two projects, A and B, details are outlined below:

Project A: A project jointly implemented by the Women's institute, a trade union body and regional universities provides guidance, training and advice to female graduates with the aim of promoting their participation into the labour market.

Project B: A separate project implemented by the same trade union body as in Project A and a language training institute aims to help train migrants in the national language

These interventions should be recorded as:

- Projects fully or partially implemented by social partners or non-governmental organisations = 2
(Project A and Project B)

AND

- Projects dedicated at sustainable participation and progress of women in employment = 1 **(Project A)**

5.8.3 Projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level

This indicator aims to measure ESF support for enhancing institutional capacity and efficient public administration. The meanings of the two entities referred to in this indicator are detailed below:

Public administration is understood to include: executive and legislative administration of central, regional and local bodies; administration and supervision of fiscal affairs (operation of taxation schemes; duty/tax collection on goods and tax violation investigation; customs administration); budget implementation and management of public funds and public debt (raising and receiving of money and control of their disbursement); administration of overall (civil) research and development policy and associated funds; administration and operation of overall economic and social planning and statistical services at the various levels of government⁴².

Public services refer to any public or private body which delivers a public service. The private element of this definition is relevant for cases where some services are outsourced by the state to large private or semi-private providers, i.e. private bodies with a public function.

Guidelines and recommendations

Unit of measure: project

Again, for this indicator data needs to capture not how many organisations have been targeted through ESF, but **how many projects** target public administration and public services.

⁴² Excluded categories are listed in Eurostat's methodology paper: [NACE Rev. 2 Statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community, 2008](#) (p.286)

Methodology for counting projects

A given project can be recorded only once per indicator, i.e. even if a project targets both public administration and public services or more than one of each, the project should be counted only once. However, if a given public administration/service is supported through various projects, then each relevant project should be counted.

Practical examples

Example 43: Capacity building for municipal leaders and public services managers

A project dedicated to equip mayors and municipal officers, as well as managers of public services organised at regional level, with management, financial and information technology skills.

Should be recorded as:

- **One project** targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level. In this case, the same project targets both the local level (mayors and municipal officers) and the regional level (managers of public services). A project may target one or more levels.

5.8.4 Supported micro, small and medium sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, enterprises of the social economy)

Only enterprises that benefit directly from ESF support as the result of a specific intervention should be covered under the common output indicator “Number of micro, small and medium sized enterprises supported”. Direct support refers to cases where the ESF support targets the SME itself for which concrete expenditure is earmarked.

In order to benefit from ESF support enterprises do not have to receive money directly, they may also benefit from services paid for by ESF but without any money passing through the enterprise. For example, ESF funds may be used to support the training of employees in an enterprise but the payment could go directly to the training company. In this case the enterprise benefitting from training is counted in the indicator but the training provider is not. The training provider is receiving payment for services as a routine part of their business and is not benefitting from ESF support.

If an SME employee participates in an ESF training project, this may indirectly support an SME but it would not be sufficient to qualify for inclusion in the indicator data for SMEs supported by ESF. SMEs acting as beneficiaries should not be reported under this indicator either. If it is important to capture such data in order to better describe the impact of the programme then relevant programme-specific indicators may be set up.

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) refers to enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million. An enterprise is considered to be any entity engaged in an economic activity, irrespective of its legal form.

Note: although the common indicators treat SMEs as a single category of entity, more focused programme-specific indicators might usefully split these into micro-, small and/or medium-sized enterprises.

Guidelines and recommendations

Unit of measure: entities

Unlike for the other indicators relating to entities, for this indicator, data needs to capture **how many organisations have been supported through ESF**.

Methodology for counting entities

Entities might benefit directly from ESF via several projects in a same operation, or even in different operations. An entity may be counted as supported entity in more than one operation but never more than once per operation.

SMEs employees taking part in ESF operations

The fact that SME employees participate in an ESF operation does not necessarily mean the SME should be counted under the indicator ‘Number of SMEs supported’; the specific objective(s) of the operation should be taken into account. If, for example, the operation consists of training aimed to offer competence development to employed individuals (irrespective of the company they are working for), then the individuals are supported directly by the ESF but not the companies. Increased human capital (i.e. better skilled employees) is considered as an indirect benefit for the SME and in this case, data should only be collected on participants, not on SMEs. However, in other cases the specific objective of an operation may target SMEs, for instance by providing support to train employees for new IT systems that will make the companies more productive. In such operations, the SMEs are supported directly, and should therefore be counted for the indicator ‘Number of SMEs supported’.

Therefore, unless the specific objective of the operation is to support the SMEs, companies receiving ESF support should not be counted under the indicator ‘Number of SMEs supported’.

Operations supporting the creation of SMEs

All common output indicators refer to the situation of participants or entities before the ESF support starts. If the SME has been legally founded before the start of the support and the support is used to somehow help the business through the start-up phase then it may be counted in the indicator on ‘number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises’. Individuals benefitting from business counselling, mentoring, training or similar support would also be counted as participants. However, if the SME is legally founded during the support period or afterwards as a result of the support provided then it should not be counted in the output indicator and only the individuals benefitting from support would be counted as participants.

In the case of programmes designed to support the creation of SMEs, programme-specific indicators might be established. Here, a result indicator that aims to count the number of SMEs created through ESF support must be linked to a relevant output indicator based on an equivalent observation unit, for example the number of business plans treated and not the number of persons supported.

SMEs benefitting directly vs. being beneficiaries

Difference between a “beneficiary” and an entity “benefitting from support”

- A **beneficiary** is defined as a “Public or private body (...) responsible for initiating or both initiating and implementing operations ...” (Article 2(10) of the Common Provision Regulation (1303/2013)).
- An **entity benefitting from support** is one that receives services or other support paid for (in full or in part) by the ESF which is designed to fulfil the objectives of an operation that targets entities rather than individuals. This is equivalent to the requirement for participants to be persons who benefit directly from ESF support that incurs expenditure.

Usually beneficiaries initiate or implement an operation that supports a number of individuals or entities fulfilling certain criteria (target group).

In order to be counted under the indicator “Number of micro, small and medium sized enterprises supported”, SMEs should, in the same way as for participants, benefit directly from ESF support that incurs expenditure. This does not mean that enterprises have to receive money directly, as they may also benefit from services paid for by the ESF without any money passing through the enterprise. See below Example 44 and Example 45.

Practical examples

Example 44: SMEs implementing an operation (fully or partially) without being supported by it

The PES, acting as a beneficiary, contracts an SME to provide management training courses to women aimed at helping them confront barriers to promotion in a male-dominated industry.

- x The SME is delivering the services offered by the operation and is paid for this out of ESF funds. It is involved in implementing the operation and is not benefitting from support. The SME should not be recorded under the indicator “Number of micro, small and medium sized enterprises supported”.
- ✓ Women benefitting from training should be counted as participants.
- ✓ The project should be recorded as a project supporting the participation and progress of women in employment.

Example 45: SMEs being supported by a project without implementing it

The PES, acting as a beneficiary, manages a programme to support the training and upskilling of employees in SMEs in declining sectors. Payment could go directly to the training companies.

- ✓ Enterprises benefitting from training should be counted in the indicator “Number of micro, small and medium sized enterprises supported”.
- x Any SMEs involved as training providers should not be counted as they receive payment for services as a routine part of their business, they are involved in implementing the project and are not benefitting from ESF support.

Example 46: SME supported through multiple projects

An SME which received support through a project providing start-up business support (Project A) also receives funding for promoting equality measures in the workplace (Project B).

There are two possibilities for how this indicator should be recorded:

a) Project A and Project B are part of a different operation (e.g. “Support for small businesses” and “ESF to promote equality in the workplace”

→ This company should be recorded twice, once for each operation, under the indicator “number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises”.

b) Project A and Project B are part of the same operation (e.g. “Support for small businesses”)

→ This company should be recorded only once under the above mentioned indicator.

5.8.5 Projects dedicated at sustainable participation and progress of women in employment

Projects which have a clear objective of improving the labour market status of women should be recorded under this indicator. Namely, projects with the aim of “combating the feminisation of poverty, reducing gender-based segregation and combating gender stereotypes in the labour market and in education and training, promoting reconciliation of work and personal life for all and equal sharing of care responsibilities between men and women”⁴³.

Unit of measure: project

For this indicator, data needs to capture **how many projects** have this specific aim of promoting sustainable participation and progress of women in employment.

Practical examples

Example 47: NGO providing management training courses for women

ESF co-finances an operation run by an NGO in order to provide management training courses to women aimed at helping them confront barriers to promotion in a male-dominated industry.

This should be recorded as:

- one project supporting the participation and progress of women in employment.

In addition, this project also fulfils the criteria to be recorded as:

- one project fully or partially implemented by social partners or non-governmental organisations.

Note: the counting of projects or entities does not preclude the data collection for individuals as participants (see section 4.1).

⁴³ Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 (Article 7 - Promotion of equality between men and women):
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0470:0486:EN:PDF>

Example 48: Project to promote women entrepreneurship

A project organised by the public employment services (PES) provides support to women wanting to expand their business.

The project should be counted as:

- one project dedicated at sustainable participation and progress of women in employment.

In addition, all SMEs supported under this project should be recorded under the indicator:

- Number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, enterprises of the social economy).

Note: the counting of projects or entities does not preclude the data collection for individuals as participants (see section 4.1).

5.8.6 Indicators for entities

Common output indicators for entities

- Number of projects fully or partially implemented by social partners or non-governmental organisations
- Number of projects dedicated at sustainable participation and progress of women in employment
- Number of projects targeting public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level
- Number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises, enterprises of the social economy)

5.9 Technical assistance

Technical Assistance (TA) funds support the preparation, analysis, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and communication, networking, complaint resolution, control and audit activities of the operational programme, together with activities to improve or support the administrative capacity of beneficiaries, including support for developing data exchange systems.

TA may also be extended to relevant partners⁴⁴ and/or subcontractors.

Monitoring requirements

For operations funded as part of TA, programme-specific output indicators must be established, and the relevant data collected and reported. Member States may also choose to use the common output indicators where these are relevant but this is not obligatory.

Reporting result indicators is generally not required, however, where the Union contribution to the priority axis or axes concerning TA in an operational programme exceeds EUR 15 000 000, result indicators will have to be reported where objectively justified given the content of the actions⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, Article 5(3)(e)

⁴⁵ Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, Article 96 (2)(c)(ii)

Guidelines and recommendations

Identifying participants and entities in TA operations

As outlined previously, only individuals that actively participate in an ESF operation, benefit directly from support that incurs expenditure, and who can be identified and asked for the personal information needed for all common indicators should be counted as participants (see section 4.1).

Note: It is possible that projects funded under TA operations do not benefit individuals directly, but rather benefit organisations and entities. Projects for which no participants can be identified should report zero values for all participant indicators.

Similarly, only entities that benefit directly from a project are to be counted. When an individual forming part of an organisation participates (benefits directly) from a project, this does not mean that the organisation is supported, but rather benefitted indirectly.

Note: entities which are beneficiaries should not be reported (see section 5.7).

Participants

- ✓ Staff of supported entity who benefit directly from ESF support
- ✗ Individuals benefitting indirectly from an operation
- ✗ Staff of subcontractor companies that deliver services

Entities

- ✓ Entities receiving the support (with the exception of beneficiaries – see section 5.7)
- ✗ Subcontractors / service providers

Practical examples

Example 49: Provision of training to municipality police officers

Police officers in a municipality receive 2 weeks of training designed to improve their interaction with the Roma community in the streets. An NGO working for Roma inclusion is contracted to provide the course.

Participants/entities which should be counted are shown below in bold:

Participants

- ✓ **Police officers attending the course**
- ✗ Roma population reached through the project
- ✗ Staff of the NGO providing the training

Entities

- ✓ **Municipal police force [for indicator on projects targeting public administrations/services]**
- ✗ **NGO contracted to provide the training [for indicator on projects wholly or partly implemented by social partners or NGOs]**

Example 50: Editing and publication of communication materials

An NGO implementing an ESF funded project providing support for migrants receives Technical Assistance funding for publishing brochures on the services offered. The publications are edited and produced by a sub-contracted private company.

Participants/entities which should be counted are shown below in bold:

Participants

- × Members of the organisation implementing the project
- × Migrants to whom the brochures are provided (receiving brochures do not constitute support in itself but those migrants that subsequently benefit from the services delivered through the project would be counted under the relevant operation)
- × Staff of the company providing editing and publishing services

Entities

- ✓ **NGO implementing the project [for indicator on projects fully or partially implemented by social partners or non-governmental organisations]**
- × Company contracted to produce the publications

Example 51: Conference of stakeholders

The PES organises an event in order to bring together organisations (including social enterprises) working towards inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Although the individuals participating in the conference and the organisations may benefit from the conference the ultimate objective is to improve the service capacity of the PES.

Participants/entities which should be counted are shown below in bold:

Participants

- × Conference attendants
- × PES staff responsible for organising the event

Entities

- ✓ **PES [for indicator on projects targeting public administrations/services]**
- × Organisations attending the conference

5.10 YEI supported operations – specific YEI indicators

For operational programmes supported by the YEI, specific immediate and longer-term result indicators for the YEI (Annex II of the ESF regulation) need to be reported annually, in addition to the common output and result indicators for ESF investments (Annex I), starting for the first time in 2015 (see section 3.2).

The **YEI immediate result indicators** apply to all YEI-supported operations and describe whether participants completed the YEI intervention, whether they received an offer or have actually changed their situation. These indicators have to be reported separately for each of the target groups by employment status: unemployed, LTU, inactive not in education or training (see section 5.3). Within each of these target groups an individual participant may be counted in none, one, two or all three of the following YEI immediate result indicators:

- > Participants who complete the YEI supported intervention;
- > Participants who receive an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving;
- > Participants who are in education/training, gain a qualification, or are in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving.

The **YEI longer-term result** indicators also apply to all YEI-supported operations and describe the participants' educational and employment status. These indicators have to be reported, as a minimum requirement, for a representative sample of participants on an annual basis. An individual participant may be counted in none, one, two or all three of the following YEI longer term result indicators:

- > In continued education, training programmes leading to a qualification, an apprenticeship or a traineeship six months after leaving (see section 5.5);
- > In employment six months after leaving (see section 5.3);
- > In self-employment six months after leaving (see section 5.3).

The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) is intended to support the implementation of Youth Guarantee (YG) schemes through directly supporting the integration into the labour market of young people NEET residing in the regions most affected by youth unemployment/inactivity.

YG schemes supporting individuals have two phases:

- the **YG service** phase when YG providers work with young people to help them find a suitable offer of employment, education or training;
- the **YG offer** phase when the young person participates in the work or training opportunity found during the service phase.

The YEI funding can be used to support either the YG service phase or the YG offer phase (e.g. subsidised traineeships or subsidised jobs), or both phases in an integrated operation. Both the relevance and application of the YEI immediate result indicators and the relation with YG monitoring depends on the type of support funded.

5.10.1 YEI immediate result indicators

As mentioned above, YEI immediate result indicators relate to different reference population, depending on labour market situation (unemployed, LTU, and inactive), and monitor three different situations as result of participating in a YEI intervention: the completion of the intervention, receiving an offer, or moving into employment or education/training. Practical recommendations for each of the indicators are provided in this section.

a) Completion of the YEI supported intervention

As stated in Annex C2 of the EC guidance document, for participants to be recorded in these indicators, full participation is required from start to finish. However occasional absence due to sickness or similar justifiable reason can be accepted. In this case, a threshold for minimum participation can be set (for instance 90%), but it should be applied consistently.

Participants who do not attend according to the schedule and/or leave before having completed the planned activities (i.e. they drop out, even if to take up an offer) should not be counted (see below sections on [Intervention vs. operation](#) and [Recording completion at point of exit](#)).

b) Receiving an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship

According to Annex C2 of the EC Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation, an **offer** is to be understood as “a voluntary but conditional promise, submitted for acceptance by an offeror (e.g. employer, training organisation) to the participant, as long as it clearly indicates the offeror's willingness to enter into an agreement under specific terms with the participant and that it is made in a manner that a reasonable person would understand its acceptance will result in a binding agreement. Once the participant accepts it becomes an agreement which legally commits both parties”. The subject of the offer could be employment, continued education, a traineeship or an apprenticeship which the offeror would propose to the offeree.

The common YEI immediate result indicators capturing offers of employment/education do not contain any reference to **quality** (duration, skills required, etc.). All offers which are in line with the definition of offer are to be recorded.

The following situations are **not considered to be an offer** in terms of immediate result indicators:

- ✘ offers of traineeships, vocational education or other activities that are part of the same YEI operation in which participants are taking part;
- ✘ the employment service proposes that a participant applies to a particular employer or training institution;
- ✘ a participant is invited or referred to a job interview

If the YEI intervention itself consists of providing the participants with employment, an apprenticeship or traineeship, or continued education or training (i.e. by definition the participants already received an offer in the meaning of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation), the support is not to be counted as an offer. In this case, zero values should be reported for the YEI immediate result indicator on persons having received an offer.

The indicators on offers cover all participants and do not exclude those leaving earlier than planned.

The concept of receiving an offer "upon leaving"

Offers received during the YEI support can be interpreted as a result of the support irrespective of the precise point at which they are delivered (even if on own-initiative) and should therefore be counted in immediate result indicators. This implies a rather flexible interpretation of the term “on leaving”, and means that the indicators should count participants “having received” an offer on leaving, rather than the strict interpretation of “receiving an offer upon leaving” (which implies that offers received prior to the point of leaving would not be counted) (see Example 52).

c) In education/training, gaining a qualification, or in employment, including self-employment

These are crucial indicators in terms of the effectiveness of YEI interventions as it is expected to demonstrate the actual change in the labour market or educational status of the participants.

These indicators cover participants with a positive outcome (including those who left without completing the intervention). The following participants should be counted:

- Those who have gained a qualification as result of the intervention (see section 5.5.2); or
- Those who moved into employment or to education/training within four weeks of leaving the intervention (see sections 5.3.2 and 5.5.3).

Guidelines and recommendations

Intervention vs. operation

There is a distinction to be made between the terms “intervention” and “operation”. For the YEI result indicators, the term “intervention” refers to the full set of activities (i.e. one or more) planned for each participant and the scheduled period over which these should take place in the context of a YEI supported operation.

The activities and duration planned within an operation may be the same for all participants, or different for each participant (i.e. individualised or tailored activities). Hence, within the same operation, the length and content of a YEI intervention may vary between participants. The term “intervention” is used in order to describe the act of “completing an intervention” (i.e. the participant completes the full schedule of planned activities) (see Example 53).

Eligible YEI participants may benefit from YEI interventions under more than one YEI supported operation, depending on the way the operations are designed. The eligibility should be reconfirmed at the start of each of these relevant operations. As described in section 4.3.1, a participant should be counted only once in any given operation, but if taking part in multiple operations, they should be recorded (under separate participation records) in each operation.

Recording completion at point of exit

Managing authorities should ensure that for all operations with YEI funding a mechanism is in place in order to determine which participants completed the planned schedule of activities and which did not. For this purpose, it is recommended that data at individual level are recorded (e.g. as either completed intervention or early exit) when the individual leaves the operation. This would simplify subsequent aggregation of data for indicator purposes, particularly in the case that the planned duration of participation is linked to individual needs (i.e. tailored support).

Practical examples

Example 52: Offer refused, participant continues in the YEI operation

An inactive participant (who was not previously in education or training) receives an offer of traineeship whilst participating in a YEI intervention.

S/he declines the offer and continues to participate until the end of the planned activities of the intervention.

→The participant completed the planned activities (intervention) within the YEI operation, s/he should be recorded under:

✓ inactive participants not in education or training who complete the YEI supported intervention.

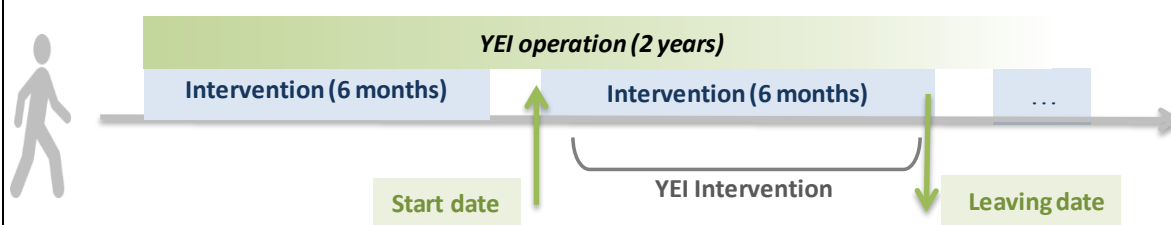
→The participant received an offer of traineeship (even though it was not made “upon leaving”), s/he should also be counted under:

✓inactive participants who receive an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving.

Example 53: Completing an intervention

A YEI operation runs for 2 years. The same 6 month intervention (or series of activities) is run successively for different groups of people.

→Irrespective of the wave of the intervention, participants who complete the 6 month period of activities will be considered to have “completed the intervention”.



Participants who **attend the intervention according to schedule until the last day/last session of its scheduled end** are considered to have **completed the YEI supported intervention**.

→ Participants who leave the operation to take up a job before the end of the planned 6 month intervention will not be counted as having completed the YEI intervention.

Example 54: Participant leaves the intervention to take up a job

An unemployed participant receives a job offer whilst participating in a YEI operation. S/he accepts the offer and leaves immediately, before the end of the planned activities.

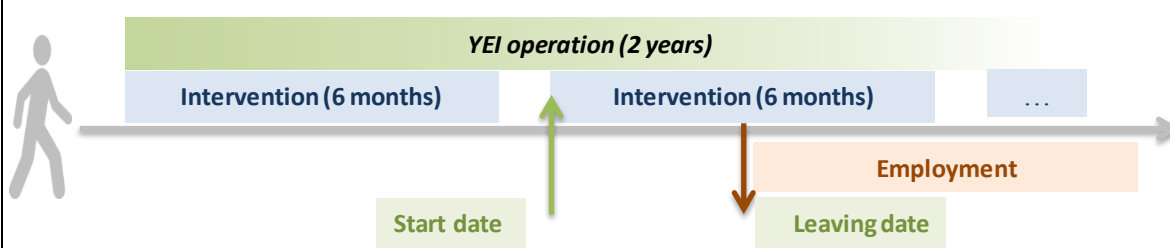
→The participant did not complete the planned activities and should not be recorded as having completed the YEI supported intervention.

→The participant received an offer, so s/he should be recorded as:

✓unemployed participants who receive an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving.

→The participant moved into employment within 4 weeks from the exit date, s/he should be recorded as:

✓unemployed participant in education/training, gain a qualification or are in employment, including self-employment upon leaving.



Participants who leave the operation *before the planned end of intervention* are considered to **have not completed** the YEI supported intervention.

Example 55: Further education offer starting after 4 weeks of exit date

An unemployed participant takes part in a 6-month long operation supported by the YEI. At the third month, s/he receives (and accepts) an external offer of continued education. The course does not start for 3 months and in the meanwhile s/he decides the YEI supported activities are no longer relevant and leaves the operation. Finally s/he takes up the offer 3 months later as planned and takes part in continued education.

→The participant did not complete the planned activities and should not be recorded as having completed the YEI supported intervention.

→The participant should be recorded as:

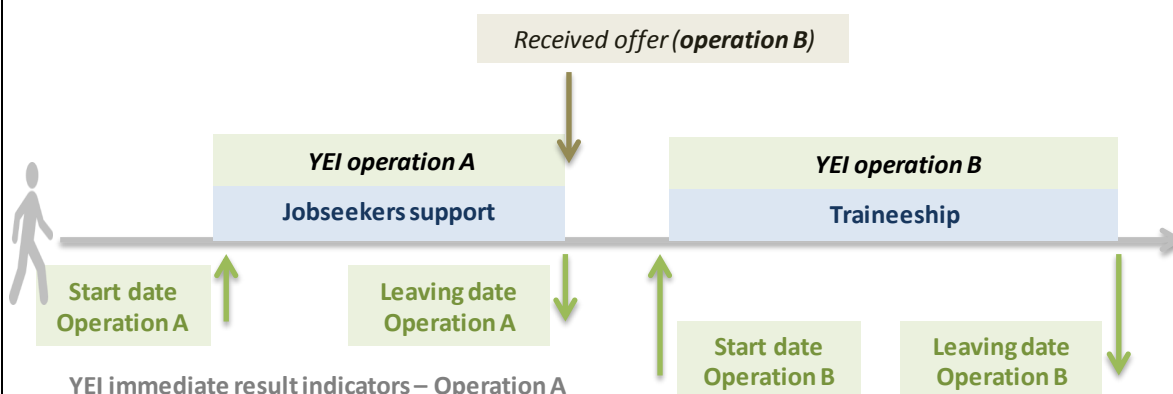
✓unemployed participants who receive an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving.

→However, as the course does not start within 4 weeks of leaving, s/he should not be counted in the immediate result indicator “in education/training upon leaving” (but will be counted in the longer-term result indicator “participants in continued education [...] six months after leaving”).

Example 56: Participants taking part in two YEI separate operations

Unemployed participants take part in a YEI operation that consists of providing support in finding jobs and internships to jobseekers (operation A, jobseeker support). They are offered to start a traineeship organised through a different YEI operation (operation B, traineeship), which they start after finishing the planned activities of the operation A.

→ Each operation has to be monitored independently, and results for participants are to be recorded once per each operation (i.e. there will be two participation records for each individual; see section 4.1.5).



YEI immediate result indicators – Operation A

- Complete the YEI supported intervention: if participant benefits from the YEI-supported intervention for the whole of the planned period of activity.
- Receiving an offer: **YES** – offers received during operation A (and up to 4 weeks after leaving) should be counted for the indicators.
- In education/training, gain a qualification, or in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving: if they have gained a qualification as result of the intervention; or move into employment or education/training

YEI immediate result indicators – Operation B

- Complete the YEI supported intervention: if participant benefits from the YEI-supported intervention for the whole of the planned period of activity.
- Receiving an offer: **NO** – no offers should be recorded for this operation. Report zero values.
- In education/training, gain a qualification, or in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving: if they have gained a qualification as result of the intervention; or move into employment or education/training.

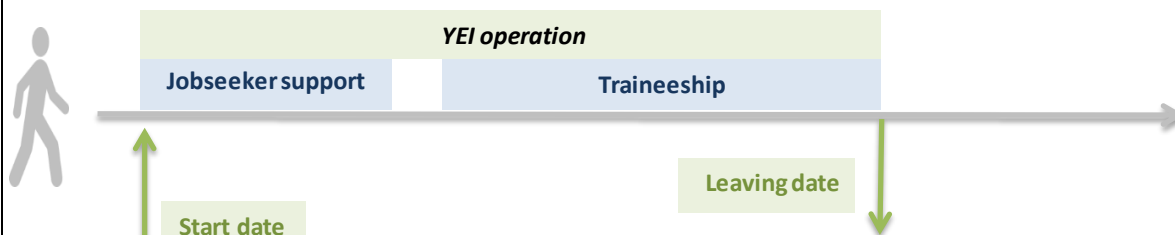
Example 57: Jobseeker support and traineeship as part of the same operation

An inactive participant takes part in a YEI intervention that consists of two stages: during the first stage the participant is involved in activation/motivation activities (jobseeker support); after completion of these activities s/he is placed in a traineeship which is organised and funded through the same operation. Both these activities are supported by the YEI as an integrated operation.

→ Results for participants are to be recorded only once per operation (see section 4.1.5). In this case the switch to a traineeship takes place within the same operation and is not an immediate result for any of the immediate result indicators. The immediate result indicators should refer to the situation only after leaving the operation (i.e. after the end of the traineeship).

[continued ...]

[... continued]



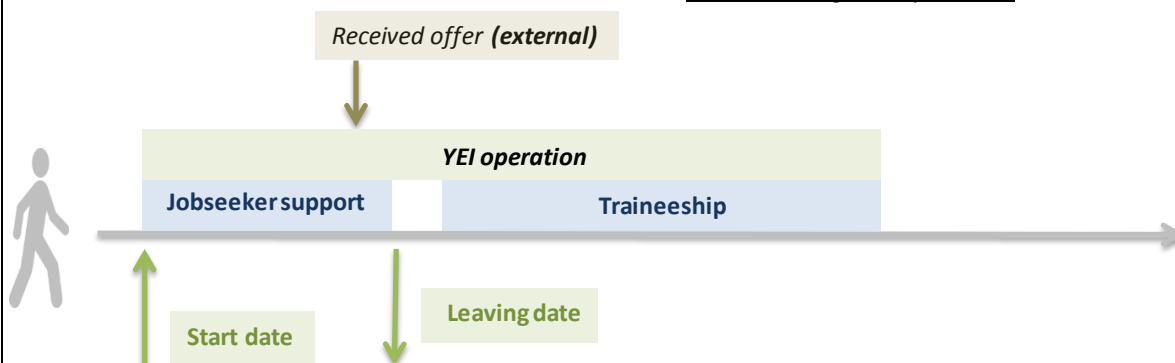
YEI immediate result indicators

- Complete the YEI supported intervention: YES – if participant benefits from the YEI-supported intervention for the whole of the planned period of activity.
- Receiving an offer: NO.
- In education/training, gain a qualification, or in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving: if they have gained a qualification as result of the intervention; or move into employment or education/training.

Example 58: Jobseeker support and traineeship as part of the same operation with external offer

An inactive participant takes part in a YEI intervention that consists of two stages: during the first stage the participant is involved in activation/motivation activities (jobseeker support); after completion of these activities s/he is to be placed in a traineeship which is organised and funded through the same operation. However, while participating in the first phase s/he receives an external offer (not part of the same operation). S/he accepts it and leaves the operation.

→Results for participants are to be recorded only once per operation (see section 4.1.5). In this case the participant leaves the operation before completing the operation to the intervention to start the external offer. The offer received should be counted for the immediate result indicators. The immediate result indicators should refer to the situation when leaving the operation.



YEI immediate result indicators

- Complete the YEI supported intervention: NO – here, the participant leaves the YEI-supported intervention before the end of the planned activities to take up the external offer.
- Receiving an offer: YES - external offers received during the jobseeker support activities (and up to 4 weeks after leaving) should be counted for indicators on offers.
- In education/training, gain a qualification, or in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving: if they have gained a qualification as result of the intervention; or move into employment or education/training.

5.10.2 Differences between YEI and YG monitoring

Although the YEI is intended to support the implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes, it should be clear that monitoring of the YEI and the YG are not the same. The YG is a package of policy measures with a single overall objective – to deliver an offer of employment, education or training within 4 months – whilst the YEI provides funding to support the implementation of one or more elements of this package, each of which may have a specific objective as one of the steps in the overall process. The monitoring of each is accordingly different.

Monitoring of YG implementation is focused around the delivery of offers within the 4 months target period and a follow-up of what happens to beneficiaries afterwards. The timing of observations is based on entry and exit from the YG service phase, which is defined to occur on take-up of an offer or earlier deregistration (e.g. in case of drop-out or sanction)⁴⁶. The YEI is however, intended to support both YG service and offer phases, and both should be monitored.

Entry and exit dates

When YEI operations support only the YG service phase, for example through preparatory measures providing advice, guidance and training in soft skills, then YEI and YG monitoring are similar. Entry to and exit from the YEI operation may be coincident with entry/exit to/from the YG service phase, but are not necessarily so (e.g. if a person starts a YEI funded operation after having registered for the YG service).

On the other hand, YEI operations which support the provision of actual offers are quite different since all participants have by definition already received an offer and had a positive exit from the YG. In this case, all YEI monitoring of implementation effectively occurs within the follow-up phase of YG monitoring.

Refusal of offers and treatment of re-entries

In both YG monitoring and YEI monitoring a person that refuses an offer made during the YG service phase may continue to participate in the service/intervention.

There is a difference, however, in the treatment of re-entries. In YG monitoring each start is counted, irrespective of the number of times the same participant has been through the service phase, and further variables record information about previous YG experience. For YEI monitoring (as with all ESF monitoring) participants are counted only once per operation (by updating their existing participation record on re-entry) (see Example 13).

Longer-term result indicators (YEI) vs. follow-up indicators (YG)

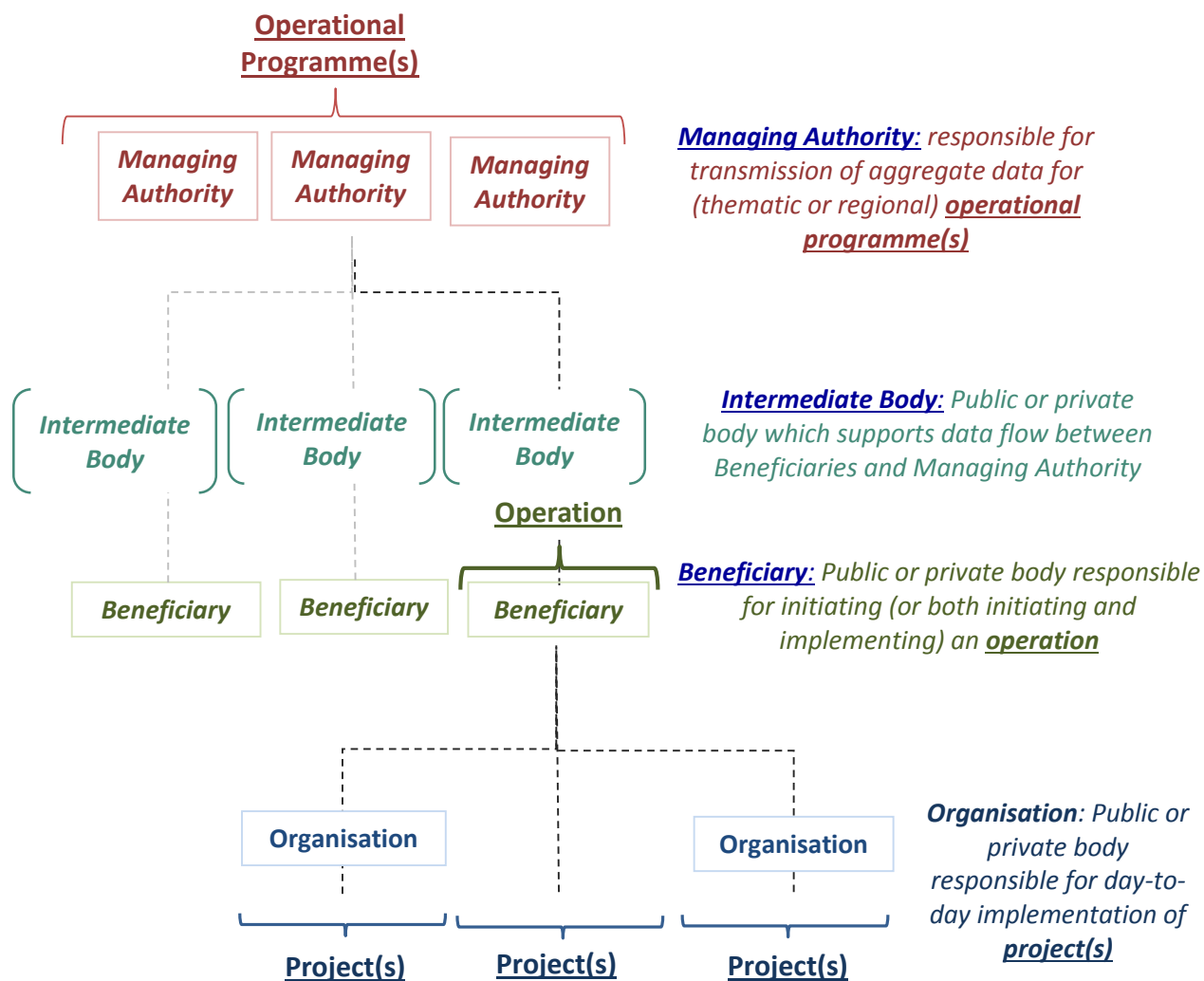
Another difference with the monitoring of the YG is the follow-up indicators. The YEI longer-term result indicators are to be recorded 6 months after having left the operation, and record only positive results. On the other hand, the YG “follow-up” indicators cover both positive and negative outcomes (i.e. unemployed and inactive have to be reported as well as those in employment or education/training), and are to be collected 6, 12 and 18 months after the exit.

⁴⁶ Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee:
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/contentAdmin/BlobServlet?docId=13402&langId=en>, and the accompanying methodological manual:
<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/emplcms/social/BlobServlet?docId=14091&langId=en>

6 Annex

6.1 Organisation of ESF monitoring

The diagram below outlines the different layers of responsibility for monitoring of ESF programmes in relation to data collection, processing and reporting.



6.2 Glossary of terms⁴⁷

Note: the definitions of terms provided here are taken primarily from Article 2 of the latest Common Provision Regulation (1303/2013) or from the same Article in the previous CPR (1083/2006).

Beneficiary

Public or private body (...) responsible for initiating or both initiating and implementing [operations](#) (...)

Category of regions

The categorisation of regions as 'less developed regions', 'transition regions' or 'more developed regions' in accordance with Article 90(2):

- (a) less developed regions, whose GDP per capita is less than 75% of the average GDP of the EU-27;
- (b) transition regions, whose GDP per capita is between 75% and 90% of the average GDP of the EU-27;
- (c) more developed regions, whose GDP per capita is above 90% of the average GDP of the EU-27.

The classification of regions under one of the three categories of regions shall be determined on the basis of how the GDP per capita of each region, measured in purchasing power parities (PPS) and calculated on the basis of Union figures for the period 2007 - 2009, relates to the average GDP of the EU-27 for the same reference period.

Completed operation

An [operation](#) that has been physically completed or fully implemented and in respect of which all related payments have been made by beneficiaries and the corresponding public contribution has been paid to the [beneficiaries](#)

Intermediate body

Any public or private body which acts under the responsibility of a [managing](#) or certifying authority, or which carries out duties on behalf of such an authority, in relation to [beneficiaries](#) implementing operations; designated by MS or MA.

Investment priority

Investment priorities are objectives which detail and focus the [thematic objectives](#) (as set out in Article 9 of the CPR) and are set out in Fund-specific regulations. In particular, Article 3 of the ESF Regulation sets out a total of 19 investment priorities for ESF support.

Each investment priority (defined at Union level) must be linked to at least one specific objective defined at Member State level to concretely reflect the change they seek to achieve with EU support (for instance 'increase employment of low qualified unemployed and the inactive'). Specific objectives should generally define the investment priority to ensure appropriate targeting for the national and regional context. A specific objective may not be broader than the investment priority it is linked to.

⁴⁷ Source: CPR Regulations 2007-2014 Article 2 – Definitions (and 1083/2006 General provisions , Article 2 – definitions)

Managing authority

Designated by Member States; the managing authority shall be responsible for managing and implementing the [operational programme](#) in accordance with the principle of sound financial management.

The managing authority bears the main responsibility for the effective and efficient implementation of the Funds and the EMFF and thus fulfils a substantial number of functions related to programme management and monitoring, financial management and controls as well as project selection. Accordingly, the managing authority's responsibilities and functions should be set out.

Operation

Project, contract, action or group of projects selected by the [managing authorities](#) of the [operational programmes](#) concerned, or under their responsibility, that contributes to the objectives of a [priority \(axes\)](#) or priorities (priority axis). (...)

Operational programme

Document submitted by a Member State and adopted by the Commission setting out a development strategy with a coherent set of priorities to be carried out with the aid of a Fund, or, in the case of the Convergence objective, with the aid of the Cohesion Fund and the ERDF.

Participant

A participant is a person that actively participates in an ESF [operation](#), benefits directly from support that incurs expenditure, and who can be identified and asked for the personal information needed for all common indicators.

Partnership agreement

A document prepared by a Member State with the involvement of partners in line with the multi-level governance approach, which sets out that Member State's strategy, priorities and arrangements for using the ESI Funds in an effective and efficient way so as to pursue the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and which is approved by the Commission following assessment and dialogue with the Member State concerned

Priority axis

One of the priorities of the strategy in an [operational programme](#) comprising a group of [operations](#) which are related and have specific measurable goals.

A priority axis can cover one or more [thematic objective](#), relating to one or more [investment priorities](#) outlined in the ESF Regulation (see 2013 CPR).

Thematic objective(s)

Set out in Article 9 of the CPR, thematic objectives represent the over-arching objectives to be pursued by the Structural funds in order to contribute to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Article 3 of the ESF Regulation limits the scope of ESF to cover four of the eleven thematic objectives set in the CPR (nos. 8-11 of the list in Article 9):

- promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility;
- promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination;
- investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning;
- enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration.

Thematic objectives are translated into multiple specific [investment priorities](#).

Main changes in May 2016 update

- Further guidance added in section 2.2.1 Computerised system: lists of fields to be recorded in a computerised form (Annex III of the Delegated Regulation (EU) No 480/2014).
- Section 2.3.6 Obligatory breakdown by gender: expanded paragraph (two last sentences) making distinction between requirement of gender breakdown for common and programme-specific indicators.
- Section 4.1.2 Counting participants in capacity building operations: new section has been added.
- Section 5.2 Gender: added reference to programme-specific indicators, where relevant.
- Further guidance added in section 5.5.2 How to record participants gaining a qualification: recording qualification results known after 4 weeks period.
- **Note:** the numbering of tables, sections and examples has been updated following the above listed changes.