

Cohesion Policy and Ireland

⋈ In 2014-2020, Ireland will manage **three operational programmes**: two regional European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programmes and one national European Social Fund (ESF) programme. The two regional programmes will cover the Border, Midland and Western region and the Southern and Eastern Region.



How much will the EU invest in Ireland from 2014-2020?

For 2014-2020, Ireland has been allocated around **€1.19 billion** (current prices) in total Cohesion Policy funding:

- **€951.6 million** for more developed regions (all)
- **€168.8 million** for European Territorial Cooperation
- **€68.1 million** for the Youth Employment Initiative.

Of this, the ESF in Ireland will represent a minimum of **€492 million**. The actual share will be set in light of the specific challenges the country needs to address in the areas covered by the ESF.

Structural Funds (ERDF and ESF) eligibility 2014-2020

- Less developed regions
(GDP/head < 75 % of EU-27 average)
- Transition regions
(GDP/head between $\geq 75\%$ and $< 90\%$ of EU-27 average)
- More developed regions
(GDP/head $\geq 90\%$ of EU-27 average)

What are the main investment priorities for Ireland?

Priorities for Ireland will be set out in the Partnership Agreement with the European Commission. The priorities are expected to include:

- Combatting long-term and youth unemployment
- Combatting social exclusion
- Promoting R&D investment and the competitiveness of the business sector
- Promoting an environmentally friendly and resource efficient economy
- Supporting the shift towards an energy efficient, low-carbon economy

What results have been achieved so far?

The total allocation from Cohesion Policy funding for the 2007-2013 period was € 901 million.

Since the beginning of the 2007-2013 funding period, amongst other achievements, ERDF investments have helped to:

- create more than 4 500 jobs (over 900 of these in research);
- extend access to broadband internet to an additional 150 000 people;
- support over 7 000 SME's.

The ERDF has enabled the Institutes of Technology to play a key role in developing innovative technologies in collaboration with local industry to deliver maximum industrial impact. Specific supports and business space are provided within the environment of third-level institutions to advance the development of emerging high-level start-up companies.

ESF Funds have provided co-funding for a range of government policies in re/up-skilling of unemployed, in particular those who are long term unemployed, young unemployed and of those threatened by poverty and social exclusion. Some 848 254 people benefitted (of which 56 % were women and 27 % under 24 years old; 33.4 % unemployed, 43.7 % inactive and 23 % employed). Furthermore, 47 % of these had primary or lower secondary and 30 % upper secondary education. The share of participants from 'vulnerable groups' (minorities, migrants disabled, other disadvantaged groups) is estimated at around 15 %.

Cohesion Policy success stories

ERDF projects

● **CASALA (Centre for Affective Solutions for Ambient Living Awareness)**

[CASALA](#) is one of two Applied Research Centres on the Dundalk Institute of Technology campus. Its primary function is working with Irish industry to achieve product innovation, business competitiveness, and market leadership in the emerging ambient assisted living sector. The Centre helps increase Dundalk IT's ability to compete in national and international funding initiatives, particularly in relation to the EU action plan on 'Ageing Well in the Information Society'.

Total cost: € 1.8 million (ERDF contribution: € 1.4 million)

● **Waterford Crystal Manufacturing Centre**

The ERDF Gateways scheme funded the restoration and conversion of City Council-owned buildings into a [crystal manufacturing and visitor centre](#) and transforming the Bolton Street car park into a dedicated tourist coach parking area. This central location for a traditional and symbolic industry boosted the city in both employment and tourism terms. 'Waterford Crystal' has attracted more than 400 000 visitors since it opened in mid-2010.

Total cost: € 5.5 million (ERDF contribution: € 2.7 million)

- **N52 Tullamore Bypass**

The [Tullamore Bypass](#) forms a 14 km section of the Dundalk to Nenagh road. Tullamore, a major traffic bottleneck was bypassed and accessibility to and between growth centres within the BMW Region was greatly improved, while travel times were reduced and safety levels improved for all traffic using the N52.

Total cost: € 53.2 million (ERDF contribution: € 21.3 million)

ESF projects

- **Traditional Currach Making Course on Inishbofin**

The [Back to Education Initiative](#) (BTEI) enables providers (VECs, Non-VEC Schools and Community Groups) to develop part-time education and training opportunities for low-skilled workers to gain qualifications. Co. Galway VEC offered a traditional currach making course on Inishbofin – reviving the island’s long tradition of boat making, while equipping participants with a FETAC Level 3 certificate in Woodcraft. The course boosted the rural economy and has fostered an entrepreneurial spirit. The BTEI programme succeeded as a model for effective engagement of a rural community leading to both accredited training and economic revival and sustainability.

Total cost: € 34 000 (ESF contribution: € 17 000)

- **Athlone Institute of Technology ESF-funded engineering courses**

The global gaming industry has gone from strength to strength with employment in the Irish-based games industry increasing by 91 % since 2009 to a current estimated total of some 3 000 workers, generating revenues of € 2 billion since 2001. Recognising the need for highly qualified software engineering graduates with expertise in game development, [Athlone IT](#) developed an honours degree. The programmes funded through EU cohesion policy were BEng 0 (Level 7) in computer engineering and mechatronics, as well as a higher certificate (Level 6) in electronics and computer engineering.

Total cost: € 1.2 million (ESF contribution: € 0.6 million)

- **Offaly VEC – Clara Youthreach ‘Operation Rainwater’**

When an internal energy audit of the community-based ‘Community Tree’ projects revealed that high water charges for watering seedlings, flowers and vegetables, a new project called ‘[Operation Rainwater](#)’ was born. A harvesting system, which collected rainwater from the roof of the centre, using it to nurture their seedlings and plants was transformed to carry water to the garden and to a self-watering table and drip-feeding system in the tunnel/ The project cut both energy and costs, while people obtained new skills in this process; research, planning, costing, computer skills, drawing, plumbing etc. The trainees went on to raise local awareness of environmental issues local and global, particularly water. Operation Rainwater won the All Ireland Senior Water Category at the annual Eco-Enesco Environmental Awards Ceremony in the Mansion House Dublin and secured the Bronze Eco Sustainability award for the centre as a whole.

Total cost: € 1.2 million (ESF contribution: € 0.6 million)

Find out more about EU cohesion policy projects in Ireland

For more project examples, as well as links to the complete list of beneficiaries of EU cohesion policy funding, see the following websites:

- [European Commission Regional Policy website](#)
- [European Commission ESF website](#)
- [Border, Midland & Western Regional Assembly](#)
- [Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly](#)