

Large numbers of people lack basic skills and qualifications, and seven million workers lack level 2 qualifications. This skills deficit contributes to the productivity gap with comparator nations. Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly face specific employment and skills challenges to achieve economic convergence.

Strategy

The England ESF programme will support EU, national and regional strategies to tackle these challenges. It will add value to the Lisbon National Reform Programme and thereby contribute to the European Employment Strategy, and to relevant EU objectives on education and training, social inclusion and equal opportunities.

The programme will contribute to policies to increase employment by helping more unemployed and economically inactive people enter sustainable jobs, particularly those at a disadvantage in the labour market. It will also help to prepare young people for working life and reduce the numbers not in education, employment or training.

The programme will contribute to policies to develop a skilled and adaptable workforce by increasing the numbers of people gaining basic skills, level 2 qualifications and, where justified, level 3 qualifications. It will also help to reduce gender segregation in the workforce, and to improve the skills of managers and workers in small enterprises.

Priorities

The programme will contain six priorities:

	Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective <i>All of England and Gibraltar except Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly</i>	Convergence Objective <i>Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly</i>
Worklessness	Extending employment opportunities (Priority 1)	Tackling barriers to employment (Priority 4)
Workforce skills	Developing a skilled and adaptable workforce (Priority 2)	Improving the skills of the local workforce (Priority 5)
Technical assistance	Technical assistance (Priority 3)	Technical assistance (Priority 6)